

## THE WHISPERED "AH"

The Whispered "AH" is one of the most basic and important procedures which Alexander encouraged his pupils to experience. It grew out of his very real need to find a way of using the vocal mechanism.

The mechanism consists of the Energizer-which is the breath, the Vocalizer-which is where the sound begins, and the Resonators-which are the spaces in the head and body where the sound is made louder and fuller. The coordination of these three make the voice work or not work. It only takes one of these to be not working and the voice becomes inefficient. If you pull the head back, shorten the neck muscles, pull down in front, gasp or suck in the breath, then you will be interfering in each of these areas.

The Whispered "AH" will enable you to use your voice properly. Frank Pierce Jones said, "As Alexander used it in his teaching, it is an extremely effective device for demonstrating the role of inhibition in voice production."

First of all, after checking your directions, think of something funny. It is important that you actually think of something. The thought will make you smile and that will liven and lift the soft palate and soften the face. As you go forward and up, the light in the eyes continues and the epiglottis follows in the forward and up direction, so masses of space is suddenly available, all through non-doing.

Now notice the tongue, and direct the tip of it to the top of the lower teeth. This stops that large organ from getting in the way and prepares the mouth cavity for the shape needed to form the open sound of the "AH". Then, working closely with gravity and appreciating the help it is giving you, allow the jaw to move forward and down. Watch it here that you do not tilt the head back. Now the whisper-to speak in a whisper is not what we habitually do, so Alexander asks us to practice the sound "AH" in this unusual way.

The vowel sound "AH" is the most open of all the vowels-all vowels let the column of air through without interference. "AH" lets it through in the least obstructed way. Compare the consonants which are a definite blocking of the air-p, b, t, ch.

So with your attention organized in this very specific way,

whisper "AH"....."AH".....

Now close the jaw and the air will come rushing back in through the nostrils. If the ribs have been consciously directed together, and the length and freedom maintained while saying the whispered "AH", there should be no problem with the reflex action of the in-breath. You do not have to take a breath-if you consciously direct the air out, the in breath will happen automatically.

It is not only important for the beginner, but it is a very true measure for the experienced teacher, Alexander student, and performer to persistently check both their inhibition and direction. In my experience, it is a perfect exercise that should be put into practice daily.

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