

Look familiar?

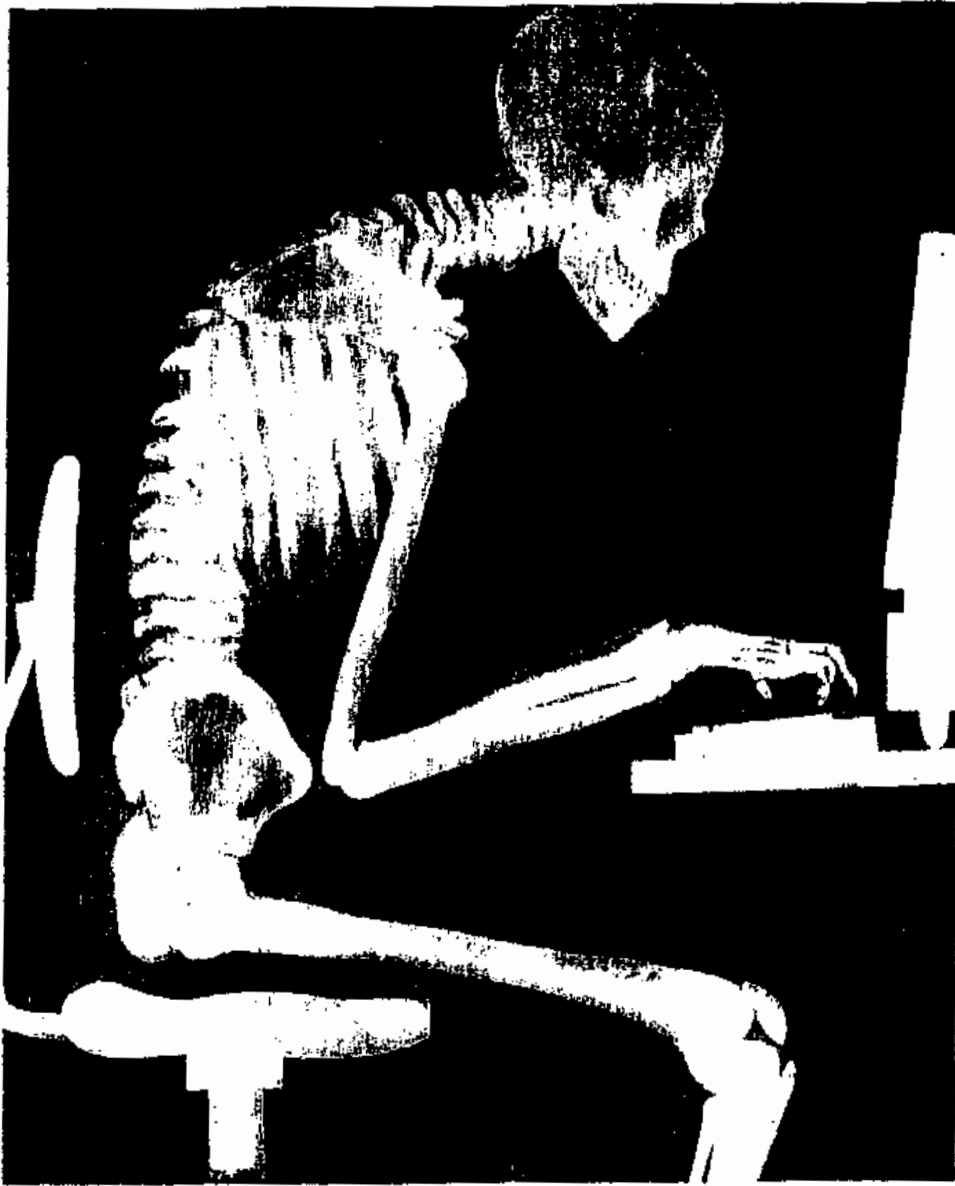


Diagram 2: Severe Spinal Damage at 0 mph

Reprinted from National Back Pain Association poster

What is the Alexander Technique?

I am often asked the question: “What is The Alexander Technique?” I begin by explaining what it is NOT!

The Alexander Technique is **not**:

- an exercise regime
- yoga or meditation
- a massage
- about being constantly relaxed
- about perfect posture
- about sitting up straight
- about getting in and out of a chair
- a cure for serious disease or illness

So.... what is it all about then?

