

Tomatis Method and the Alexander Technique

Tone, pitch, rhythm, harmony - these are among the many terms that can describe the condition of our bodies as well as the quality of sounds we make and hear. Our language is permeated with words and expressions that suggest a deep primal connection between sound and body. It was F. Matthias Alexander's desire to improve his voice which led to the far reaching discoveries we now know as the Alexander Technique. Some fifty years after Alexander's pioneering work, a French medical doctor, Alfred Tomatis, began investigating the cause of hearing difficulties in his patients. His studies have led to a number of revolutionary new discoveries about previously unknown functions of the ear and the therapeutic effects of sound. He also developed a practical method of enhancing listening skills. Both Alexander and Tomatis were initially interested in improving sound quality; one with its production, the other with its reception. Today, both the Alexander Technique and the Tomatis Method are recognized as having an extraordinarily wide range of beneficial effects - physical, mental and even spiritual - which extend well beyond the original motivation of their developers. Their inherent transformation power springs in large measure from their being based on close, practical observations of our relationship with sound, one of the most fundamental aspects of our existence. We live in a veritable "sea of sound", with our brain receiving far more stimuli, both external and internal, from our ears than from any other organ. "The ear builds, organizes and nourishes the nervous system" says Dr. Tomatis. He believes the human ear's primary function is to transform sound energy into an electrical cortical charge which the brain then distributes throughout the body, toning up the entire neuromuscular system. His method consists of a sensory stimulation program in which the individual listens to electronically modified and filtered sounds through headsets. The content is either music (Mozart and Gregorian chants primarily), the mother's voice, or the individual's own voice. The sound is modified by a device called the Electronic Ear. By means of filters, amplifiers and a sophisticated gating mechanism the sound is reshaped and presented to the ears in rapidly alternating forms. Dr. Tomatis' early investigations led to the discovery that the human voice can only produce sounds which the ears can hear. The two organs are part of the same neurological loop and a change in the response of one shows up immediately in the other. This has been repeatedly verified by medical investigators and has been named the "Tomatis Effect" by the French Academy of Science and Medicine. This discovery is very significant for students of the Alexander Technique because it suggests that Alexander's work on himself in front of the mirror may have been at least as important in its effect on his capacity to listen as it was on his ability to speak. Reinforcing this hypothesis is Dr. Tomatis' finding that in order to hear very high pitched sounds, our body must adopt what he calls a "listening posture". From my personal experience with Tomatis' work, and my observations of others who have been exposed to it, this corresponds precisely to the Alexander Technique concept of "good use" - neck free, head releasing forward and up with the whole body following. As one might expect, the commonly reported benefits of the Tomatis Method include improvements in voice quality, posture, co-ordination, balance and general well being similar to some of those experienced by students of the Alexander Technique. There are many other fascinating parallels between the Tomatis Method and the Alexander Technique. Both procedures are well worth investigating by anyone interested in exploring the links between the mind and body.

About the Author

Each of the 38 remedies discovered by Dr Bach is directed at a particular characteristic or. Here is a list of the 38 remedies and their indications.

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