

Back Saver Groups in Kirkby Stephen and Sedbergh, April-June 2007

17 th April Sedbergh 6:30pm-8pm 18 th April Kirkby Stephen 1:30pm-3pm	Introduction to the Alexander Technique and Your Back The lower, middle and upper back. Some simple awareness exercises. <i>Activities: sitting, standing, walking, lying</i>
24 th April Sedbergh 6:30pm-8pm 25 th April Kirkby Stephen 1:30pm-3pm	Big Joints and Little Joints Using your knees, hips and head-neck joint. <i>Activities: Bending, "Monkey", "Lunge"</i>
1 st May Sedbergh 6:30pm-8pm 2 nd May Kirkby Stephen 1:30pm-3pm	Learn How to Stop—Learn How to Stop Pain Slow down to get more done! To prevent bad habits, first stop and think. <i>Activities: Answering the phone, opening a door, reaching for something</i>
8 th May Sedbergh 6:30pm-8pm 9 th May Kirkby Stephen 1:30pm-3pm	Your Strong Back "Monkey", "Lunge"—tools for everyday life. How to use big, strong muscles not small, delicate, easily-damaged ones. <i>Activities: Lifting, swimming, walking, running, crawling</i>
15 th May Sedbergh 6:30pm-8pm 16 th May Kirkby Stephen 1:30pm-3pm	Your Flexible Back Bending and twisting—how to do it without pain. <i>Activities: Getting into and out of bed, reversing a car, reaching behind you.</i>
22 nd May Sedbergh 6:30pm-8pm 23 rd May Kirkby Stephen 1:30pm-3pm	Knees, Ankles and Back Is it a knee problem, a hip problem or a back problem? Use your back well, and find stronger, lighter, pain-free knees. <i>Activities: Knees forward and away while walking, sitting. Lifting revisited.</i>
29 th May Sedbergh 6:30pm-8pm 30 th May Kirkby Stephen 1:30pm-3pm	Wrists, Elbows and Back Your back affects your arms and hands. Chop carrots or use a hammer without hurting your back—or your arms! <i>Activities: chopping carrots, using a hammer, turning page of a book</i>
5 th June Sedbergh 6:30pm-8pm 6 th June Kirkby Stephen 1:30pm-3pm	Using a Computer, Being Kind to Your Back The challenge of using a computer: stay long, wide and free while sitting "still". <i>Activities: How to use a mouse and keyboard without getting back pain, neck pain or feeling stressed.</i>
12 th June Sedbergh 6:30pm-8pm 13 th June Kirkby Stephen 1:30pm-3pm	Exercise and Back Pain Bring any subject you like! Football, swimming, fell-walking, riding...
19 th June Sedbergh 6:30pm-8pm 20 th June Kirkby Stephen 1:30pm-3pm	Revision Session Open session where we explore anything participants would like covering again.

Tuesdays Sedbergh School Chaplaincy; **Wednesdays** Kirkby Stephen Tourist Information Centre (upstairs)



What Is the Alexander Technique?

“...a technique for the control of human reaction”

—FM Alexander

Why Use the Alexander Technique?

To live well, to age well, to perform well, to be alert and engaged, and to recover from all kinds of back pain. With Alexander lessons you're less likely to suffer from a number of conditions including:

- bad back, knees, hips
- Repetitive Strain Injury
- Breathing difficulties
- Digestive conditions
- Stress and Depression

Is It Like Yoga?

You'll find the Alexander Technique much gentler than most Yoga classes, and usually one-to-one. You can use the Alexander Technique to improve the way you do Yoga.

Is It Like Osteopathy?

There is no manipulation or cracking of joints in Alexander Technique, just gentle hands-on contact. Go to an Osteopath to get an acute problem put right. Go to an Alexander teacher to avoid acute problems, to prevent them recurring due to your own faulty behaviour, and to help Osteopathic manipulations to “hold”.

What are AT Lessons Like?

An Alexander teacher usually works **one to one**. S/he works in a simple, practical way with **everyday acts like sitting, standing, reaching, reading and catching**. Lessons are of immediate relevance to you. The teacher will use **touch** and **words**, and is looking to help you **change your thinking**, to be **less controlled by habit**. In particular, they are helping you to use your **head, neck and back** well.

A great way to have lessons is to think of something you really enjoy, like playing Squash, building dry stone walls, reading, making your own clothes or playing jazz piano, and go to a teacher to explore that activity.

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Dear

Welcome to my Back Saver groups in Sedbergh and Kirkby Stephen. These groups introduce you to simple and powerful techniques that have helped many people recover from or manage back pain. In essence what I try to do is improve your awareness of yourself so that you stop hurting yourself doing everyday tasks.

Sessions typically start with thinking around your body for 20 minutes, particularly your back, go on to some kind of activity, and then finish with “active lying down” for 20 minutes. I will often come round and work one-to-one with people during the sessions.

You should find the sessions relaxing, interesting and fun, and some pain relief if you are in pain. Afterwards you may feel light and free, and you may also feel sleepy. This is quite normal.

Please let me know if you find particular movements difficult or painful (e.g. crawling on hands and knees, bending your knees, bending your back.) You can let me know either by phone or at the session itself.