Here are some one-liners - an attempt to clarify this all-encompassing, thoughtful, mind-body, sophisticated yet SIMPLE work:

The Alexander Technique:

- Is a way to be in the moment
- Is a way to be easier with oneself
- Is stopping the wrong thing, so the right thing can do itself
- Is finding something new without looking for it
- Is rediscovering our innate ability to move in a coordinated way
- Is freedom from being dominated by fixed habits
- Gives us conscious control, or choice, over the habitual
- Is “thinking in activity”. It combines thought with movement
- Is renewing and constructive, rather than deconstructive
- Can offer a new way of living, doing, being
- Teaches one to be kind to oneself
- Gives you more of your real self that you forgot you had

..... and finally.....

- The Alexander Technique helps you to change what you thought you were stuck with!

Who was Frederick Matthias Alexander?

In 1869 Frederick Matthias Alexander was born, the eldest of 8 children, in Wynyard, a small town in the North of Tasmania, South of Australia. He had childhood weaknesses. He worked as a clerk to support his family before exploring his dream of reciting Shakespeare. He moved to mainland Australia to pursue his acting career, when a voice problem interrupted him. Doctors prescribed rest, and his voice returned, but he would lose it again during performances. This led him to deduce that if rest healed his voice, it must be something he was doing that caused the problem.

Being from a self-sustaining farm background, he asked the doctor if he could investigate his problem himself. As he studied his movements he developed a technique that brought about total recovery for his voice. After healing himself, he continued to develop his technique and help others who were curious about his recovery. Alexander's early work focused on respiratory re-education, but he found this work affected the whole body, not just his voice. The principles he discovered or recognized, when applied, helped a range of movement and postural issues from sitting and standing to walking and talking, or doing anything you want to with greater ease and less effort. It is about using your whole body as it was naturally designed.

Alexander impressed his acting colleagues and the doctors of Melbourne and Sydney. In 1904 he travelled to England. Some of these doctors wrote letters of testimonial to support his venture. It was in London where he established his work and wrote his books. He had a school for children teaching them the work, as he believed that early education equaled prevention and was worth far more than adult correction.

He taught the work to his brother Albert Redden who assisted him in bringing the work to North America. Eventually he was persuaded to train others in the 1930's so his discoveries and invaluable work could continue.

Late in his life he suffered from a stroke. He continued working and recovered his functionality. He worked until he died in 1955.

For more information:

www.EaseforMusicians.com (Blog and Resources)

