



## Emotional healing - Ref236

*with Anthony Kingsley*

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### TRANSCRIPT

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## **Steven Bruce**

You know we're really fond of getting back our best speakers on the show. And we had such good feedback after I spoke to Antony Kingsley last time, although it was over four years ago now, when we did an on-location recording or broadcast from London, but we finally managed to get him back on the show. You might not have been there for that broadcast, but Anthony's been Alexander teacher for over 35 years. He's, in fact, the head of the Alexander Teacher Training Organisation in London. And he's also a psychotherapist and has been a psychotherapist for over 20 years. And what we're going to talk about today is the business of emotional healing, Anthony's developed his own variation of incorporating mind body therapy, and he's going to tell us what he does himself, and perhaps offer some insights on how we can either refer people on to people like himself, or use his techniques in our own clinics., I hope. Anthony, it's really, really good to have you back on the show. And I'm only sorry that we couldn't do this in the studio. Although as I said, it does mean that because it's a virtual broadcast I can do this one from the comfort of France rather than being in Higham Ferrers, but welcome anyway. Did I sum you up properly, 35 years as an Alexander Technique trainer, you must know your stuff by now?

## **Anthony Kingsley**

I'm still learning. Yeah. I mean, I look back and think where did 35 years go but and this isn't simple modesty, but I do feel I'm very much a beginner in the explorations of mind body.

## **Steven Bruce**

I suspect that if people don't feel that then they're probably not paying much attention to their therapy because everything moves on. There's always something else to learn.

## **Anthony Kingsley**

Yeah, absolutely. Right. Absolutely. Right. Yes. Yeah. It is such an exciting field. This is a growing field. Trauma research, psychosomatics, mind body therapies, embodied therapies. It's such a growth industry at the moment, and I'm very passionate to be part of this growing endeavour.

## **Steven Bruce**

Well, I think one of the reasons you were so popular last time, of course, is that a lot of osteopaths and chiropractors will be very much on side with Alexander technique. And certainly, all of them recognise the impact of the psychological stresses and strains on physical wellbeing on overall wellbeing. When we spoke about today's broadcast, you made it sound as though emotional healing is something which you've really started doing corporate recently, but you know, you've been a psychotherapist for 20 years, haven't you? So?

## **Anthony Kingsley**

Well, that's right. Well, I'd say that, I always saw psychology, therapy and Alexander as very aligned. Even when I qualified in 1986. This isn't something new for me. I studied psychology at university when I was 18. And then I, very soon after I did an Alexander training, and then I went into psychotherapy on my own, and did 10 years of psychoanalysis three times a week. And then very much working as an Alexander practitioner quite classically. And then I went on to do a psychotherapy training about 20 years ago. So this is very much part of my life, the areas of my body have always been intertwined. And I have

been working, as far as I understood, even from the beginning, as a mind body practitioner, and I always saw close alignment of mind and body. But I would say that in the last 10 years, I have deepened a particular approach to Alexander that is more psychophysical, it's more mind body than it was before, it has refined itself over the years. But I have always seen the powerful link between the emotional world and the realities on postural patterns and muscular problems.

### **Steven Bruce**

Do you see a particular variety of psychological problems?

### **Anthony Kingsley**

Interesting, I think most people would still come to me with the classic Alexander expectation. They'll come with their usual neck problems and back problems and RSIs, performance issues in terms of sports, music, dance, performances of all different kinds. And they want permanent solutions to some of these, what they think are postural issues. Occasionally, and it is perhaps a little bit more than occasional today than it was maybe 10, 20 years ago, but people are more frequently coming with issues you could genuinely call emotional like depression, anxiety, inability to relax, addicted to adrenal patterns of hyperactivity and mania, the inability to switch off and have fun. People are coming more with that sort of agenda. But still, the majority of people are coming with what they consider are postural and physical issues. And they think very much that Alexander will supply them with postural and muscular solutions. Now, they get a bit of a shock after a little while of being with me that when I introduce the concept that maybe there's a link between their stress, between maybe adverse childhood experiences, and their present-day realities.

