

## BRINGING SEMI-SUPINE TO LIFE

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### TEACHING *ACTIVE REST*.

Exploring the way **directions** keep us coordinated in whatever spatial movement we make.

Inspiring *awareness, inhibition and direction* in *Active Rest* when teaching groups or with your private students.

Referring to the *Active Rest* Handout:

Clarifying: We know the written word does not easily convey the experience. So, in the interest of honoring the depth of our work I'd like to give a little background information.

In university settings I am working with large groups (20+) in music departments.

I introduce the Alexander Technique as a study in how they (the students) *use* themselves. I explain the concept of the *Self as the Whole Person, the Psychophysical Self* and the concept of *Use* as the manner in which they go about living their lives.

I introduce "*Active Rest*" in the first class - I do not give them the handout until after the second week.

I take my time with the "*Awareness of Your Self*" section. Talking aloud about noticing nine points of contact with the floor: shoulders, left & right; pelvis, left side & right; feet, left & right; elbows, left & right; head. I explain that they are simply tuning into their sense of touch. Collecting data about how they are in contact with the floor and this may give them insights into how they *use themselves* in the upright. I explain concept of *use affects functioning*. I distinguish our sense of touch from our kinesthetic sense. We are *re-educating our kinesthetic sense*.

I give them time to consider their *thinking* (in this moment, in this week, in this month, this semester, this year, this lifetime - making those latter suggestions as they proceed through the semester.) Is it conducive to their best *use* or does it interfere with their best *use*? Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual.

When asking them to consider their emotion(s) in the moment, I clarify that we are not "doing" anything, we are simply noticing and continuing on. We are not suppressing, we are noticing, observing. I encourage them to use this opportunity to enhance their emotional vocabulary beyond happy/sad. As artists (actors & opera singers) it is useful to build an emotional vocabulary.

I often skip saying anything about *Inhibition* until later in the semester. But, it becomes clear to them that in the process of becoming aware they are already inhibiting unwanted tensions, thoughts, emotions. In time I speak of *Inhibition* as not only the space between stimulus and response, the space in which we have an opportunity to make a choice, but also as the ability to send messages from the brain to stop muscular excitation.

Demonstrating *Direction & Kinesthetic Awareness*, I will often begin by asking them to simply think to their right thumb, then right pointing finger, middle finger, ring finger, pinky. Now notice how the right hand feels different from the left having directed your thought to the right fingers. That is giving directions and heightening ones kinesthetic sense. Then, I'll ask them to think to their left hand in same way. Then, into their feet, etc. Then I explain that Alexander gave directions by thinking of "allowing the neck to be free (of any unnecessary tension), to allow the head, etc." and liken pointing up along one's spine to pointing with one's finger. Again, in time, I help them to *distinguish between thinking the thought and feeling the response to the thought*.

*Directing as thinking spatially*: up/down, forward/back, side to side. Three dimensional.

Delighted to say I have had great success in teaching classes of 28 students to do *Active Rest* for the first 5-10 minutes of a 50 minute class that met twice a week for a 14 week semester. They learned to appreciate the benefits of *Active Rest* and would to be lying down when I arrived at the start of class time.

Within a short time in the semester they understand that they can be sitting in a chair and "doing" *Active Rest*; standing in *Active Rest*, walking in *Active Rest*. Again, *Directing as thinking spatially*.

Always with the same process: What are you aware of in your *Whole Psychophysical Self*: physically, mentally, emotionally. Eyes are always encouraged to be open for this.