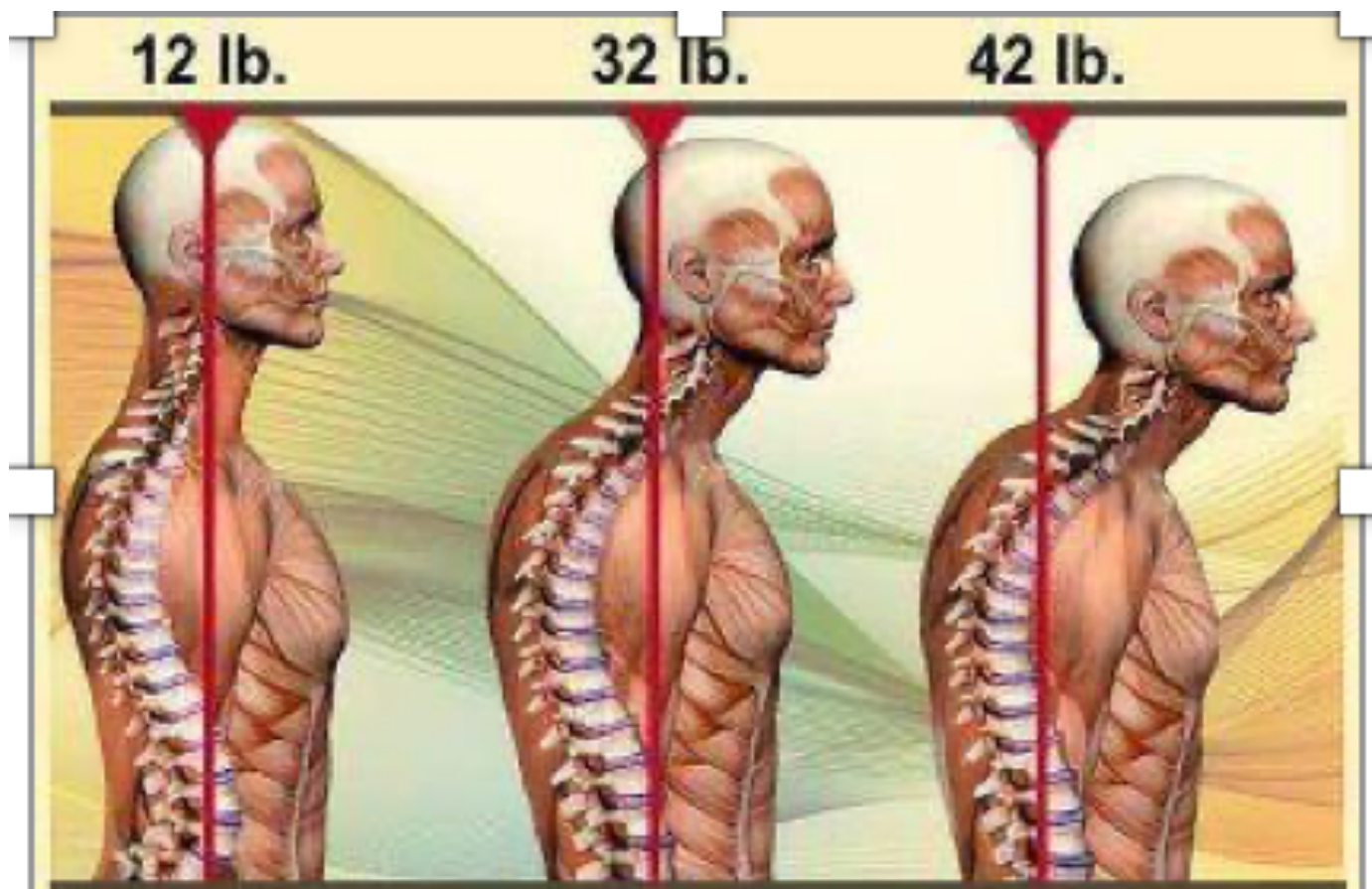
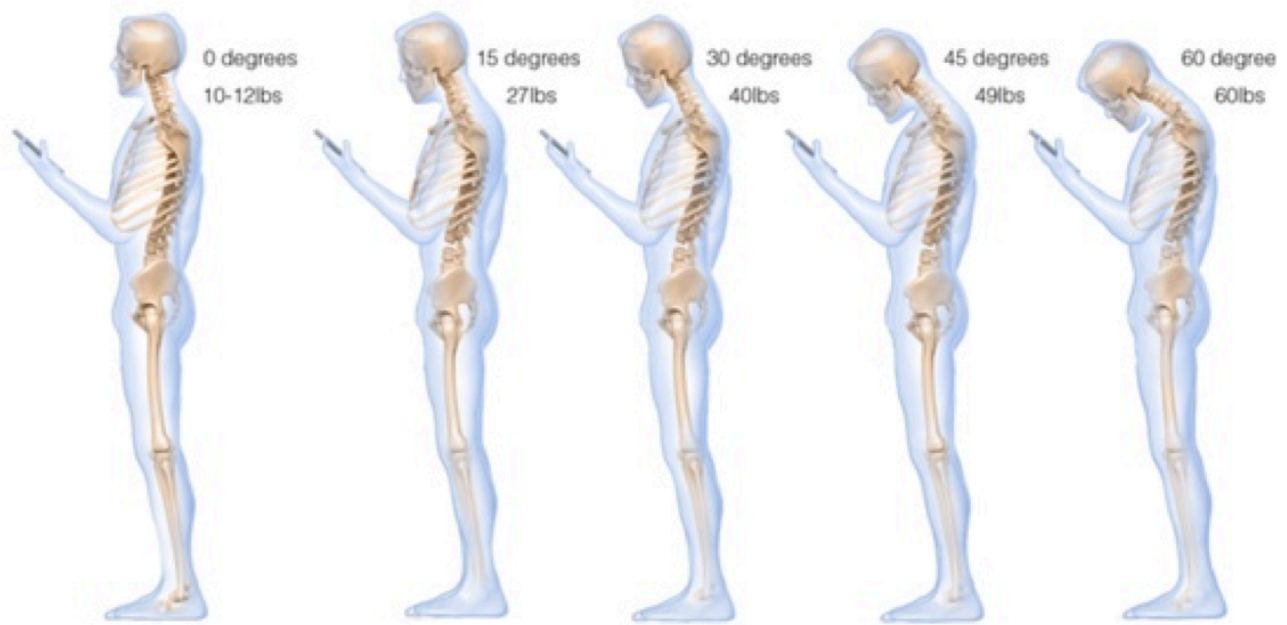
12 Ways the Alexander Technique can Benefit Musicians