### **Steven Bruce**

How do you wheedle that sort of thing out of people, because I imagine, well, I imagine a lot of people, as you say, they come to you thinking, well, this is a postural issue. It's a musculo skeletal issue. When you start to introduce the idea of psychological components, I think many of them might be quite resistant to exposing themselves that way.

### **Anthony Kingsley**

You're spot on. And I do try to choose my words carefully and timely. I certainly don't jump into the deep end with everybody. But some people I get a sense, they're quite ripe for the understanding that mind and body are more linked than even those words do imply. But what happens is they'll come for their first session, I'll ask them, what's going on with them? I'll ask them what's going on in their life at the moment? And I will ask them, as well as simple questions like, are there any injuries? Are you on any medications I need to know about? Have you got any history of trauma to your body? I will also ask them some very gentle questions. What's going on in your life? What's happening with you? Are you going through any major upsets, distresses, griefs, losses? Have you had any major upsets in the last number of years? And then, if I'm brave enough, and I feel they might be ripe enough for the question, I might even ask them if they've had any particular traumatic troubles, struggles, adverse childhood experiences going back. And they may not totally understand why I'm asking the question, but I'll say to them, there is a mind and body link, often your physical issues may have emotional antecedents, an emotional story. And if they want to share with me anything they want, they're very welcome.

**Steven Bruce**

I suspect well, obviously, you're better qualified than many osteopaths and chiropractors because you have that psychotherapy background. Do you think, although we would try to elicit any psychological components in somebody's wellbeing, do you think there's any danger in the unqualified in inverted commas, osteopath or chiropractor trying to deal with those emotional issues? Or should we simply be looking to say, well, maybe you need to get someone else to talk to you about this?

**Anthony Kingsley**

It's a great question. I often ask myself, how would I be dealing with the classic Alexander pupil that comes through my door if I wasn't a psychotherapist, and maybe consciously and unconsciously, I give myself a certain license to ask perhaps more personal questions. However, Alexander always started out as a psychophysical enterprise, Alexander himself over 100 years ago called his work psychophysical. He understood that the mind and body were very, very closely linked and actually were part of the same organism of self. And he turned the individual a psychophysical self. Today, we may use the words mind body in exactly the same way. But being the man he was at the time he was in 1890, 1900s, 1910, 1920, there wasn't really the same language of psychophysical unity, there wasn't the same language of emotional issues, it was still quite Victorian. And although Alexander did recognise the link, I don't think he fleshed it out at all. And he's left it for future generations to really flesh out the psychosomatic truth in the Alexander Technique. So I think in a way, I'm a bit of a pioneer, that I do ask psychophysical questions. And I would like to think that even if I wasn't a psychotherapist, I'd still want to honour the fundamental psychophysical unity of the person that walks through the door.

**Steven Bruce**

So can you give us, I'm putting you on the spot here, because we haven't talked about this before. But can you give me an idea of how that consultation might go? If I'm your patient, what questions are you going to ask me along those lines? How do you phrase them?

**Anthony Kingsley**

Okay, so you walk through the door, hello. What are you looking for? They'll say, well, I've got a lower back problem. It's been troubling me.

**Steven Bruce**

I've actually got a neck problem which is partly due to having to stare around at this screen for great long periods of time.

**Anthony Kingsley**

I suppose then move the chair rather than leave your head like that.

**Steven Bruce**

And then I get criticism from Claire and from Justin because it buggers up the picture for the viewers when I'm turning to look at the camera.

