



I ONCE WAS LOST... BUT NOW AM FOUND

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Have you ever had one (or more) of those moments when you feel totally whole and totally free? When everything seems to be doing itself with utmost ease? When you are totally present and at one with the moment? When amazing skill and coordination is just flowing out of you?

Over many decades of working with people, mostly performers, I've explored these moments of "optimal functioning" hundreds of times, and I've come to see how almost everything we need to know about good use and functioning is revealed in those moments.

Those experiences are one of the hallmarks of Alexander Technique lessons, but of course they also occur in other methods like Feldenkrais, etc., and in moments of performance when a musician is "in the music" or a dancer "in the flow" or an actor "in the scene", sometimes they occur at intimate moments of sex, or even during a lovely sunset at the beach.

Recall those moments and you'll note that most or all of the following things are happening, and they are happening all together all at once:

- You experience a **wholeness and unity** such that you have no parts;
- You experience **ease and freedom** such that there is no effort and everything seems to do itself;
- Your **performance is high quality** and your ability to express your skill is up there with the best you have done;
- You are **present in the moment**, so much so that often things seem brighter, more colourful, more 3D;
- You experience **an expansion** out into the space around you, **an openness** to, and a **oneness** with, your environment, the others on stage, indeed, the world; and...
- You feel **joy and delight**, a sort of yummy appreciation that this is **really good** stuff.

We've all had these moments. No one has to tell us that they are wonderful. We'd like to live more of them. But it's relatively rare because, while we've certainly had the experience, we've usually missed the meaning of the experience. To jargonize it, we've *failed to reliably appreciate the sensory experience* we just had.

For instance, in those moments there is an undeniable wholeness — I have no parts, I am just me all the way to the ground and out into the room... And at the same time, I'm not doing anything, everything is doing itself... And it is all happening with total ease and no effort, and with a quality that is a lot better than I manage when I've tried to do it...

Of course we like that experience and are disappointed when it begins to fade. And we want to experience it again. So, immediately after that experience fades, what do we do to try to get it back? We go straight back into parts to try to free ourselves, to release this bit and that bit, to tell various parts what we think they should be doing, all guided by the memory of that yummy experience.

And we hope that this will get it back for us. If that doesn't work, we start studying various methods or works in the hope that they can show us how to "have" that experience more often.

Did you ever wonder why those moments are so elusive and seem so "hard" to get back to? Is it that the work is so difficult to master it takes decades (it is called the "work", after all)? Or is it rather that we completely failed to understand the significance of the experience we had?

We got the "it's good" part alright. It's hard to miss that, especially in comparison to our usual "not so good" experiences. But, we missed the bit that in wholeness there are no parts. And we missed the part where the wholeness does itself without us having to do anything. What could those two together possibly mean but that *we ARE whole!* It takes no doing to be whole. Being whole is easy and does itself... It's right there in the experience, plain as day.

Unfortunately, what keeps us from seeing the full significance of that experience is we are still trapped in the biggest habit which is invisible to most people. That is the habit of trying to get somewhere better (to get to better use, to being successful, being perfect, being loved... you name it). The habit whispers that we are not where we should be. We could get over there to the promised land where the grass is greener, if only we could work out how. *Then* we'd be OK and we could relax and just enjoy life.

We fail to see that our own system is showing us every time we have one of those "optimal experiences" that it already knows (and has always known) how to be whole without effort, and that this goes with, and *is inseparable from*, openness and presentness and oneness.

This is not a far-off land, it has happened to us many times and is available anytime. Of course, it feels good, but we fail to see exactly what it is that our own system is telling us is GOOD. It's saying to you in the only way it knows how, "*Feel this? How's this for a good way to be? Go ahead, go for it, just live what is happening now — be whole, be easy, be present, be open... And just to make sure the message is clear, compare this yummy wholeness, easiness, presentness, openness, freedom, oneness to that "normal" effortful, horrible way you feel so you can see how you are straining against yourself to do more than you can do, or be better than you are, when you are all parts and tension and reaction to the moment, full of effort and trying*".

The message doesn't get any clearer than that.