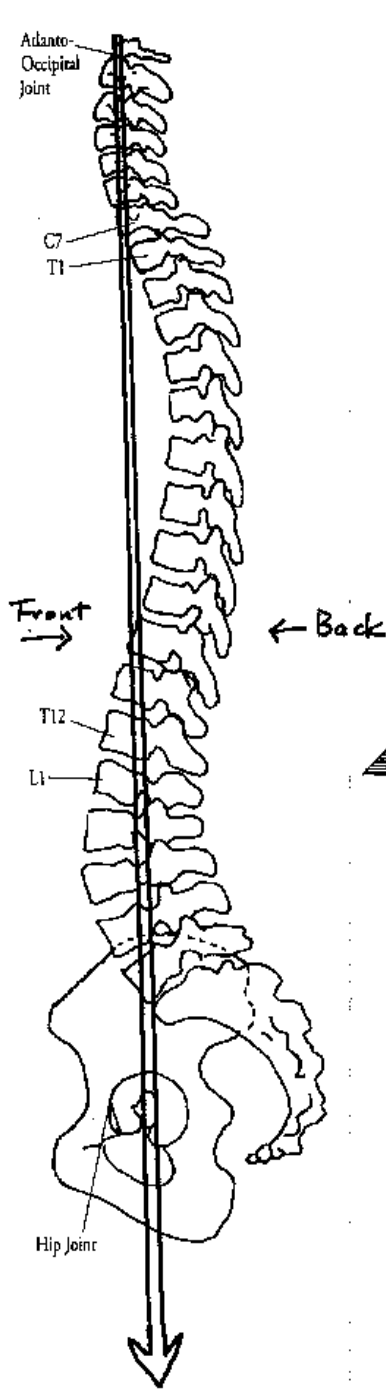
1. Prevents and relieves overuse and misuse injuries
2. Relieves stress and excess tension
3. Allows for more effortless and natural movement
4. Restores natural breathing in activity and enhances general health and functioning
5. Replaces poor posture with graceful poise
6. Increases consistency and success, boosting self-confidence and alleviating performance anxiety
7. Increases physical endurance through better alignment and balanced muscle tone
8. Enhances technical skill, improves sound quality for musicians
9. Inspires curiosity and joyful creativity, reducing mindless repetition and boredom
10. Increases alertness, leading to more focused and efficient learning
11. Develops a greater range and freedom of artistic expression through the enhanced ability to access and process emotions
12. Aids in the realization of potential

Alexander Technique book list

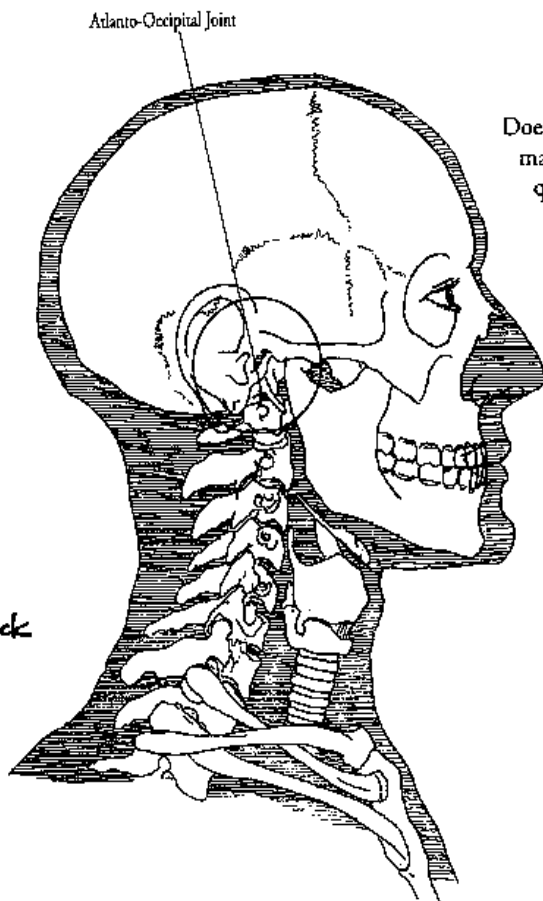
(there are many more – this is just a start!)