### **Anthony Kingsley**

The things we have to suffer for our art forms. I have the same issues with certain dancers and ballerinas and people that have to do all sorts of things for their art. And it comes with the territory. But so be it. So a person comes with a neck problem or a back problem, and I really will ask them, what's going on at the moment, are you under any particular upsets or stress. I don't usually go very much further than that. In other words, my consultation, my verbal consultation, before I actually start the practical work is probably five minutes maximum, I don't sit and have a 20-minute consultation with anybody. I go very much into the practical. And you've put me on the spot. And I think that's very good that you have because what happens after a while is that as I start to work, things come up, rather than having to elicit very personal information before they've actually got a sense of trust. In fact, I wouldn't want anything to come up of an overly personal nature before they get a sense that they can trust me, because actually, emotional healing has to happen in an environment of safety, of trust with a therapeutic alliance. That's the only way that people can start to give up on their postural distortions that may be due to emotional distress. And so that has to be number one, number two, number three, they have to feel safe enough with Anthony, that some of the patterns that they've been carrying around with for years that may be making their necks rather tight, not just because they have to look round on a nice camera shot, but in general, their habits, their existential habits of holding their necks very, very rigid, or holding their shoulders very rigid. So this is a way of being in the world that they feel safe with, that we all develop certain ways of feeling safe, feeling at home in our own bodies. And whether it's major trauma or minor trauma, or simply adverse childhood experiences, or sibling rivalries or a parent that wasn't particularly emotionally available, or a death of a parent early in life, or poverty, or abuse, or all sorts of things, it doesn't matter, whatever the situation was earlier in life, we do react to these patterns, these events, if they're overwhelming, potentially with a need for feeling safe, with a way of having to adapt to these rather upsetting, distressing events, with our whole being. And so often, the need to hold ourselves in a particular way is simply an adaptation and a compensation for earlier experiences that were overwhelming at the time. And we had to find a way of coping rather than being overwhelmed. A lot of the postural patterns I see are literally adaptations for overwhelming experiences in childhood.

### **Steven Bruce**

And how do you address that through Alexander technique?

### **Anthony Kingsley**

In one word, through prevention, or through non gratification, so I'll give you an example. If I've had, say, problematic parents, violent parents, and every time I stood up to my mother or my father, I was greeted with abuse, ridicule or violence, I may actually avoid having to stand up to them because I'd be on the receiving end of the rather unpleasant reaction. So I have to then compress my assertiveness. I have to sort of hunker down, shrink down and be rather small, so I don't evoke antagonism, or aggression. Because I know or I sense that my father, my mother, are volatile and naturally, if I stand up for myself, literally, posturally, physically, emotionally, I'm going to be on the receiving end of, as I said, an unpleasant reaction. So I develop a posture of meek, mild, small, unthreatening. Now, these events, although they start off in childhood become the way I see the world. We project onto the world, exactly the same experience that we suffered when we were little, and we start to see authority is potentially dangerous or aggressive, or threatening. So this is our way of being. Now they come into an Alexander lesson, they may complain of a neck problem or a lower back problem. And that's just the way they are,

they've never had an opportunity of exploring. This has just become a habit. Alexander called them postural habits or habits of misuse. When I start to work with them, things can start to change. Now, it's a very interesting question why things start to change. The work of Stephen Porges, I don't know if you've come across him for the polyvagal theory.

### **Steven Bruce**

I haven't.

### **Anthony Kingsley**

He's a researcher into neurobiology. And essentially, he's come up with this rather intriguing and fascinating idea that when you're traumatised, you get into a set, where you're always looking out for the next danger, you become hypervigilant, it becomes your set of your habits of way of being. And the only way you can come out of this is if you reexperience or experience probably not for the first time, but maybe for the first time, the sense of safety. Without that sense of safety, there can be no unsticking up the mechanism. So hopefully, after a while of getting to know me, then they know they're not going to be ridiculed, and I'm not going to be demanding, I'm not going to be upsetting for them, they feel reasonably safe with me. Things can start to unravel, that I put my hands on now, who's the Anthony putting hands on? Well, I spent three years training and the last 35 years of refining my mind body systems, my brain coherence to a certain quality of stillness, a certain quality of stillness. I can't emphasise it strongly enough. But that's, you could say 90% of my skill base, I have to tune my nervous system, to a very high level of coherence of stillness of non-reaction that Alexander called inhibition. The states where everything quiets down from my maybe normal business and mania, hyperactivity, and dropping down from my cortex into my body, through my mid brain, into a quality of stillness, and a wakefulness. And this quality of mine that I hope I carry through into private work is communicated through a quality of touch, there is a quality of touch that will come through the hands, that will influence their nervous system, we can call this co-regulation that two individuals are intermeshing, intermingling their energetic patterns of being. I mean, it's not unusual. But if you walk into a room where people are rowding, and you feel you pick up this intense upset and distress in the atmosphere, you know when people have a happy vibe or a sad vibe, a calm or an agitated vibe, you know it, we all know it. But this is something that you have to deliver and produce in the moment. And I hope I can produce enough of this to regulate a person from their hyper vigilance and hyperactivity to a quality of it's okay, I'm alright with that, at least in this room. I can soften some of this mania, and adrenaline and cortisol and move into a safer place where things can start to open. Now, this is the interesting thing. You asked a question about the emotional story. When a person quiets down, what starts to happen is they become more aware of their internal world. Why do we become workaholics? Why do we become any holic? Why are we addicted to our iPhones and iPads and busyness? And everybody says, you know, I'm busy. I've got no time. Why are we so addicted to this time poor world where our brains are manic? We never quieten down. And the reason is often because to quieten down, to allow ourselves to be still and available means to be in touch with our emotional world. And most people don't want to be in touch with their emotional world, but they come into an Alexander class with me. And I don't tell them what's going to happen, but I work with them and things quieten down, and maybe after five minutes, 10 minutes, I'll ask them how they are and they say they're fine. I feel really relaxed. That's number one. The mind is more quiet than it's been for years. I don't usually get this unless I'm on the beach on holiday for weeks, and I'm getting it now, it's a rather strange feeling. I don't know quite what's going on. This is very unusual. That's the first. Now I know what's going

