

Natural Running Workshop with the Alexander Technique

When we were young children we all used to run naturally with a forefoot strike as opposed to a heel strike. We also used to run with freedom and ease using the minimum of effort and strain. Consequently our breathing was freer and we loved the joyful experience of running. For many this is no longer the case and running has become something we do, we try hard to run, we suffer from impact injuries and we spend lots of money on getting the right equipment and fixing ourselves in order to continue running. So what has happened?

Essentially we have been conditioned out of our natural running use or method as a result of being told to slow down, be careful you are going too fast, try harder, use more effort and don't run barefoot but wear cushioned shoes to protect your feet. As a result we no longer land on our forefoot but our heel because trainers cushion our heel impact and we over stride by trying to gain more ground with increased effort. More importantly we become unaware of how to use our innate natural mechanism, the human body, to walk and run as we become less aware of what our feet, legs and head are doing in the act of running. We have lost the essential instant kinaesthetic feedback from our feet. Virtually all elite distance runners, especially the Africans, run with a forefoot strike. They also make it look effortless and easy which is what running should be all about.

As an Alexander Technique teacher my aim is to teach people how to use their mind and body together to achieve a more natural, effortless and balanced co-ordination by increasing their all-round awareness and learning to change tension induced habits which cause the body to suffer unnecessary strain and pain. The Natural Running workshop incorporates the Alexander Technique to teach people how to release their innate natural running technique from within them with the use of video analysis and some key drills. The focus is on doing less and allowing the body to release its potential which lies in all of us by teaching the brain and body to work together more harmoniously. How we use our eyes also affects the tone of the muscles throughout the body and can help release the head and neck. Vision plays a key role in governing tension during running and walking. If the head, neck and spine are properly aligned then the rest of the body's natural reflexes should work more effectively.

The workshop is 2 ½ to 3 hours long and caters for all levels of runner. It is fun and non-strenuous as the emphasis is on learning and practice with easy light drills and exercises. Video analysis helps individuals to see what they are doing and demonstrates their progress. The workshop caters for a maximum of 12 people to allow enough individual work as possible.

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