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THE DART PROCESS and THE LAUNCHING PAD™

I have been totally inspired, both as a working dancer and as a teacher of the Alexander Technique, by the exploration of developmental movement. This is an overall term to describe the movement pathway that we must go through after birth to be able to stand and move about on two feet. The movements we do naturally in the first year of life are so beautiful, and are the underlying syntax or movement language underpinning almost all dance and movement forms like yoga and tai chi.

I teach a series of developmental movements called the Dart Procedures that are very effective in re-balancing tension in your musculature and resetting the balance between the forward and backward curves of your spine, which may be compressed or rigid from long held habits of use. The Dart work is a rich movement framework within which to explore the Alexander Principles. I have developed an aid for this series of movements called The Launching Pad, and often use it, if appropriate to your needs, to help you find more ease and freedom in your shoulders and upper back. The Launching Pad is sold for home use to help students healing from shoulder and neck injuries gain access to more mobility in injured areas without pain. It's also popular with other Alexander teachers and students who use the Dart Procedures in their teacher training or private practice.

I found this excellent description of the dynamic and natural re-balancing of the body elicited by the Dart Procedures. I'm not shy to use the word "bodywork" on my website, because in part, though not in whole, that is what the Alexander Technique is:

"In a bodywork session, all our muscles may not need the same treatment. If one muscle is chronically tense and contracted, it's antagonist will be chronically over-stretched. While the first muscle needs to be relaxed, the antagonist needs to be stimulated. 'Wake up! You can contract too!' In bodywork, this balance is seldom mentioned. Everyone talks about relaxing, lengthening, or sedating, but many bodyworks do not even have the capacity to stimulate, strengthen, contract, or tonify. In actuality, they are both needed equally but in different places in our body."

- From Behold Your Body: Anatomy and Physiology Anyone Can Enjoy by Charlene Penner, M.D.

For people who are naturally loose and flexible or even hyper mobile, this coordinated muscle tone can be absolutely essential for postural support. I was not fully able to understand how to support myself until I encountered this branch of the Alexander Technique.