to happen. Usually, two or three minutes after the quiet, after the quiet feelings start to come up and I start to see tears coming out of their eyes, welling up of tears or a memory will come up because in the absence of the pattern of hyper and mania and busyness there's room for things to regulate. And when things regulate, there's an opening to our emotional world, which normally we're so busy chasing tails that we don't give any time to. And this goes hand in hand with postural changes that we can see probably later on today. This is the juice of a good Alexander session where you don't, despite popular misconception about the Alexander Technique, of course, some Alexander teachers may think that, Alexander doesn't open people up. Alexander doesn't open people's shoulders and necks. It doesn't reposition and re posture, it doesn't lengthen spines. What it does is leave the organism to regulate itself. So that any change happens organically from within rather than from any conception I have of what is necessary. Now when I was first an Alexander teacher, I had all these ideas that have to open people and release people and open the muscles here and posture them up here and give them some length and some width. And over the last 35 years, it's been clearer and clearer to me that any change that has any value comes from them, not from me, I just have to supply the conditions and the conditions are 90% safety, containment, support and my own nervous system that then starts to influence them nonverbally.

### **Steven Bruce**

Interesting stuff. And I think that will chime with a lot of chiropractors and osteopaths who are watching. Anita has sent in a comment saying that A.T. Still, the founder of osteopathy, apparently always said that your muscles are the graveyard of emotions. And I guess that's one way of looking at it. But you can turn it around as well, can't you, and say well, the emotions are also then possibly the key to fixing the musculo skeletal problems.

### **Anthony Kingsley**

But I think that's a really good way of putting it. I probably wouldn't use the word graveyard, I'd probably be happier to see that actually, when someone comes in with a neck ache or backache, their gifts. They may be irritations but their gifts to go a little bit deeper and see what's wrong in the soul.

### **Steven Bruce**

I suspect Andrew Taylor still hadn't been schooled in neuro linguistic programming or anything like that. And so chose his words less carefully than you.

### **Anthony Kingsley**

Definitely, it's dramatic, it makes an impact. And I like the impact of that sort of strong statement. Yeah.

### **Steven Bruce**

I've got a couple of other things that come in as well. Jason says he's found that many people carry their emotional feelings in their bodies. And he wonders a lot of the posture adopted by many of the gym goers with the head and shoulders forward, which doesn't seem to have any advantage in lifting weights. And presumably, it's just for the image. And I remember as a Royal Marine, it was a standing joke that any physical training instructor had tennis balls surgically inserted under their armpits to make themselves look that little bit broader at the top. And you know, and I wonder if there a detrimental component to that, that seeking an image by altering your posture that way.

