

Alexander Technique: Constructive Rest

Constructive rest is a self-led version of the table work usually included in an Alexander Technique lesson. By taking the time to lie down in this way you will:

- build a strong relationship between your thinking and a muscular response, an essential skill of the Alexander Technique
- take pressure off your spine and allow it to lengthen
- allow your muscles to release excess tension
- calm your mind and your nervous system
- allow a return to easy breathing
- improve your sensory awareness and regain energy

At least once a day, take about 20 minutes to practice constructive rest. It can be particularly helpful first thing in the morning, as a break from long periods of sitting, doing computer work, or practicing an instrument, or at the end of the day.

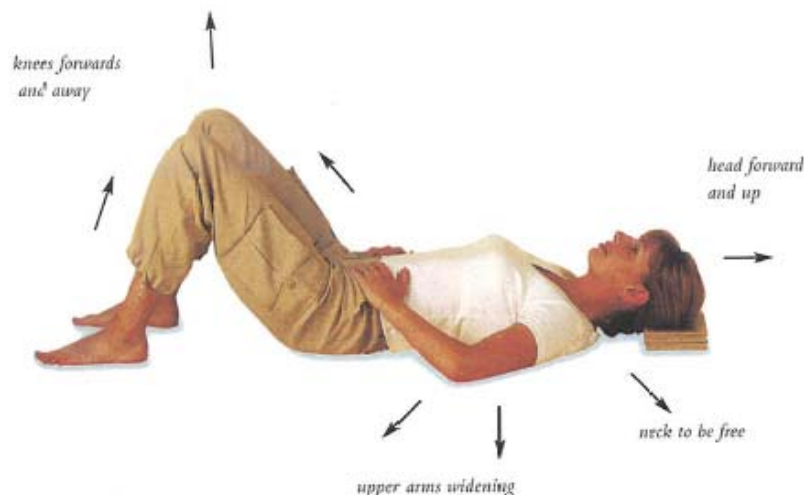


Photo from: "The Alexander Technique" by Michele Mac Donnell

Lie down on a firm but comfortable surface such as a carpeted floor (a bed or sofa is too soft). Bend your knees and put your feet flat on the floor. Place a stack of books underneath your head to support its weight. Choose a book height that allows your face to be approximately parallel to the floor. If your head tips forward (pressing your chin into your throat) you have too many books. If your head tips back (with your chin higher than your forehead) you have too few books. Place your elbows on the floor and your hands on your torso. If it's more comfortable, you can rest your arms on the floor by your sides. Keep your eyes open so you can practice undoing tension while awake and alert.

Alexander Technique: Constructive Rest (cont'd)

Allow yourself to rest and receive the support of the floor beneath you. Notice anywhere you might be tightening or holding. Form a wish to release that tension. Keep in mind that this isn't something you can *do*. Your job is to think of *undoing* the excess tension and activity that already exists. You might find that your body drops back toward the floor as a result of that undoing.

As you release tension, your muscles will lengthen. That creates expansion through your whole system. It allows your back to lengthen, your whole torso to widen, and your arms, legs, and head to release outward from your torso. You can encourage that outward release by thinking your Alexander Technique "directions". Remember, you can't *do* these directions. Just think them:

- I'd like my neck to be free
- So my head can balance easily on top of my spine
- So my back can lengthen and my torso can widen
- So my knees can release forward from my hips and away from each other

You might not feel anything happen at first. That doesn't necessarily mean that nothing is happening. It takes time to become more sensitive to subtle changes, and it takes time to build a constructive relationship between your thinking and your muscles. Be patient. You will get better with practice. The table work in your private lessons will help you become more effective at home.

Have fun and good luck!