

MY PATH TO MBSR* - THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

Posted by a US military veteran in www.mindfulvets.org** (12/23/2017)***

In my journey to MBSR* I experienced a variety of modalities. They have all been very beneficial to me in my battle with pain. I consider the different modalities to be valuable tools that I keep in my tool box and use as needed. I will admit that my tool box is getting very worn!

I thought it may be helpful to take some time and try and explain the Alexander Technique. I had assistance with this from my two eminent teachers, Andrea Bruno and Dr. Zadok Ruben as well as my awesome fellow veterans who practice along with me. Along with MBSR I practice the Alexander Technique as part of my daily routines as well as weekly drop in classes at the VA.

I noticed the beneficial effects early on and continue to do so. I personally have been practicing for two years and find it to both complement and enhance my mindful practice.

When in pain I naturally tense up and this of course would intensify the pain by placing additional compression on my muscles, skeletal system and joints. This would also increase the already poor posture I lived with. I was not aware of any of these issues as they had become long time habits.

We all have different levels of pain and needs. In my case I have issues with all my joints and soft tissue, some back, neck and both feet as well as migraines.

Many years of conventional medicine, surgeries and never ending injections have provided little relief. I would like to reiterate, (from an earlier post), that the Alexander Technique is not exercises and it is not a medical treatment. Instead, it is a set of principles you can use to guide how you move comfortably which can improve the quality of your everyday activities. It is learning by experience. I am learning to lessen the tension that I naturally apply myself. The compression on the spine is lessened when I am relaxed. I am developing an awareness on how to move in a relaxed and comfortable manner which is very helpful in reducing my pain level.

Another important feature of this method is the learning of how to rest and breathe comfortably. This experience usually takes place during the lesson when we lay in a supine position either on a mat or massage table.

I am developing improved posture both when moving, sitting and improved balance as well. With ongoing sessions I continue to feel improvements. Let me add that over the years we all develop poor habits and in my case they were largely due to compensation for pain. For myself it will be an ongoing learning practice.

I have also observed the benefits fellow veterans have received. Through the guidance of the teachers you learn what helps you as an individual. The Alexander Technique was developed some one hundred years ago by Frederick Matthias Alexander. It is a very unique mind-body learning method and I feel that those veterans who have it available are very fortunate.

*MBSR: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction developed by Jon Kabat Zinn, PhD.

**Website administrator response: *Thanks so much for this! Sure sounds very much like the Alexander Technique fits hand in glove with our mindfulness practice.*

***Prepared as a PDF document from www.mindfulvets.org by Z. Ruben