### **Anthony Kingsley**

But people go to the gym for all sorts of reasons. And I'm a great fan of good or what I'd call intelligent exercise, no problem at all. Alexander coined the term end gaining in other words, he wasn't really bothered about whether you exercise or not. He was very keen on exercise; he was a keen rider of horses. But the question that we ask ourselves in the Alexander world is, how you exercise, what is the mind body state you're employing to exercise? So I show people, I say, look, if you're going to do weights, I'm not against weights on principle. But if you do weights like this, you can see what I'm doing here. I'm exaggerating, of course. But if you're doing weights in a way that is simply reinforcing this huge shortening of the neck muscles, huge compression of the spinal column. And you're just bulking up and ending up like this at the end of a good strong session with a frown and an effort, that's going to develop a certain body that will be anything other than free, mobile, motile, healthy, elastic and resilient. And so is there a way of exercising, where the mind and body are in a good condition. And I would say if you understand the core of meditation or the core of yoga, which is a mind body system of extreme stillness at the same time as employing an activity, if you can understand that you can get yourself into the right state of mind and body and exercise or run or jog, gently or even fast walk or slow walk and you're doing it in a way that is simultaneous with a mind body state is ease, poise and freedom, you're not going to hurt yourself. But if you're in a state of effort in running and your chin is poking forwards and you're trying to reach the destination, and your mind is frazzled, with effort and ambition to build up more muscles and get your 10,000 paces in, then I think you're going to get a different result. In other words, the result you get isn't due to the exercise, it's due to the mind body attitude that is present in you while you're engaging in the activity. So I ask people to be interested in the how rather than the what. And then I'd say do any exercise you like. However, I'm also very passionate about the technique. And so I'll say if you want to exercise intelligently, it might need a number of lessons before you learn how to exercise in a way that doesn't reinforce strain and reinforce habits of distortion.

### **Steven Bruce**

I actually wonder, you mentioned the 10,000 paces. I actually wonder sometimes whether those well-established guidelines actually cause as much stress as perhaps people might resolve by adhering to them. There's no evidence behind the 10,000 steps other than a commonsense approach, which may or may not be accurate. There's no evidence behind the six-monthly visits to the dentist. There's no evidence behind the five pieces of fruit or vegetables or 11 or 37, whatever it is now that you're supposed to eat, but they're so tightly ingrained in our psychology now that maybe people stress if they don't achieve those aims.

### **Anthony Kingsley**

Yes, that would be a rather rigid attitude, Alexander was rather interested in rigid states of mind. And he thought that rigid states of mind created rigid necks, I suppose if you're doing anything in a rigid manner, if you're rigidly attached to 10,000, not 9 and a half thousand and 11 and a half thousand, but 10,000 and has to be precise, you've probably got a rather stiff neck system. And at that point, you'd probably benefit from some Alexander work to soften the rigidity of your mind. And then you might be very happy with eight and a half 1000 or seven and a half 1000 paces and be okay, rather than stressing yourself out that you've only hit 9900. Again, it's the manner of, what's your attitude, it's so important that you understand, the attitude is so much part of the story. It isn't the what.

**Steven Bruce**

I think I like Alexander's approach to exercise which is exercise the horse while you sit on it.

**Anthony Kingsley**

Actually good horse riding is actually quite strenuous.

**Steven Bruce**

I'm aware that I'm being slightly facetious and largely to annoy Claire, my wife who will come up shortly and tell me how hard work it is. Question from Mary. Mary says, how do you know that postural adaptations are solely due to overwhelming experience rather than children developing posture due to familial posture genetics, familial posture or genetics.