But, of course, with our habitual inaccurate (i.e. unreliable) way of understanding (appreciating) our experiences we miss the real message again and again and default back to the habit of thinking we have to do something (or undo something) to get to that lovely yummy state, and so we react the same way the next time we find ourselves in a present moment which we don't like. We have already pre-judged that moment to be wrong and we start to try to do something with the parts we are already caught in, in order to get to a better moment we think we will like, a moment later...

It does not occur to us that our system has just showed us exactly how to live in that "optimal functioning", and how to live it right now. Instead, the habit sucks us into taking the next step in the vicious circle by doing more parts, making more effort, trying more trying, while narrowed to that future better moment about to come. There we'd be happy to stay in that better moment and wallow in its yumminess. But wait, how come our strategy only works once in a while, and when it does, that wonderful moment doesn't "stick" very long?

What we need is to realize is that the wonderful experience is not the "result" of some path. It is the path itself! *It's not the end, it's the means!*

You, the conscious choosing you, need to lead the way by living what you want first. You cannot "get" the experience and then live in it once you have it That is, you must inhibit the habitual tendency to try to "fix" the moment (under the mistaken idea that it is somehow "broken" or a "bad use" moment and therefore needs fixing by you). Instead, learn from that yummy experience

and follow the path by starting to live, right now, what your own system just showed you about the way it works.

That means choosing to live the whole you just as you are in the moment of choice, whether you like how you currently feel or not — in other words, start being whole RIGHT NOW.

That means choosing to stop all the doing, releasing, striving... all the stuff whose sole purpose is to change something you don't like into something you'd like better — in other words, to let your system do itself — be itself — RIGHT NOW. How easy is that?

That means choosing to be present in the moment as it actually is (for the simple reason that it is, whether you like the present moment or not) and fully and willingly accept it RIGHT NOW.

If you think for a moment, this is about the easiest and simplest thing you can possibly do. In fact, there's really nothing at all to do. It is a challenge, for sure, in the face of the habit, in the face of your feelings, in the face of what you've been taught, but it is possible to inhibit your reaction to the moment and follow the means-whereby which your very own highly-evolved system keeps showing you — which is to open up to the present moment, to your wholeness, and to give your system a little bit of faith that it seems to know what it is doing, and that it can do it really well without your "help".

Remember the part of that optimal experience where everything is easy and seems to do itself? What can this mean but that your system is taking care of everything wonderfully well, and you have nothing to do but to be present?

I can tell you that after you have truly put this to the test for a while you won't need faith any more; you'll have the experiences to know that you can trust it. In fact, you'll no longer be thinking of it as trusting *your* system or "using" *your* system. You will BE your system... You'll just be YOU... in the world and not separate from it nor from yourself.

The ultimate learning is not that you will have finally figured out how to get back in touch with your system and use it well. You'll realize that it was YOU who were lost, and your system was trying to contact you and let you know how to find your way back.

So give a heartfelt thanks that it managed to wake you up and show you the way home and to show you how utterly amazing and capable you are in such a beautiful, seductive, and loving way.



About the author:

David Gorman has been studying human structure and function since 1970. He is the author of an illustrated 600-page text on our human musculoskeletal system, called [The Body Moveable](#) (now in its 6th edition and in colour), and numerous articles and essays, including the book, [Looking at Ourselves](#) (2nd edition in colour).

David has been working with performers (singers, musicians, actors, dancers and circus artists) for over forty years. He is a trainer of teachers of LearningMethods and of the Alexander Technique and has taught all over the world in universities, conservatories, performance companies, and orchestras; for doctors in hospitals and rehabilitation clinics; and in training courses for Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, physiotherapy, osteopathy, massage & yoga.

Over the years, his changing understanding about the root causes of people's problems led him to gradually extend his Alexander Technique teaching into the development of a new work, LearningMethods (and an offshoot, Anatomy of Wholeness about our marvelous human design), which is being integrated into the curricula of performance schools in Europe, Canada and the United States by a growing number of [LearningMethods Teachers and Apprentice-teachers](#).

For the last 6 years, David has been running online post-graduate groups for Alexander Technique teachers and groups for those who want to learn to use LearningMethods in their own lives and work, as well as a group for those who want to go on to train as LearningMethods teachers.

