

TEACHER CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

A philosophy of training

F.M. Alexander began teaching his technique during the last decade of the nineteenth century. We are now in the first decade of the twenty first century. The aim in this training course is to build on the great wealth of experience and knowledge that has accumulated for over one hundred years and has been passed on to us by teachers of the previous generation who worked closely with F.M. himself. At the same time we want to prepare new teachers for the realities of professional life in the very different social climate of the twenty first century.

The fundamentals of the training are based on John Nicholls' extensive experience of the approach developed over many years by Walter and Dilys Carrington, and his experience of training Alexander teachers in Melbourne, Australia and in Brighton, England. Walter Carrington, of course, worked closely with F.M. Alexander and carried on the original teacher training program when F.M. died.

To understand the structure and content of the training program, it is helpful to look at it from several different points of view. First we will take an overview of the three years to see how there is a planned developmental progression through those years. Then we will look at a typical week to get an idea of what students can expect each day. Finally we will look at the "core curriculum," that is, those elements of the practice and theory of the Alexander Technique which we focus on communicating throughout the three years.

Coursework

This training course is based on the following outline plan:

The first year of the training focuses on enabling each student to understand in both practice and theory the three key elements of the Alexander Technique: Primary Control, Inhibition, and Direction. Consistent experience of these three elements, and how they facilitate what FM called "going up," builds the students' confidence in their own use and awareness of improved use and functioning in themselves. This is an indispensable pre-requisite for teaching improved use to others. Alongside this there is study of the written works of F.M. Alexander and some basic anatomy and physiology.

The second year focuses more on developing the refined manual skills and physical practices that have been evolved to pass on the Alexander Technique. Considerable class hours are required to develop in the trainees the reliable standard of use and the sensitivity of touch required for this work. This a time of building consciously chosen habits of good use both in the practice of hands-on skills and in everyday life. Concurrently there is further study of F.M.'s writing, anatomy and physiology, and related literature to give the trainees sufficient knowledge to understand the intellectual and scientific concepts underlying their work.

The third year focuses on the practical problems of Alexander teaching. The trainees progress from practicing on each other to supervised practice on members of the public. The habits of good use developed in the first two years are challenged in this situation, as the trainees must maintain good use in themselves if they are to have the sensitivity and "direction" required to help a new private student. Development of verbal teaching and presentation skills is also

included, so that articulate explanations and instructions can accompany the hands-on experience

WEEKLY COURSE CONTENT

In a typical week each student will have:

- Individual turns (“mini-lessons”) from teachers every day.
- Two to three half-hour “hands-on” groups per week.
- Some form of supervised “directed activity”.
- Lecture/discussion periods of 30-45 minutes every day, covering basic concepts, reading F.M.’s books and other books/videos on the Technique, and books/videos on anatomy and physiology.
- Students are expected to work on themselves both during course hours and outside of course hours, and will also be required to complete 160 hours of Approved Independent Study.

Core Curriculum

A developing understanding of the basic **concepts** of the Technique, both kinesthetically and intellectually. Basic concepts include:

- Primary Control
- Inhibition
- Direction
- Non-endgaining and means-whereby
- Non-doing
- Faulty sensory appreciation
- Use and functioning
- Psychophysical integration

Training in the established **practices** of teaching the Technique. These include:

- Chair work: working with sitting and standing and the movement from one to the other is an ideal way to access the fundamental co-ordination of the support muscles in the neck and back with the dual function of the legs for both support and movement.
- Table work: lying down on the back with head slightly raised and knees bent is an ideal environment for releasing chronic holding in the neck, back and legs, when all of this musculature is relieved of the demand to support the body against gravity.
- Monkey: this basic working stance, with flexed hips and knees, exemplifies the pattern of “antagonistic pulls” (as FM called them) that promote full expansion of the body and an even spread of elastic tone throughout the musculature.
- Hands on back of chair: FM said that this practice, combined with the monkey stance, gave you all the experiences you need to use your hands as a teacher. It is a way of learning to use the arms and hands without compromising the support muscles of the trunk or the mobility of the ribs for breathing.
- Whispered Ah: this is an ideal practice for observing the crucial relationship between breathing and postural support. In many people, these two functions severely interfere with each other, but as use improves they become a mutually reinforcing synergy.

CURRICULUM METHODOLOGY

Chair and table work involve learning to use one's hands well as a teacher, and this is, of course, a fundamental aspect of any Alexander teacher training. It needs to be taught under close supervision from experienced teachers as it is the heart of the whole training.

We deal with this in small groups, usually two or three students together, and we guide them through a step-by-step program over the first two years of the course. In this program simple practices become the foundation from which more complex skills can develop. It is a steady, well worked-out discipline, like a musician learning scales, which needs to be established before students become able to work more fluidly as they get towards the end of their training.

These procedures are supplemented by others developed since Alexander's death which have been found useful by different training courses. For example, the many processes used by Walter Carrington under the title "Games" (we call them "Directed Activities") which serve several purposes:

- Processes that help illuminate some aspect of the Technique.
- Processes that can be used to help students observe and improve their own use.
- Processes that can be used in teaching to help a pupil.

In the second and third year classes and exercises are given to develop verbal and written fluency in presenting the Alexander Technique. For example, practice in putting together the knowledge and skills learned from the above curriculum in such situations as:

- Giving a talk on the Technique
- Giving a first lesson
- Following on through the first few lessons in a series
- Teaching a group class

In the third year students have the opportunity of supervised practice teaching on members of the public. Also in the third year there will be opportunities to discuss problems of setting up as a teacher and common difficulties encountered when working as a professional Alexander teacher. For example:

- Publicity and advertising
- Dealing with telephone enquiries
- Setting appointments
- Setting fees and keeping accounts
- Dealing with pupils with specific problems

terms, times and numbers

The course is of three years duration and training time is a minimum of 1600 hours over the three years. This is in accordance with the rules of the various national societies of teachers of the Alexander Technique who have affiliated together with common standards.