**Anthony Kingsley**

I think there's always a nature nurture thing going on. And there's not very much you can do about your genetics. What you can do is sought out some of your adaptations, and I think that's where our freedom lies. So it isn't all about trauma. Trauma is a very important element, but it's certainly not the whole story. There's also imitation, a very overlooked ingredient in people's postural patterns. But even imitation is an emotional story. So I'll give you an example. Often mothers will bring in their 7,8,9, 10-year-old sons or daughters and say, please fix them, look at their posture. And I look at the parents and I think, oh, my goodness, it's just the same, it's just the same distortion. So I say to the parents, the best thing you can do is come to me for lessons and they'll start to see that you're in a different condition. Now, here's the point, because I agree that that's not obviously emotional trauma. But it's still emotional. There's still stuff going on. Why are you copying mum's posture? What's the mum's posture all about? Where did that come from? It can be intergenerational trauma. It doesn't really matter. The imitation is I want to be like mummy, I identify with mummy, if I don't identify with mommy, mummy's not gonna love me anymore or whatever. There are still emotional stories in imitation. There may be accidents that you've had when you were little, you can say the accident is purely physical. Well, no accident is purely physical because you get upset when you have an accident. You don't want to use the same leg anymore that's been injured. So you compensate for the fear of hurting yourself on the other side, so you start to swing on one side. It's very hard to extricate emotions from physicality. And so not everything is trauma with a capital T. It may be trauma with a small t, it may be adverse childhood experiences, it may be more simple everyday stuff that we have to go through, the knocks and the bruises and the aches and the pains of fallings and accidents and all sorts of things. So I certainly wouldn't want to overplay the trauma with a capital T at all. And your viewer is quite right. There can be genetic influences as well that may predispose you to certain characteristics. Some people say, well, my grandmother had a kyphosis, or hunchback, and my mother did, and therefore I'm going to be the same way. There is more room for manoeuvre than people realise. I get a lot of people coming to me saying, I don't want to end up looking like my grandmother. That's not a bad, or a grandfather, that's not a bad thing, to be passionate about that there is. You're not condemned, there are certain congenital conditions that, I'm sure you know, are passed through the generations. And, again, one of my favourite teachers, a guy called Patrick McDonald, had ankylosing spondylitis. And he became one of the best Alexander teachers. And towards the end of his life, his spine went like this. But from an Alexander perspective, we didn't say he's got a spine like this, he's a mess. He was agile, he was alive, he was vital. So he was still very, very much opening from his condition, rather than going into the condition. So even though it was a congenital condition, he still was making the

most of his shape, rather than the least of his shape. So I think there's always room for improvement. There's always room, there's always something we can do. And, yeah.

### **Steven Bruce**

I rather like the 10,000 steps, I imagine that there is stress involved, psychological stress in somebody who is desperately worried that they will end up like their grandmother or their grandfather, because if that's what's dominating their life, the thought that's going to happen to them. I'm still struggling to know how you get them out of that, obviously, you can encourage them and say that it might not be that bad, you might be able to do something different. But making sure that that sticks, and it translates to physical health is a different matter, surely.

### **Anthony Kingsley**

Absolutely. So I wouldn't, I don't give anyone any platitudes, I actually give them the experience of an Alexander lesson. And then they will say, I'm starting to feel a bit lighter, a bit more open. I'm starting to feel lifted off my hips, my neck's starting to feel longer, I'm growing an inch, an inch and a half. Some people say to me, they're having to find different shoes, because their feet have expanded, and they're no longer fitting into their regular shoes. So people have to have an experience, I don't tell people what they're going to experience. But when they have an experience of increased lightness and openness, and they go through that vulnerable place of transition, where they feel maybe a little bit anxious at being open. So the person that has been very coward in life starts to feel safe enough, at least in the Alexander room to open up a little bit. They have to go through the fear of confrontation, the terror of confrontation, that it may create an antagonistic situation, they have to go through that vulnerable sense of, this isn't safe, but to be safe enough that it's not safe. And only through that experience that they have to grow through again, the fear that once upon a time the fear pushed them into this compression of safety. They have to feel safe enough to go through the door the other way, and feel safe enough to be unsafe, if you understand.

### **Steven Bruce**

Yeah. Crystianna sent in a couple of observations going back to what you were saying about necks, she says that's why we talk about a stiff-necked attitude and I suppose it's, you know, it is the way that physical, emotional characteristics will find their way into our vocabulary as a part of that. We get this every time we had this last time you were on, I remember this distinctly, lots of people saying where they could find classes near to them as we do whenever we get external practitioners, different practitioners. What would you say people should look for in identifying a good Alexander trainer?