1. Alexander Technique for Musicians (Judith Kleinman and Peter Buckoke)
2. Body Learning (Michael Gelb)
3. Freedom to Change (Frank Pierce Jones)
4. How to Learn the Alexander Technique (Barbara and Bill Conable)
5. What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body (Barbara Conable)
6. The Alexander Technique (Sarah Barker)
7. Indirect Procedures (Pedro de Alcantara)
8. The Structure and Movement of Breathing (Barbara Conable)
9. How you Stand, How You Move, How You Live (Missy Vineyard)
10. Forward and Away (Elizabeth Walker)
11. Body, Breath and Being (Carolyn Nicholls)
12. The Brain that Changes Itself (Norman Doidge)
13. What Every Flutist Needs to Know About the Body (Lea Pearson)
14. Use of the Self (F.M. Alexander)
15. What Every Dancer Needs to Know About the Body (Robin Gilmore)





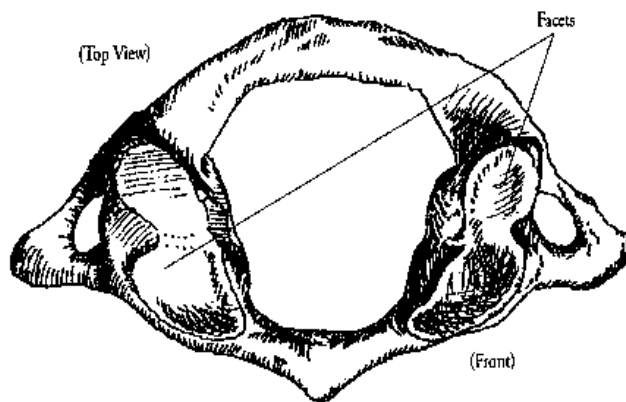
[Gorman, vol. 1, p. 45]



Does this match your body map? Notice that this joint is quite central rather than at the back of the neck. It is also a bit higher than you may have thought. The a/o joint is comprised of two condyles, like curved sled runners, on the bottom of the skull which glide within two facets, like footprints, on the atlas.

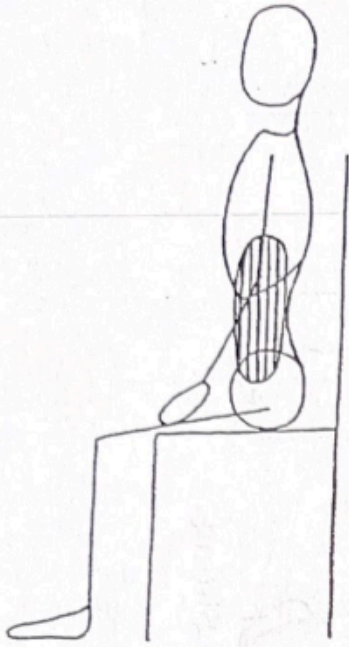
[Gorman, vol. 1, p. 152]

ATLAS FROM ABOVE

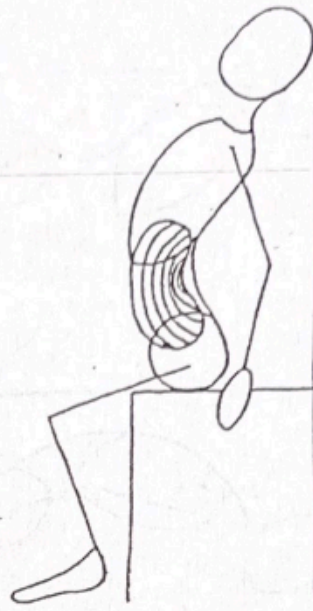


[Gorman, vol. 1, p. 48]

