

Walking with the Alexander Technique

The following is based largely on my own interpretations, investigation and practice on myself and clients.

Why can African women, Nepalese hill tribes, and many Asian women walk with large heavy loads on their heads for many miles and not drop the load or collapse under it? Is it because they are stronger physically? Have a magic technique or load carrying device? Or is it because they walk with much greater balance, poise and co-ordination compared to many westerners? Could one of the main reasons be the lack of complicated or raised footwear which allows much greater kinaesthetic feedback with the ground. Or is it the fact that they walk with less intention (rushing forward to gain the end) and therefore do not over stride and tighten/pull their bodies forward with each step, consequently unbalancing the head, neck and spine relationship? In considering these questions what is the incidence of hip and knee replacement in developing nations?

Established walking pattern versus Alexander Technique or natural walking gait:

Established:

Heel strikes ground first

Heel lands in front of hip

Heel absorbs most of the impact

Heel acts as a brake to body momentum

Body tenses to absorb shock wave created by heel strike

Attitude and alignment of head, neck and back compromised

Natural:

Heel lands marginally prior to rest of foot landing

Foot lands under the hip

Foot spreads and cushions impact

Momentum facilitated by quick transfer of weight from back to front of foot

Minimal shock created by impact of whole foot plant

Attitude and alignment of head, neck and back is allowed to lengthen remain balanced and poised

Hips brace and are permanently over engaged in the act of moving the leg forward and supporting the back

Hips **can release** the legs to allow the knee to bend freely and support the back and trunk

Walking with greater awareness:

1. Peripheral vision helps release the neck and soften the overall body tension
2. Walk with a lengthen and widening attitude allowing the head to release at the **Occipital region**
3. Send the ground away behind you and try not to think of striding forwards
4. Energy to go forward comes from the back....think of a motor boat
5. Allow the feet to release and spread with each step then **kiss** the ground away with the toes
6. Think of more frequent and smaller strides
7. Think of allowing the knees to release forwards and downwards and let the body follow
8. Experiment with barefoot walking at home

We all have the potential to walk with less tension, more fluidity, poise and balance so reducing the impact/strain on the hips, knee and back. We all used to walk like this when we were very young.

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