### **Anthony Kingsley**

Okay, well there's all sorts of good Alexander teachers all over the world and we're all different. My school in North London, the Alexander Teacher Training School is what I call a psychophysical training where we do honor the mind body. I call it a trauma informed Alexander training and now I don't know any other Alexander training that does that particular sort of work but that doesn't mean that there aren't some excellent Alexander teachers around. There are and you can get huge benefits, including emotional benefits by going to a teacher that may not be overly interested in psychophysical unity and mind body unity. It depends what's in your area. There's an organisation called STAT, which I'm a part of, Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique, where you can find a list of teachers, hopefully, near you in your

area. But if you're interested in someone that can move you in a more consciously understanding, psychophysical issues of mind body issues, of trauma related issues, of adverse childhood experiences issues, then certainly the teachers that I've been training over the last number of years will be much more available for that sort of discourse. But as I said, don't feel that you have to find a teacher that has my training in order to find a good Alexander teacher, that's just not the case.

**Steven Bruce**

Well, that's good to hear. Mary has sent a follow up saying thank you very much for a helpful and thought-provoking response to her question a few minutes ago. So many parallels with the osteopathic approach, we definitely need to move away from being critical of asymmetrical postures as a diagnosis. It's how they function and compensate, which is key. And I'd like to think that most of us are along that line in our treatment, our therapy these days. Josh says, every Christmas, he has someone come in with acute torticollis. He knows it's the Christmas relative interaction that's causing it, every time, have you seen anything like that? That family gatherings or regular occasions like that give rise to certain patterns of activity?

**Anthony Kingsley**

Ram Dass, a great spiritual teacher was talking about enlightenment. And he said to the question I said, he said, if you want to really check out if you're enlightened or not go and spend a weekend with your family.

**Steven Bruce**

Yes, yeah.

**Anthony Kingsley**

These are triggers. That's the common term today, Alexander called them stimuli. And yes, parents are usually very, very powerful triggers. And they're enough to throw all of us into stiff necks and torticolises or shapes. Is it's about you know, parents can make us cringe. They can make us irritated and make us boiled with rage. They can make us all sorts of things. And if you can handle your parents you doing very, very well. It surprised me that these enforced happy gatherings in inverted commas over Christmas and Easter can provoke all sorts of reinforcements of postural distortions that you need some help after an event like that.

**Steven Bruce**

It's no wonder so much alcohol is consumed, isn't it? Before we came on air, we talked about your four quadrants. I had a look through your slides. And I wonder if perhaps you could just run us through what's meant by those? We've got a few minutes left, five minutes left.

**Anthony Kingsley**

Yeah, great. So if you want to put it up on screen, and we'll go through them. So basically, I categorise Alexander habits into four different categories. So and if you see a circle, I don't know if it's on screen, I can't see it right now.

**Steven Bruce**

So we'll just have to assume that Justin's doing that, because I can't see that screen either.

**Anthony Kingsley**

Okay, so that's the quadrant. So there's four ways of looking at particular patterns of behaviour, certain habits of mind and body. So if we keep scrolling through, go on to the next one, you'll see endgaining, so there's a certain sorts of person, they'll come into your room, and there'll be straining ahead, endgaining, rushing ahead, interested in your business, head pulling backwards and down and contracting the spine and their eyes are open and they're hyper vigilant. That's one kind, keep on moving. Concentration, a person will come in and they're sort of very fixed and focused, and everything's narrowing and compressed. That pattern, coding everything together. Right? Concentration. Okay, next one. Collapsed relaxed. Everything's floppy, and relaxed and collapsed, there's almost no vitality in the system, unlike the upper two this collapsed is a devitalised state of inertia. Next one, mind wandering. Away with the fairies, sort of also quite floppy. Not very energised, but sort of yeah, wandering, not able to pay attention. You talk to them. And it's like they're all over the place.

**Steven Bruce**

Which one of these are you?

**Anthony Kingsley**

I'm all four.

**Steven Bruce**

I was going to ask if you could be more than one.

