

Postural Attitudes

Postural Attitudes are full body expressions of a person's feelings, mood, and personality. The word *attitude* can be defined as "position or posture of the body appropriate to or expressive of an action, emotion, etc."²⁸ The Action Tactic is an intellectual or psychological choice that must be put into action. The acting teacher Michael Chekhov said, "Each individual psychological state is always a combination of thoughts (or Images), Feelings, and Will-impulses."²⁹ He referred to gestural developments such as "the Gesture together with the Feelings connected with it" as the Psychological Gesture. It is the will-impulse that ignites these thoughts and feelings into action. Stanislavski referred to this process of postures and actions turned to living images of movement as, Physical Actions.

In Alba Emoting, Postural Attitudes³⁰ are an essential aspect of the basic emotion patterns. These postures are exhibited through the body's leaning directions, curve of the spine, tension or relaxation of muscles, weight distribution, and arm gestures. When learning Alba Emoting, one can spend years learning and perfecting control of the intricacies within each of these Postural Attitudes.

28. Dictionary.com (2012) <http://dictionary.reference.com/>

29. Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting*, 59.

30. Susana Bloch, "Alba Emoting: A Psychophysiological Technique to Help Actors Create and Control Real Emotions," Theatre Topics, (1993).

However, actors can benefit from learning even the most generalized aspects of these postures, and their association to Action Tactics.

In order to simplify the study of Postural Attitudes, let's first consider very basic shifts in our posture that contribute to varying modes of expression. Changes of muscle tonicity— or the tension state of muscles— can move in two opposing directions: tension or relaxation.

Try This:

Take a moment and tense as many of your large muscle groups as possible. Hold that tension for a moment and explore how this affects your posture, movement, gestures, and also your mood. Then release the tension as much as you can. Experiment with how this also affects your overall posture and ability to move and express yourself. You probably noticed that there were varying degrees of tension and relaxation as you went from one polarity of muscle tonicity to the other, which shows the range possible between these two extreme states for variations of expression.

General Muscle Movements

In addition to our muscle tonicity, muscles also have general directions of movement, expressed in terms of opposites: (a) extend/flex, (b) abduct/adduct, (c) elevate/depress, and (d) internal/external rotation. Take a moment and explore these movements in a standing position:

[Examples]

- a) **Extend/Flex:** Explore the difference between extending parts of your body like arms, legs, head, and hands. Then, try moving in an opposite direction of that extension and flex or bend these areas. How do you feel as you embody these opposite directions?

- b) **Abduct/Adduct:** To abduct is to pull aspects of your body away from your midline, or center axis. Your spine is the marker for your body's midline. Try abducting your arms and legs away from the midline by raising your arms and spreading your legs. Now move in the opposite direction and adduct. What happens to your overall posture as you bring your arms and legs inward, close to your midline?
- c) **Elevate/Depress:** How might you elevate the muscles in your shoulders? Perhaps lifting your shoulders upward? Do you notice other muscles in your rib cage and back moving along with this upward movement? Then depress the same muscles by either pushing them downward or by releasing the tension used to lift them and essentially give-in to gravity. How does this muscle depression affect how you stand, and how you feel? Does it feel different if you choose to push down rather than release tension?
- d) **Internal/External Rotation:** What happens if you rotate your arms and legs internally, or in toward your chest and pelvis? Hold this for a moment and recognize how it affects your overall posture. Did your hands and feet move to accomplish this? Then rotate your arms and legs externally, perhaps by turning your hands and feet so the palms and toes face outward or away from the midline of your body.

These basic muscle movements directly affect the quality of our posture, movement, actions, and overall mood. As you explored the examples of muscle directions, did you notice any muscle tonicity changes associated with each exploration? When you tried these examples did you also sense changes in your overall mood or feelings as you went from one extreme movement to the next? The two areas of tonicity and general directional movements are interconnected, as are our postures, actions, and feelings.

Postural Attitudes and Emotions

Building upon the original Alba Emoting patterns and their Postural Attitudes, I have grouped the basic patterns into pairs that articulate these polarities between states of expression. Consider this polarity expressed in a line with an A representing one extreme and a B representing the opposite degree.



- A:** The A-state represents an attitude that has the least amount of tension coupled with muscle directional movement that exhibits an open and approachable Postural Attitude.
- B:** The B-state exemplifies postures that have the greatest degree of tension and/or uses general muscle movements that close the body off to others or make it unapproachable.

Some people might refer to these Postural Attitudes like this: A exhibits positive attributes, and B expresses negative states. However one prefers to view these expressive modes, it is important to recognize that they can be grouped into these primary categories of opposites, or cognate pairs. Minor changes of tension and directional movements can easily shift a person from expressing in an A-state to a B-state, or vice versa. It is also important to acknowledge that there are varying degrees of these states between their extremes.

Opposite States of Expressive Behavior



The posture of Tenderness (1A) is relaxed, open and tends to gaze forward, extending arms to adore or protect. Anger (1B) is expressed with tension and by moving forward, extending this tense posture toward the stimulus of the anger.

(1A) Tenderness

Relaxed Tonicity

Muscle Movements in Specific Areas:

Extend/Abduct/Depress

& External rotation

(1B) Anger

Tense Tonicity

Muscle Movements in Specific Areas:

Extend/Adduct/Elevate

& Internal rotation

More Postural Attitudes are described and illustrated as the book continues...