

Alba as a Method for Coaches and Therapists

Alba Emoting™ (also called the Alba Method by American practitioners) is a physical method used to help recognize, induce, express and regulate the basic emotions. This is achieved through the reproduction of the respiratory-postural-facial emotional patterns discovered in psychophysiological research conducted by neuroscientist and research psychologist, Dr. Susana Bloch and her collaborators. The Alba Method is a purely physical technique for recognizing, inducing, expressing and regulating the basic emotions. The method includes a 'step-out' technique, also based on specific breathing, posture and facial actions, and is designed to stop the emotional activation and bring the person back to an emotionally neutral state.

Alba Emoting was first used to train actors during its initial development in the late 1900s. It is now a sought-after and highly valuable technique for use in various professional fields, including coaching and therapy. The Alba Method can be used to facilitate emotion awareness, regulation and transformation. It can also be used to help coaches and therapists better recognize their own and their clients' emotions.

Alba training workshops focus on teaching participants how to replicate the six respiratory-postural-facial emotional patterns. This is a slow and intensive training process (typically taught over 5-7 days with 4-6 hours of study each day) where participants learn to replicate specific breathing patterns and also isolate muscles in the face and body that organically trigger the basic emotions. Once these patterns are successfully applied by the participant, an emotional induction is felt. Participants then learn to control and master these patterns, as well as apply them to simple daily activities like walking, sitting, speaking, and interacting with others. Throughout this training process participants gain a clear and de-personalized knowledge of how emotions are felt throughout the entire body and how they are expressed in various activities. Mixed emotional states are demystified, because practitioners can now de-construct these complex expressions down to their basic components and recognize where and how the mixes are coming in and being expressed. Participants gain incredible personal insight on their own expressive habits, as well as learn how to read the emotions expressed by others so much more clearly.

Training in the Alba Method can be achieved on various levels, and Alba Associations and Boards identify their practitioner's knowledge and allowable use of the technique in the form of certifications. Certification Levels (CL) are awarded from Level One (Personal Use) all the way up to Level Five (Academic Level and Teacher Trainer). After each workshop, participants are informed of their certification level and provided with clarifications on their qualifications and abilities for using, sharing, coaching, and/or teaching the patterns to others. However, it is ultimately up to the individual to determine how they would use this method within their own profession, and ascertain its appropriateness. Nancy Mercer, a therapist and CL1 Alba Practitioner, offers that "both therapists and coaches have strong ethical guidelines that precludes them practicing in a discipline for which they have no training. Navigating this grey area seems to be a normal part of practice. The therapist has an ethical responsibility to use techniques and methods that are appropriate and relevant to the client's needs and related goals of therapy—so the Alba Method would be used only in this context."ⁱ

The Alba method, and the science behind it, is a stand-alone technique that can be used by coaches and therapists toward meeting their unique and discrete goals and objectives. Psychotherapy and coaching naturally overlap and it is up to the coach to be clear where the line might be crossed into therapy.

Coaching can be distinguished from therapy in a number of ways, explains Deanne Prymek, Newfield Network Director of Programs and CL2 trained Alba practitioner.

"Coaching, as defined by the International Coach Federationⁱⁱ, is a profession that supports personal and professional growth and development based on individual-initiated change in pursuit of specific actionable outcomes. These outcomes are linked to personal or professional success. Coaching is forward moving and future focused. Therapy, on the other hand, deals with healing pain, dysfunction and conflict. The focus is often on resolving difficulties arising from the past which hamper an individual's emotional functioning in the present, improving overall psychological functioning, and dealing with present life and work circumstances in more emotionally healthy ways. Therapy outcomes often include improved emotional/feeling states. While positive feelings/emotions may be a natural outcome of coaching, the primary focus is on creating actionable strategies for achieving specific goals in one's work or personal life."ⁱⁱⁱ

Nancy Mercer further explains the distinctions between these two professions by stating, "Therapy can be defined as the treatment of mental and emotional disorders through the use of psychological techniques designed to encourage communication of conflicts and insight into problems, with the goal being relief of symptoms, personality growth, and behavior modification."

The study of emotions and its direct application to therapy is a fairly new development in psychotherapy practices. Therapist and CL5 certified Alba Practitioner, Juan Pablo Kalawski explains "For decades psychological theories viewed emotions as third-class phenomena, after behavior and cognition. In recent years, psychological science has finally begun to acknowledge that emotions are not just epiphenomena but rather serve important functions in organizing thoughts and behavior. Understandably, theories of psychotherapy have lagged behind in integrating the science of emotions into clinical practice. Lacking a theoretical understanding of emotions and specific methods to work with them, therapists fall back on what they know, that is, working with behaviors and thoughts and hoping that emotions follow suit. Slowly, however, theorists have begun to present coherent approaches to working with emotions in psychotherapy."^{iv}

Nancy Mercer offers that good therapy practices incorporate many different approaches, "There are multiple models and approaches to psychotherapy and some are borrowed from other disciplines. The use of Alba in therapy would be an example of this. (Other examples might be Mindfulness, Yoga, Expressive Arts)."