**Anthony Kingsley**

You can actually oscillate between all four but these are sort of typical types. Now, here's the thing. You can fit people somewhere into this cake, maybe a mixture of concentration and collapse. Like, if you're a concentrator, you're taught to relax, you just relax, collapse and little Johnny at school when he's sort of collapsed and relaxed or mind wandering, he's told to concentrate and we swing between all of these areas of the circle. And here's the key, the Alexander Teacher, what I need to do with my self-regulation is bringing myself, keep going through the thing, next one, that's outer and inner, next one, the outer world and the inner world. Next one, the thing I need to do is bring all of these back to the centre of the circle to zero. And at the point of the centre of the circle, I call my work my particular psychophysical way of teaching Alexander mind zero, when the mind body states come to a sort of quality of neutrality, of emptiness of stillness. That's where the work is taking place. That's where the alchemy of the Alexander world is taking place. The mind wanderer comes back home, the endgainer comes back home, the concentrator comes back home, the collapsed comes back home, and the body regulates from wherever it is back. Wherever it is, come home. And coming home is the highest level of postural integration, the highest level of stillness, the highest level of aliveness and vitality and the least effort, the least distortion, the least dramas written on the body. And therefore, the work of an Alexander teacher is wherever a person is, within this cake, to bring them back home. A good Alexander brings people home, rather than just shapes them into cemeteries and perfections. That allows them to be themselves. Good Alexander technique allows the person to be who they are, rather than some image of who they think they ought to

be, or who they've adapted to become, because of difficult situations. So we allow a person to regulate back to their essence to who they are, who they're destined to be, biologically, organically, socially, they're destined to be who they are essentially, deep within their souls, deep within their bodies. And when they are safe enough to come back home, then the postural mechanisms can open up, the mind can settle. And true poise and relaxation can become a norm rather than a rarity.

### **Steven Bruce**

That all sounds great. Actually, just going back to when you described your four quadrants, Liz sent in a comment saying, oh, my God, you just described my mother. And I don't know whether she was referring to any one in particular of those quadrants or whether it was all four randomly oscillating, as you said, but I think we can all see ourselves or people we know in those quadrants, can't we.

### **Anthony Kingsley**

I just want to say very quickly, that's true, but not to think that we stay in the centre, that life is we leave home, but hopefully we can recover and come back. This is resilience, that we will have a road rage attack, we'll come back home, Alexander's about the ability to not react so extremely away from home. Alexander call it inhibition, the ability, the capacity to come back to our stillness, to come back home, and maybe to lose home a little bit less. And to recover our homeness a little bit quicker. It isn't about staying in some perfect zenned out centre. That's impossible. It's certainly not my life with my children who throw me out of home, minute by minute, but hopefully it's a capacity that can develop and good Alexander work develops the capacity for stillness and non-reaction in the face of life's triggers and life's challenges. And this is mental, as well as physical work. It's the ability to come back to stillness, and okayness in the face of challenges.

### **Steven Bruce**

I know that word stillness will resonate quite a lot with osteopaths. I don't know too much about the chiropractors. But we've got one minute left. In that time, having now learned there's a lot behind this which perhaps we just can't make up on the spot as as an osteopath or as a chiropractor, what's your guidance to our audience today about how they incorporate the things that you've described? Should they just seek out Anthony Kingsley?

### **Anthony Kingsley**

Well, unless you're in North London, it won't be very easy for everybody. But I would say everyone should take some time out. Make time in the day for coming back to your own home. Lie down on the floor with your knees up in the air. Knees up and feet on the ground with your head on some books to support yourself in this constructive resting position. You can find ways of doing this online. Have a cup of tea more regularly. Matcha latte or whatever floats your boat. Make time for stillness, whether it's elevenses and fours in the afternoon. Take time to come back to yourself and reflect. Come back home and say hello to who you are. Give yourself a bit of time and a bit of space away from the maddening crowd, to say hello, to see your soul that deepens.

### **Steven Bruce**

Thank you for all of that. And I didn't want to cut you off there. But we've come to the end of our scheduled time. And I know people have got patients probably waiting at two o'clock. Anna has said that that was

beautifully explained, beautifully put by you. And then she asked how much explanation you give during a class because you said early, you don't say much. But actually, I think what you said was you don't start with a lot of conversation. You allow it to come out during the training. So I hope I summed that up okay. We've had just under 300 viewers, so there are lots of people interested in what you had to say, there will be more who watch the recording of course when that goes out. But that's been wonderful. It's been great talking to you. And I hope we can do this again sometime, preferably in the studio as we did last time. Thank you.

**Anthony Kingsley**

Thanks very much for inviting me on again.