



*An invitation to take part in research*

## ***How do women use their experiences of learning the Alexander Technique in the early postpartum?***

**If you are familiar with the Alexander Technique and are pregnant or have recently given birth, you might be interested in participating in this research. The following gives you all the information you need to help you decide if you want to join in.**

**Who is doing the research?** Nicola Hanefeld, Teacher of the Alexander Technique, member of the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique, STAT, as part of her PhD in Health and Social Care Studies the University of Hull.

**What is the purpose of this study?** The aim is to understand the role the Alexander Technique can play in meeting the potential challenges of the 'working conditions' of the postnatal period, especially with respect to self-care, well-being, typical activities like feeding and carrying the infant as well as infant interactions and dealing with sleep deficit.

### ***What is meant by the 'working conditions' of the early postpartum phase?***

*The 'working conditions' of the postpartum are understood to include the following: discomfort/pain due to healing after birthing, adapting hormonally (and otherwise) to the non-pregnant state including new family and partner dynamics, many hours daily spent carrying/feeding the baby and further infant care, fatigue due to nightly care work, possibly reduced social contacts due to time, lack of energy or baby-sitting issues.*

*These factors are being called the 'working conditions' of the postpartum in this study and will vary from woman to woman.*

**Structure of the study** There are two parts to this research: an initial online survey and a semi-structured interview if you enter into the actual research. These steps are explained in the following:

A) The online survey includes a few short questions to find potential participants and takes only minutes to complete. In this first survey, I ask for your consent to collect data, your name, email address, UK telephone number(s), amount of previous AT experience: whether you are a client ('pupil'), an ex-client, student in teacher training or an Alexander teacher. I ask if you are pregnant at present. If so, the due date and if you have any children, how many. I ask if English is your first language (or if you have similar standard language skills).

The aim of this first survey is to find potential participants with similar demographics. A uniform group raises the quality and value of qualitative research. If you are not asked to take part in an interview, this is probably because your demographics differ from a majority of other potential participants: for example, maybe you already have a child and several women who answered the survey are pregnant for the first time (or vice versa).

B) If you are chosen to join the study, **you will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview** lasting about an hour, max. 70 minutes. This would be conducted personally, if possible and recorded. Otherwise, interviews will be done online, via Skype and recorded: The questions you will be asked are open-ended and non-directive, aiming to understand various aspects of your postpartum

experience which possibly relate to your experience of the Alexander Technique. The researcher will adopt an empathetic, respectful, non-judgemental attitude.

**Who can participate?** To participate in this study, you must

- be over 18 years old
- have English as a first language (or equivalent language skills)
- have given birth within the last 9 months or will give birth within the next months
- have experience of learning the Alexander Technique from a member of the Society of Teachers of Alexander Technique (STAT) or you are in a STAT approved teacher training course or are MSTAT.
- have had a minimum of 10 lessons and be a UK resident

**How much time will participation involve?**

Completion of the initial survey should take only a few minutes. If you enter into the actual study, you will be asked to participate in the interview, lasting a maximum of 70 minutes. The interview will be transcribed and analysed to answer the research question.

**Will participation in the project remain confidential?**

Yes, information will not be disclosed to other parties outside the research group. Only the researcher and the research team will have access to the transcriptions of interviews and initial questions. Data from the initial questions will be treated confidentially. Responses from the interview will be used only for this study and, if additionally, anonymously in publications. The EU General Data Protection Regulation and the UK Data Protection Act will be adhered to.

**Participation** If at any time you feel uncomfortable about the data you have been asked to give, then you have the right to withdraw from the study. If you wish to withdraw, you will not be asked why. You can withdraw at any time prior to the data analysis stage, but not afterwards. Interviews will be transcribed for data analysis, so withdrawal is possible up to the end of the interview.

If you complete the initial survey, you will be provided with a receipt number. You are advised to quote this number in any communication should you wish to remove your data from this study. Data collected from this survey from women not participating in the study will only be deleted after the interview stage of the study in case someone withdraws from the interview stage. I'd then perhaps approach you, if necessary, asking you to participate. If you participate in the research interview you will be asked to provide a pseudonym. The interview transcription data will be stored for a maximum of five years and then destroyed. Your participation is voluntary, no reimbursement will be made for your time.

**Potential Risks and Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval has been gained from the Faculty of Health Sciences ethics committee, University of Hull. There is no risk associated with participation in the interview but there may be potential for discomfort arising during the interview. In this case, you may take a break or decide to discontinue the interview. A 'sources of support' leaflet will be routinely provided at interview completion. If a participant discloses information which suggests that someone is at risk of harm then the researcher is bound to pass on this information. The researcher will talk to the participant about this and will discuss it with their supervisor. They may have to report the information, for example to the safeguarding team based within the participant's geographical area. As far as possible the researcher will let the participant know before action is taken. If a participant discloses information which suggests that someone is at risk of harm then the researcher is bound to passing on this information. This might be the safeguarding team based within the participant's geographical area.

**What happens now?**

If you are interested in taking part in this study, please fill out the short online survey at:  
<https://hull.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/womens-experiences-of-the-alexander-technique-in-the-post>

At the start of the survey, you will be asked to give your consent to participate. I will contact you regarding the second stage of collecting data.

If you are chosen join the interview part of the study, the consent form for the interview will be sent to you via email. You will be asked to complete it, scan (or photograph) and return it to [n.hanefeld@2017.hull.ac.uk](mailto:n.hanefeld@2017.hull.ac.uk) If you prefer to do this via the post, this can be arranged. You will also be contacted to make arrangements for the interview.

**Contact for Further Information** If at any point in the study, including after you've completed the survey, you are concerned or wish to withdraw, please contact me or my supervisor so your response can be taken from the database. If you have any questions or complaints about this research, please feel free to contact either me or my supervisor:

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If there are any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted then participants are free to contact the Associate Dean for Research, Prof Mark Hayter, [M.Hayter@hull.ac.uk](mailto:M.Hayter@hull.ac.uk)

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