

FREDERICK MATTHIAS ALEXANDER

F.M. Alexander (1869 – 1955) was a remarkable pioneer of the holistic approach to better health and the development of human potential. He grew up in the harsh environment of rural Tasmania but became, through sheer force of desire and ambition, a professional actor. His career was almost brought to a halt in his early twenties, however, when he developed chronic laryngitis caused by excessive tension. Instead of accepting the loss of his voice, he began to experiment with making the conscious means – the level and distribution of tension in the body – whereby he performed any given activity more important than the end result. He discovered that habitual patterns of thinking and moving were actually impeding his performance instead of improving it. He found a way to inhibit, or stop these habitual patterns from occurring. This act of inhibiting automatic reaction allowed the possibility for a new and therefore previously unknown state of expansiveness, allowing for easy breathing, resonance in his voice, and availability for expressive movement in his body. This “allowing for the new thing to happen” proved to be an essential and previously misunderstood part of any learning process. In this way he was able to relinquish the habits that were harming him, reach the goal he had originally intended, recovering his voice – and much more. He indirectly stumbled upon an amazing mind-body process that became his life’s work.

Recommended Books about the Alexander Technique:

Body Learning: An Introduction To The Alexander Technique by Michael Gelb

Freedom to Change: The Development and Science of the Alexander Technique
By Frank Pierce Jones

Books by F.M. Alexander:

Man’s Supreme Inheritance (1918)

Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual (1923)

The Use of the Self (1932)

The Universal Constant in Living (1941)

Books about F.M. Alexander:

The Life Of Frederick Matthias Alexander by Michael Bloch

Frederick Matthias Alexander: A Family History by J. A. Evans