Cost: £50 for 10 sessions, or £7 for individual sessions.

In a given week, the sessions in Kirkby Stephen and Sedbergh are identical. You can come some weeks and not others. All sessions are suitable for beginners. Feel free to introduce a friend at any time, but please let me check that the maximum 12 people has not been exceeded.

The full 10 sessions is designed to be a good introduction to using the Alexander Technique for back pain. I do recommend coming to all ten sessions if you can.

I look forward to meeting you!

With Best Wishes,

Nick Mellor MSTAT
www.back-pain-self-help.com

Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique
www.stat.org.uk (STAT)

Spinning or step aerobics, plenty of well-known names are aficionados, from John Cleese and Paul Newman to Fergie, Duchess of York.

Day is certainly a living exponent. Her body is flexible and she walks with a calm grace. Perhaps she has always been like this, but AT seems to give her superhuman energy levels too. When she turned 80, to make sure her mind stayed alert, she decided to take on a new activity every year. First it was scuba diving, in the local swimming pool with an instructor. "I got my certificate, but wasn't that keen on all those tubes and underwater breathing. So then I turned to t'ai chi and I love that, it's part of my morning routine. The next year, I decided to learn Esperanto and I've never stopped. It's a fantastic language and recently I came out with a distinction, passing the exam with 83%."

This summer, Day will be going to an Esperanto summer school. By the way, she also translates the works of the philosopher Martinus from the Danish.

But teaching AT remains her day job, at an age when most people would have been long pensioned off. Day was one of the pioneers of this specialised method of health "re-education", developed in the 1890s by an Australian actor, F M Alexander, and carried on by Walter Carrington in London in the 1960s. Day trained with Carrington, as one of his early students at the Holland Park Constructive Teaching Centre.

"I was already 41 when I discovered the Alexander Technique," she says. "I'd had various jobs, done all sorts of things, but not found what I wanted to do in life. At the time, marriage and children weren't for me. Without the Alexander Technique, I'm sure I would have developed problems with my muscles and joints."

So what does having a lesson feel like? There's only one way to find out. Day guides me in a new way to stand from sitting, and to sit from standing. My experience of standing up from a sitting position is nothing like I have ever experienced before. I am not pulled up. Nor do I clench my leg or buttock muscles, my neck or back. Almost as though by hypnosis, I find myself lifting out of the chair, with Day's hands guiding me forward. In another part of the lesson, on the table, she encourages me to lengthen out my legs one by one. Her hand cradles one heel of an outstretched leg and, wow, I can feel my leg involuntarily moving towards her. It's an amazing sensation.

But how am I going to change my bad ways? Like most people, I'm so used to pulling my back up straight, jaw stiffened, to meet deadlines or get things done. The trick is not to take home your list of exercises or things "not to do". Day explains: "One of the greatest things is to learn to 'stop'; we have to stop reacting to the stimulus 'to do'. When I was guiding you out of the chair, you had to stop your mind from pressing the 'I'm going to stand button'. Your head, given its freedom, will lead the way."

• Your local Alexander Technique teacher, Nick Mellor, can be found in Ravenstonedale (01539 887202), website www.back-pain-self-help.com. If you live further afield, find your local Alexander Technique teacher at www.stat.org.uk or by ringing 0845 230 7828.

Mind over matter

From scuba diving to learning Esperanto, Jeanne Day does more in her 80s than most people half her age. What is her secret? The Alexander Technique, she tells Carol Dix.

Thursday March 16, 2006

[The Guardian](#)



Jeanne Day, aged 80, Alexander Technique instructor. Photograph: Murdo Macleod/The Guardian

Jeanne Day greets the morning cheerfully. Up by 6.30am, she pulls on her tracksuit and heads out in to the bracing Fife air to walk a couple of miles over St Andrews' farmland. Then it's back home for some meditation, floor exercises and a breakfast of fruit. Between 9am and 6.15pm, she is available to teach but if she's not fully booked, she'll take in another long walk or do a spot of gardening, followed by a light supper and more gentle exercises on a cross-trainer. After 8pm, she's often on the phone with family and friends, or keeping up with her emails.

Nothing extraordinary about this - it's the sort of lifestyle many of us lead. But Day is 87 years old. How does she do it? "I've always been what I call 'a cheerful chappy'," she says. "I'm not a complainer. I don't say 'Why me?' but take things as they come and see what I can learn from it."

It's all very well being a happy-go-lucky person, but that doesn't account for the fact that Day looks and acts well over a decade younger than her years. Slim, sprightly, mentally alert: what the multi-million-pound anti-ageing industry wouldn't do to bottle some of this elixir. So what's her secret?

Though Day eats healthily - no meat and about 80% raw food - it is not just her diet that keeps her sprightly, but her devotion to the Alexander Technique (AT), which she has been practising and teaching for nearly 50 years.

A tricky thing to describe, AT is not like any other fitness or health craze; neither a therapy nor a fitness regime. It's described as a simple and practical method for self-improvement and self-help, taught in one-to-one lessons with a qualified teacher. Your goal is to become more aware of how you have been "misusing" your body. Popular with musicians and actors, it is good, too, for city workers who sit scrunched up over a desk with a phone jammed under their chin. Although it's never become a craze on a par with