

# THE POWER OF POSTURE

An introduction to the principles of the Alexander Technique and the  
mind-body connections

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Carmen Tarnowski MCSP STAT

My mentor

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The actor who lost his voice and became the Father of  
'Good Posture'

**Frederick Matthias Alexander 1869-1955**

- Born in Tasmania
- As an actor, untreatable voice loss
- Self observation of misuse
- Developed a series of techniques for re-establishing our natural ease of movement we had as children

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## **The perfect childhood posture corrupted into adulthood**

His Principles

- The Primary Control - Head, neck and back relationship should remain intact through transitions of movement
- A lengthened spine is a strong one, and length should be maintained through planes of movement
- Disruption caused by mood, technology, fashion, culture and copied behaviour
- Over time habits feel 'comfortable' and 'normal' to do – faulty sensory perception
- Inhibition and direction
- We resort to them in times of stress
- A.T. is an education that aims to restore the freedom of body and mind that we had as children

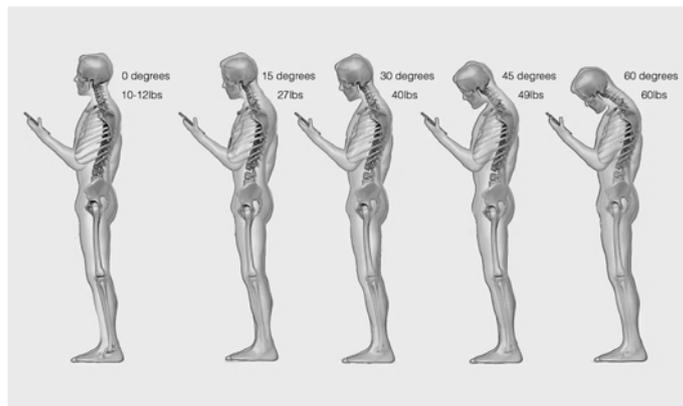
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# HABITS

**NOW FOLD YOUR ARMS**

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**The effects on the spine of disrupting the Primary Control.**



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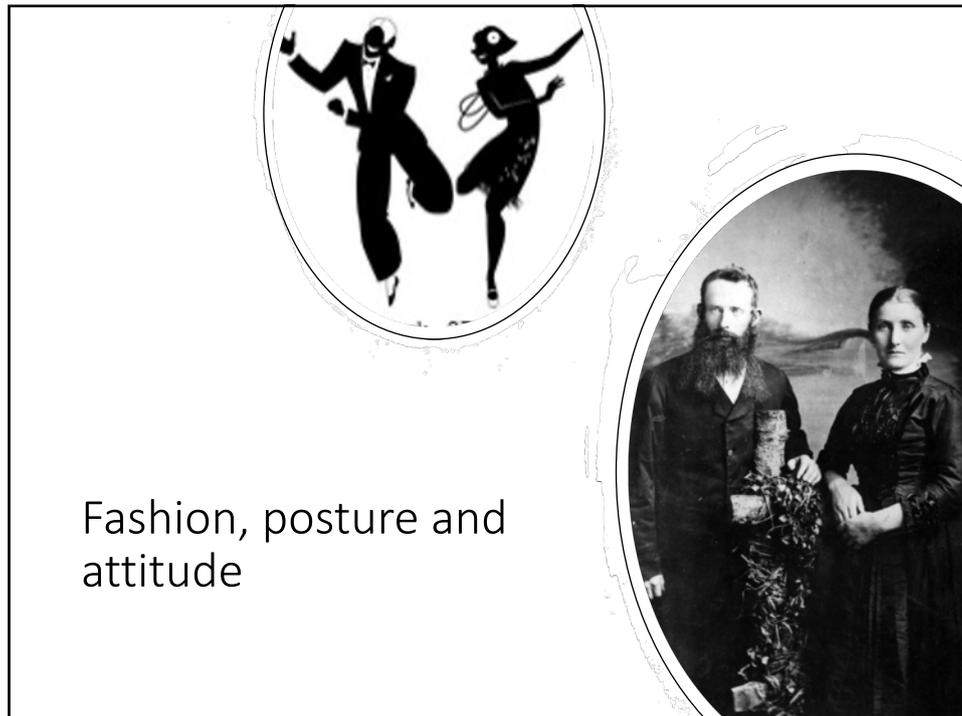
Copied behaviour

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Cultural influences on posture

