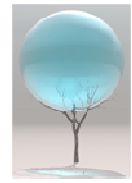




As Featured in *Healthy Times*

When Feng Shui Met The Alexander Technique By Christie Johnson

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Feng Shui, is the ancient art of placing objects in such a way as to allow flow and harmony with our surroundings. Feng translates to wind and Shui to water. Wind and water both flow. Ideally the more we can be in relationship with the flow of life the more rich the quality of it becomes. The question occurred to me, what happens when you are out on the running trail and turn the corner to find wind directly in your face? And what if it is an intense Santa Ana wind that not only blows you around, but also all the dirt in Southern California with it? How can we be in the flow if we are running against it? Given the opportunity I decided to explore this process with the art of human flow - the Alexander Technique.

When I first began to run it seemed exceptionally easy. I was in the groove – just gliding along... Then, in turning a corner I realized that I had been pushed along by the winds. Now I was running at a ninety degree angle to the winds. Against this lateral momentum of winds, I started to feel myself trying to stabilize my footing. In doing so, I noticed that I wasn't simply dealing with where my feet were landing. Tightening patterns were evolving in my right quadriceps, my shoulders began to rise, my hands began to clench and my neck muscles gripped to try to mitigate the gusts. Is this response adding value to me or the quality of my run? If I am tightening every part of my body, how am I going to get anywhere? Yes, this would be similar to driving your car with the emergency break applied. I may get somewhere, but not with much efficiency.

Observing these patterns and being newly acquainted with wind strength I decided that the wind was way bigger than me. So why would I try to fight it? Instead, I decided to surrender to the wind. Yes, the wind won. I wasn't going to waste my energy by adding tension throughout my body to battle it any further. In making this conscience choice of not holding on to the tension I felt my run begin to flow again. It wasn't completely easy though, as the Santa Ana's can be relentless. Am I as relentless as the winds? In continuing the experiment I was consistently humbled. Yes, I definitely needed persistent self checks to allow my muscles to be free so that I could go forward in motion. When I consciously noticed the muscle tension cycles try to kick in I would actively choose to release versus tighten. Happily, this process allowed a very smooth finish as I came around the final turn which meant the wind was now carrying me forward and I was completely in the flow.

After this experiment I started to think about similar efforts applied to swimming. Am I moving with the water or am I fighting to push through it? Again the water is far larger than me. As my arm rotates and my hand enters the water am I trying to force myself through it or am I moving in such a way to allow my neck muscles to be free to let my head go forward and my whole body follow? Instead of trying to push myself through I decided that I would allow my hand to slide into the water almost like a knife would glide through soft butter. Yes, this seemed to be less effort and by the end of the laps my breath also seemed easier and my energy seemed endless.

As you move through your days, notice when you are in the flow. Why add tension when you have the choice of allowing yourself to flow? Feng Shui is the art of continuous flow and The Alexander Technique is the embodiment of the art of flow. There is so much more to both arts. A lifetime could be spent studying each one. I am thankful to both arts in teaching new choices which allow life to flow with less effort and more ease. Freeing up energies and connecting more deeply is an awaking that adds new life value. Wouldn't you like more of that?

Christie Johnson helps people discover their unique patterns of thinking and moving in relation to all that they do. She helps executives and performers mitigate stage fright, seniors and surfers improve balance, gardeners and golfers improve range of motion, pregnant women and their partners expand their comfort, and riders and runners to release muscle tension. Free your Form, Function and Flow.

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