There are three terms per year: from mid-September to Christmas, from early January to Easter, and from April to June. There will be a total of thirty four weeks training per year.

Classes are in the morning, Monday thru Thursday each week. Each class starts at 8-30am and ends at 12-00pm, with a short break in the middle.

The class size will be limited to around sixteen students with three or four teachers each day,

so that each student will receive a great deal of individual attention. New students can start at the beginning of any term if there are spaces available. This is in line with most Alexander teacher training courses which take new students each term or each year, whenever there are vacancies. We offer a carefully planned program of instruction so that everyone covers all the ground necessary regardless of when they start training. In fact, the most essential elements are covered several times over during a three year cycle.

Approved independent study

Of the 1600 hours over three years, 160 hours will be allocated to approved independent study. This can take many forms. For example:

- Keeping a journal of your experiences during the training.
- Applying the Alexander Technique to the study of another skill.
- Writing a research paper on a relevant topic.
- Preparing material in the later part of the three years for giving talks on the Technique, advertising yourself as a teacher, presenting introductory workshops, etc.

tuition fees

The fees are currently a total of \$8,299 per year: that is \$2,766 per term, or \$830 per month for the ten months of the year the course is in session (i.e. no payments in July and August). Although every effort will be made to keep the fees down, they may have to rise periodically in line with inflation.

Requirements for Entry

Prospective candidates should satisfy the following requirements:

- Some personal experience of the Alexander Technique (usually at least thirty lessons) and evidence of enthusiasm to pursue it as a personal discipline.
- Adequate educational background.
- Some work experience that suggests an ability to communicate with people.

Post-Graduate Students

We are happy to take post-graduate students whenever there is space available. A graduate student can attend for any period from a few days to a term or more, and will be included in the daily timetable in the same way as other students. Whenever the graduate student receives individual attention from one of the teachers the work will, of course, be adapted to the graduate student's interests and level of experience.

This is an excellent way for teachers trained elsewhere to deepen their understanding and extend their skills.

The fee for post-graduate study is the same pro rata as for under-graduate students.

The Teaching staff

John Nicholls graduated from Oxford in 1966, and then worked for some years in the computer industry. An interest in psycho-physical growth disciplines led him to train as an Alexander teacher (1973 to 1976). He trained in London with Walter and Dilys Carrington, at the oldest established Alexander training centre, and remained at the centre for eleven years, building up a large private practice and assisting the Carringtons daily on their teacher training course. In 1980 John became an elected member of the Council of the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT) and was Chair of STAT in 1985 and 1986. He was one of the organizers of the first International Congress for Alexander teachers at Stoneybrook, NY, in 1986.

In 1987 John went to Australia for three years to direct the Melbourne Alexander Teacher Training School and graduated twenty-two students who are now teaching, some in Australia and some in Britain. After returning to the UK, he began the Brighton training in Sept. 1990, which for the next twelve years was one of the most successful training courses in England. During those years he maintained private practices in Brighton and London, and ran annual teachers' refresher courses in Denmark, Germany, Italy and the USA. He has also run seminars for the public in various European countries, Australia and the USA. At the third International Congress for Alexander teachers in Switzerland in 1991, he was one of the featured second-generation heads of training courses.

In December 2002 John moved to live in New York, where he teaches privately and offers postgraduate classes for teachers, as well as the teacher training program.

Publications:

The Alexander Technique: In Conversation with John Nicholls and Sean Carey 1991. ISBN 0 9519169 0 4.

The Alexander Technique in a Larger Context 1986 STAT Alexander Memorial Lecture.

Where are we going? 2005 AmSAT Alexander Memorial Lecture.

Nanette Walsh is Co-director of the ATNYC's teacher training program. In 2009 she was appointed Chair Elect of the American Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique; currently she is serving a three year term. She holds a Masters in Fine Arts from Syracuse University (1982); her thesis "A Digital Approach to the Expressive Elements of Movement" encompassed the work of choreographer Merce Cunningham, linguist Noam Chomsky, physicist David Bohm, and movement analyst Rudolph Laban. In 1983 she directed George Kormendi's multi-media production of Charles Olson's "Call Me Ishmael." In 1980, she received her Bachelor in Fine Arts in Art Therapy. A specialist in the linguistic analysis of movement, she has also created computerized communication systems at The Cerebral Palsy Center in Syracuse and worked as art director for research film presentations on pain at the Department of Neurosurgery at Upstate Medical Center.

In 1984 Nanette moved to NYC and began her study of the Alexander Technique. While working as a programmer analyst she also taught Computer Graphic Animation at The School of Visual Arts in NYC. In 1995 she received her teacher certification from the American Center for the Alexander Technique. In 1999 she began an intensive course of study and correspondence with first generation teachers Peggy Williams and Walter Carrington in London; continuing until their deaths in 2003 and 2005 respectively. Nanette is also a long-time practitioner of Tai Chi Chuan, and a former student of Western Style Boxing. She maintains a full teaching practice in

the Alexander Technique, has published a number of articles on the Technique (*see website www.atnyc.us*) and is currently working on her upcoming book on Peggy Williams and the Alexander Technique.

Additional Faculty: To learn about our other distinguished faculty members please see the Teacher Certification page of our website (*www.atnyc.us*), where you will find links to their bios. In addition, qualified volunteer teachers will be assisting regularly as appropriate.

Premises and Environment

The training course takes place in a large and light filled studio in mid-town Manhattan, close to all major city transport facilities. The address is:

330 West 38th Street,
Suite #805
New York, NY 10018