

F.M. ALEXANDER

ON

"CHANGE"

(TAKEN FROM A PUPIL'S MANUSCRIPT)

1. Change involves carrying out an activity against the habit of life.
2. You can't change the course of nature by co-ordinating yourself.
3. Control should be in process, not superimposed.
4. There is no such thing as a right position, but there is such a thing as a right direction.
5. Everything a person has done in the past has been in accordance with the mental direction to which he is accustomed, and it is his faith in this that makes him unwilling to exchange it for the new direction one is trying to give him.
6. You can speak as well as I can, except that you are doing something to speak that no one does except people who stammer like you.
7. The things that don't exist are the most difficult to get rid of.
8. The experience you want is in the process of getting it. If you have something, give it up. Getting it, not having it, is what you want.
9. Under the ordinary teaching methods, the pupil gets nineteen wrong and one right experience. It ought to be the other way round.
10. I should make mistakes if I reacted to some new things as you do .. the thing we are trying to kill in you is your "individuality", and we can't do it. Individuality is a habit.
11. You get away from your old preconceived ideas because you are getting away from your old habits.
12. We can throw away the habit of a lifetime in a few minutes if we use our brains.

13. Prevent the things you have been doing and you are half way home.
14. As soon as people come with the ideas of unlearning instead of learning, you have them in the frame of mind you want.
15. If people will go on believing that they "know", it is impossible to eradicate anything: it makes it impossible to teach them.
16. We are forced in our teaching at every point to translate theories into concrete processes.
17. The difficulty for all of us is to take up a new way of life in which we must apply principles instead of the haphazard end-gaining methods of the past. This indicates a slow process and we must all be content with steady improvement from day to day; but we must see to it that we are really depending upon the application of our principles in all our endeavours in every direction from day to day. You have been too anxious to be right despite the fact that you learned early in your lessons that your right was wrong. However you have done well considering your difficulties, and you will continue to improve in the controlled use of yourself if you work as steadily as directed.
18. I can do the best I can for you and if you don't know it and don't understand it, you will react to me as if I were your enemy.
19. Suppose you had the power to change a thief by magic, it would be of no use. The man would have had no experience in resisting temptation (that is, no experience of reacting rightly or wrongly to certain stimuli, and reacting ninety-nine times rightly to once wrongly), which is the experience a man must get before he can change from being a thief.
20. If you do anything to affect the processes, you must do something that will affect the results of these processes.
21. You are not here to do exercises, or to learn to do something right, but to get able to meet a stimulus that always puts you wrong and to learn to deal with it.
22. You come to learn to inhibit and to direct your activity. You learn, first, to inhibit the habitual reaction to certain classes of stimuli, and second, to direct yourself consciously in such a way as to affect certain muscular pulls, which processes bring about a new reaction to



these stimuli. Boiled down, it all comes to inhibiting a particular reaction to a given stimulus. But no one will see it that way. They will all see it as getting in and out of a chair the right way. It is nothing of the kind.

23. You want to feel out whether you are right or not. I am giving you a conception to eradicate that I don't want you to care a damn if you're right or not. Directly you don't care if you're right or not, the impeding obstacle is gone.
24. Don't come to me unless, when I tell you you are wrong, you make up your mind to smile and be pleased.
25. When people are wrong, the thing that is right is bound to be wrong to them.
26. Here you are, a young fellow of seventeen, knowing that you are wrong, as I know you are. Doesn't that show that your "right" is wrong, for you never tried to be wrong? You were always trying to be right. All I want you to do is to give certain directions for me, and then inhibit the tremendous effort you are making to be right.
27. When anything is pointed out, our only idea is to go from wrong to right in spite of the fact that it has taken us years to get wrong: we try to get right in a moment.
28. Like a good fellow, stop the things that are wrong first.
29. The minute you change it, the thing that isn't a strain feels a strain.
30. When people are wrong, the thing which is right is bound to be wrong to them.
31. All that I am trying to give you is a new experience.
32. It doesn't alter a fact because you can't feel it.
33. What you gain in one way you lose in another. Therefore you must not try for specific results.
34. Specific prevention is permissible only under conditions of non-doing, not in doing.
35. Trying is only emphasizing the thing we know already.