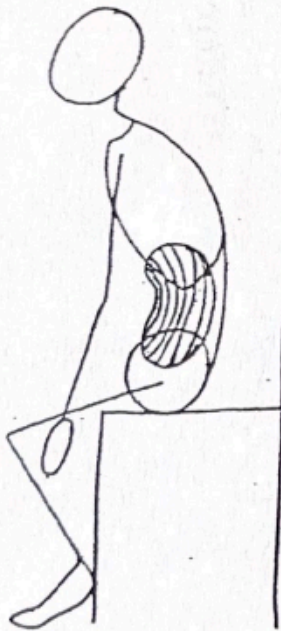
DO ANY OF THESE LOOK FAMILIAR??



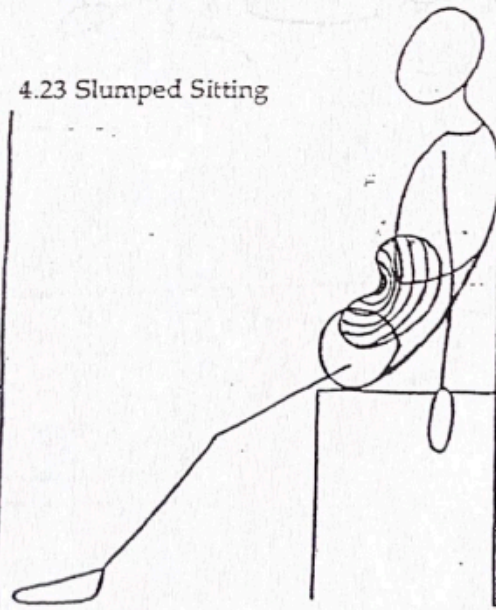
4.22 Poised Sitting



4.24 Fixed 'Sitting up straight'



4.23 Slumped Sitting



DRAWINGS FROM GLEN PARK'S A NEW APPROACH TO THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

The Alexander Technique

Mind-body work for managing pain, stress and performance anxiety

The principles of AT are used to correct/reverse habits of misuse that can result in uncontrollable nerves, stress, anxiety, injury and pain

Terminology and some brief definitions

Alexander Technique: a simple and practical method for improving ease and freedom of movement, balance, support, flexibility and coordination. It enhances performance and is therefore a valued tool for performers. Of anything! Practice of AT refines and heightens proprioceptive sensitivity, offering the person more control, which is fluid and lively rather than rigid. It provides a means whereby the use of any body part – a voice or an arm or a leg, is improved by improving the use of the whole body.

Primary Control/coordination: the inherent and intrinsic mechanism for balance and support in the body. It assures that uprightness will be effortless and that movement will be supported and fluid. Primary Control depends on the preservation or the recovery of the dynamic relationship between the head and the spine in movement or in stillness.

Inhibition: FM Alexander believed this to be the foundation of his work. In a few words, it refers to inhibiting a particular reaction to a given stimulus. It is the act of stopping or pausing, in order to allow a new direction to take place. It is, literally, the opportunity of pause that allows for choice, between a stimulus and the response to the stimulus.

Direction: Doing something different to replace the habit. Direction is the ability to use thought to do something new. It takes place after the pause.

Constructive Conscious Control: Alexander learned that it is possible to consciously inhibit the imposed pattern of tension he called “downward pull” and to consciously cooperate with and facilitate the primary control and thereby recover grace and poise in movement, and ease in sitting or standing. In this case we might decide to refer to the definition of “control” that is “guidance”.

Downward Pull: the pattern of tension in the whole body that originates with habituated tension in the neck. It is the result of our imposed pattern of tension throughout the body that compromises our primary control.

Body Mapping: the conscious correction and refining of one’s body map (one’s self-representation of one’s own body) to produce efficient, graceful and coordinated movement.

Two Laws of AT:

1. Habituated tensing of the muscles of the neck result in inevitable tensing in the whole body.
2. In movement, when it is free, the head leads and the body follows. More specifically, the head leads and the spine follows in sequence.

Kinesthesia: from two Greek words: kinema = motion + aesthesia = perception. Kinesthesia is our sixth sense. It tells us our size, our position and whether we are moving and, if so, in what way -- with what quality of movement.