

# LIMERICK

**Meeting to be held at the Strand Hotel, Ennis Road, Limerick, on Saturday 20th February 2010 at 2.00 pm.**

Alexander Technique practitioner Louise Phelan will give a talk and demonstration on the benefits of the Alexander Technique method, which is designed to work by helping the individual to identify and prevent the harmful postural habits that aggravate, or may be the cause of, stress, pain and under-performance.

You will learn how to release tension and rediscover balance of mind and body. With increased awareness you can:

- be poised without stiffness
- move gracefully and powerfully with less effort
- be alert and focused with less strain
- breathe and speak more easily and freely
- be calm and confident

This will also be an opportunity for ME sufferers and their supporters to share experiences.

From Louise Phelan:

Alexander Technique is a simple and practical way of restoring grace, ease of movement and energy to the body. Relearning the fundamentals of how we are designed to move. Take a moment to imagine or look at a child and what do you see? Curiosity, coordination, ease and grace, fun. Remember, you once moved like that.

As we grow we lose our natural balance as we develop habits limiting movement to deal with the daily pressures of life. It doesn't have to be so. Stress, pain and fatigue are often caused by not moving according to our design. As we use our bodies inefficiently it causes further stress and strain. A downward spiral if you will.

FM Alexander developed his technique when he himself found that a voice problem threatened his career. He made an equation that something he was doing caused the problem, because he saw his body heal during lengthy restful periods. That triggered him to explore the problem more deeply.

Alexander realised that despite his good intent his body still performed in ways that were habitual and harmful to his voice. He was under the illusion that he was in control of how he functioned. Of course he was in control but not in the manner in which he employed.

He realised that his mind needed to be involved to steer the action from the path so well worn by habit. He needed to stop the doing of the habit in order for the body's natural co-ordination to be restored.

That was over a century ago and his technique has travelled the world and evolved as it established itself. In 2008 the British Medical Journal reported that it was cost effective and long lasting at relieving chronic back pain in a trial with GP advice, therapeutic massage and exercise.

The Alexander Technique helps you to recognise what patterns you may have in your everyday tasks that are detrimental to your ease of movement. It will also highlight how you think about an action and the connection between the mind and movement.

We think we are normal. Our feelings, movements, sensations, patterns, even pains are normal to us. We read and hear words with our habitual mind and interpret accordingly. This is normal.

The only way to change what is normal for us is to develop awareness of how we can move, be, work better. That's what an Alexander Technique teacher can show you. With gentle hands-on work and words to guide, the teacher will focus your mind on what is happening in your body and give you an experience of moving in a new way.

The body begins to learn that there are alternatives to what is normal and habitual. The more the experience is repeated, the quicker the body and mind learns to use muscles and joints in new ways creating easier movement and reducing stress and strain.

This is often associated with posture and while healthy posture is a wonderful benefit of using your body in balance with the Alexander Technique I think it is important to point out that it is not about the way you "hold yourself" or having a straight back. Balanced posture can bring about easy of breathing and efficient digestion as well as being important in free movement.

But people can fall into the trap of trying to fix. When they find the "perfect posture" they hold on to it until they are stiffened through the neck and back, exhausted.

This is not the Alexander Technique. The fact that you are a human being it's important to realise that your body is moving and changing all the

time we are living. We want to move and grow with it, not fix it, hold it still.

When you become familiar with the process of losing and finding awareness you can use Alexander's principles in all parts of your life. Looking at how the mind and body works benefits the human condition in many ways.

Recovering from injury we can tighten and protect. The technique teaches us to trust and free the muscles protecting the injury. This allows the blood flow be unrestricted bringing the healing qualities to the site and the toxins away.

Dealing with fatigue and pain we learn to listen and manage. What movements are inefficient and what new ways allow less pain and more ease. Being gentle with your self during these times is crucial to moving through it. Movement should be, can be, gentle and easy. Performance whether you are at the computer, playing an instrument or practicing a sport, when movement is easier everything is better. When your mind and body connection is fluid you have greater control over all your abilities.

The Alexander Technique does not try to change you. It aims to strip down the layers of tensions that have been built over years that hide you. The natural easy pain free energetic funny you like the child you remembered.