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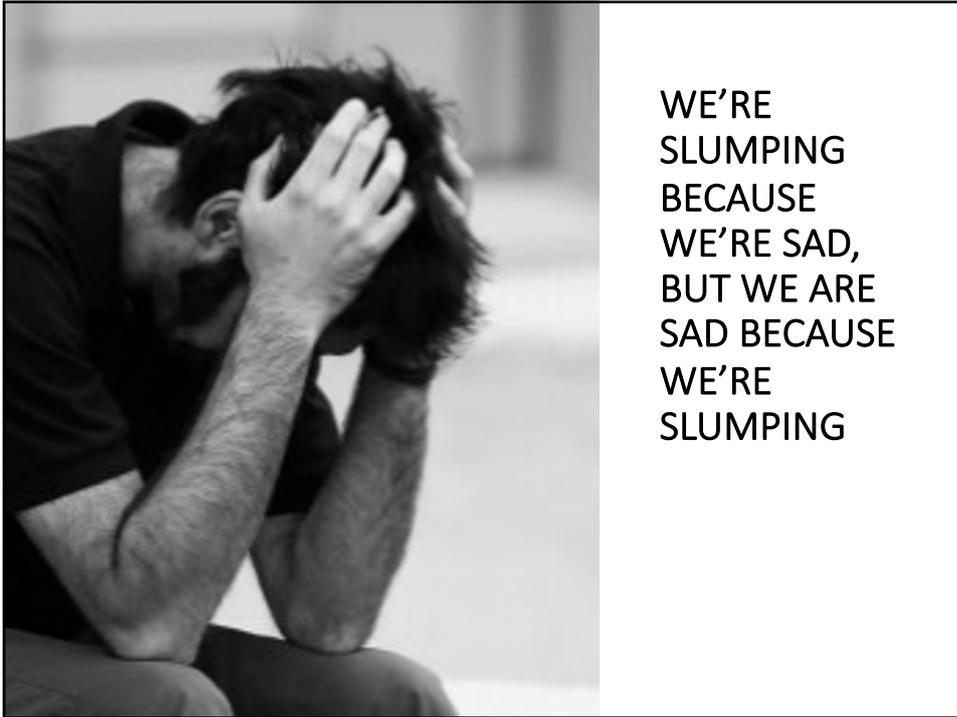
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## How you think affects how you move, and vice versa

### ‘PSYCHO-PHYSICAL UNITY’

- Connection runs both ways
- A balanced body balances our emotions and brings us to the present moment
- Past, present and future
- Today this is known as Embodied Cognition

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## Demo Time

- 3 quick and easy ways to bring you to your present
- Semi-supine – 9 points of contact
- Standing with feet together and parallel standing
- Ischial tuberosity awareness in sitting and parallel feet on the ground

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## Research Supporting Embodied Cognition

1. 'Body posture effects on self-evaluation: A self-validation approach' – Richard E Petty, 2009. The Ohio State University
2. 'Sitting posture makes a difference – embodiment effects on depressive memory bias' – J Michalek 2014. University of Hildesheim, Germany.
3. 'Do slumped and upright postures affect stress responses?' – S Nair 2015. University of Auckland
4. 'How posture affects memory recall and mood' – Erik Peper, 2017. San Francisco State University
5. 'Math with good posture can mean better scores' – Erik Peper & Richard Harvey. San Francisco State University
6. 'Postural Feedback reveals clear evidential value for Power-Posing Effects' – Amy Cuddy, 2018.
7. 'The effects of walking posture on affective and physiological states of stress' - J Hackford 2019. University of Auckland

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## Scientists generally in agreement that being upright is good, slumping is bad, for mind and body

- Pain and energy levels
- Recall of negative thoughts and memories
- Performance in exams
- Self confidence
- Hormone production
- Ability to take risks
- Blame our looking down on technology for increase in depression

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## Simple postural changes

Set up a decent working space to encourage upright sitting, feet flat on floor or footrest.

When you sit, find your sitting bones and start with a good intention.

If working at dining / kitchen table, customize with cushions or a folded towel to sit on / support lumbar spine, and a box to ground feet



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Never too young for a decent workstation!



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Stand up  
more, feet  
together



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Put your  
feet  
straight,  
stand and  
walk tall



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Semi  
supine  
tech time

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## Don't sleep on your stomach

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There are numerous sayings linking our physical posture with our mental attitude

### Positive

- Has backbone
- Walking tall
- Upstanding citizen
- Standing proud
- Thinking on my feet
- Spring in my step
- Head held high

### Negative

- Spineless individual
- No backbone
- Weak kneed
- In a slump (depression)
- Bent out of shape
- Pain in the neck
- Leading with the chin

**MY FAVOURITE IS 'DON'T LEAD WITH YOUR CHIN AS THAT'S HOW  
ALEXANDER LOST HIS VOICE!'**

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Embodied cognition is not a new concept, but Leonardo probably described it the most beautifully .....

‘The joints of the bones obeys the nerve, and the nerve the muscle, and the muscle the tendon, and the tendon the Common Sense. And the Common Sense is the seat of the soul, and the memory its ammunition.’

Quote extracted from ‘Adventures in Human Being’ by Gavin Francis