

The Alexander Technique:

Biophysical Tensegrity, Anatomical Construct and Integrative Awareness in Movement

Zadok Ruben, D.V.M., PhD

Certified Alexander Technique Teacher, ATI, ISTAT

The Alexander Technique (A-T) is an experiential learning method for improving integrative body awareness in movement. It views movement (at motion, rest or stillness) as a dynamic mind-bio-physical unity. Buckminster Fuller's Tensegrity model for dynamic stability of nonliving construct applies to the human body. At the gross level, bones are the discontinuous compression particles whereas muscles, fascia and other soft connecting tissue are the continuous tension elements. Similar discontinuous compression-continuous tension dynamics occurs at microscopic levels as shown by advancement in cellular mechanotransduction research.

F M Alexander, the founder of the A-T, stated that the principle control of body movement "becomes something in the sphere of relativity" (the body parts are in a relationship with each other). It is proposed that this sphere is a dynamic relational stability—a composition of four affinities that occur concurrently among the particles: 1. expansion (moving away from each other), 2. compaction (gathering toward each other), 3. flexibility (achieving a flexible-elastic state), 4. tonicity (achieving a suitable tone for the desired function).

The experiential teaching of the A-T is directed toward the mind regulation of bio-physical tension that is employed as a habitual-automatic-unconscious behavior; specifically, with the excessive unnecessary effort and energy expenditure that is associated with kinesthetic dysfunction, discomfort and pain. With the guidance of the teacher, the student becomes aware of his automatic undesirable habits, and learns to consciously employ a dynamic-relational regulation of efficient-comfortable movement. A crucial step in this learned proprioceptive behavior is the "mastering" of mindful-conscious interception of the tyrannical habitual process.

The benefits of the A-T are known to apply to movement at daily activities, performing arts and sports. The teaching has been increasingly included among mind-body methods within integrative medicine. Its concepts may apply to advancements in ergonomics, artificial body parts and robotic control of movement.

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