In the domain of ontological coaching, Deanne Prymek clarifies how the coach might use the Alba Method, "The ontological coach embodies powerful distinctions in language, moods & emotions, and somatics. The Alba method is strongly effective in supporting clients designing they're way forward with specific practices in how they want to show up in emotion & postural stance as they prepare for that meeting with their boss, the board members, or their employees without needing to go in to the

past in a therapeutic way."Newfield Coach and CL1 certified Alba practitioner Carol Harris-Fike, further explains^v "Our emotions are influenced by our breath, body disposition, and especially facial muscles. It gets one out of the story and supports a shift if the client wants to go there. I support Alba as another tool for the coach in understanding and identifying emotions (in themselves as well as the client)"

Emotional awareness skills are greatly enhanced by studying the Alba Method. Not only will learning the method help coaches and therapists more clearly understand how they and their clients are expressing themselves, but after more advanced training a coach or therapist can work with a client to become more clear on what they are really feeling and expressing. Juan Pablo Kalawski clarifies this need by explaining, "Some clients can easily identify their feelings, whereas others have great difficulty. Often, clients may only be able to identify being 'upset' or 'stressed' without further elaboration. A finer distinction among emotions may help clients better identify their associated needs and action tendencies. Alba Emoting provides a clear and physical way to distinguish among different emotions. When a client has experienced the respiratory postural-facial patterns of the basic emotions, he or she is subsequently better able to recognize when those patterns are spontaneously aroused."

A CL3 trained Alba practitioner can take the Alba Method and its use to a higher level in their practice, if they determine its use as appropriate, and actually coach a client in and out of different emotions and help them become aware of how the emotion really feels in their breath and muscles. At this level of their expertise an Alba practitioner can not only deconstruct the emotional expressions of their clients and more clearly identify if a client is blocking, suppressing, or avoiding emotions, but they can also help guide a client through experiencing the differences between emotional states. Juan Pablo Kalawski points out, "Emotional awareness necessitates actual emotional experience. This process, however, can be blocked by emotional avoidance. Often, clients avoid experiencing painful feelings due to fears of being overwhelmed by them, of being out of control or of not being able to calm down afterwards. Alba Emoting can be a valuable resource in helping clients deal with these concerns. Alba Emoting is empowering, as it provides clients with a tool to step in and out of an emotion at will."

Therapist, Ontological Coach, and CL1 trained Alba practitioner, Ondine Norman, describes the objective, and non-therapeutic, learning environment established within Alba trainings, "Anytime you explore the emotional realm it can potentially bring up "real life" feelings for people. But the exploration is not a form of psychotherapy nor are any of the teachers of alba emoting therapists. Just as in coaching, Alba Emoting workshops may have a therapeutic impact on people because it creates a safe place to explore emotions and how to express them in the body, but that is not the point of the workshop. The purpose is to be able to explore the emotional realm in a somatic and objective way without a lot of story attached."^{vi}

The Alba Method is an incredibly valuable technique that can be used in various ways to support the work of coaches and therapists as they deem appropriate to their practice and within the boundaries of their profession.

Below are some of the skills that a person will acquire after one introductory intensive course on the Alba Method.

1. Body-centered practices for increasing sensory awareness and control of expressing the primary emotions of Tenderness, Anger, Fear, Desire, Joy, and Sadness, as well as the Neutral State where no emotion is present
2. The awareness of limiting habits and internal blocks that can keep an individual from experiencing and expressing desired emotions without the entanglement of other emotions present
3. The ability to reach a neutral state after experiencing other emotional states.
4. The ability to generate various emotional states, at will, and shift from one emotional state to another using purely physical methods.
5. Increased expressive range and control, while also obtaining the ability to modulate intensity levels of emotional states.
6. The ability to observe and assess the emotional states of others through observing specific physical cues in their breathing and muscular patterns.
7. Use of the neutral pattern and a Step Out technique for clearing emotions with clients.
8. Methods for integrating this approach with various professions and personal practice

Below is an explanation of the certification levels available to those who would like to learn the Alba Method and apply its use to their professions.

Introduction Level (CL 1)

Objectives: Familiarity with some of the six effector patterns and Step-Out.

Authorized use: Self-use only.

Basic Level (CL2)

Objectives: mastery of the six effector patterns, Step-Out, sufficient to self-correct, and to accurately observe them in others.

Authorized use: self- use only. Eligible to work as a teaching assistant for a CL5 if teaching Alba is of interest.

Scholar Level (CL3)

Objectives: Mastery of the six effector patterns and Step-Out sufficient to be capable to reproduce them at will; work with Alba Emoting in the applicant's specialization area; to go deeper in the scientific study of emotions; and to start the training as Alba Emoting teacher.

Authorized use: training CL1 and CL2 in the applicant's specialization area; personal and professional use of the method.

Professional Level (CL4)

Objectives: Mastery of the six effector patterns and Step-Out sufficient to holistic professional use of the method and training others.

Authorized Use: training CL1, CL2, CL3 in various fields of work and professional use of the Alba Emoting method.

Academic Level/Teacher Trainer (CL5)

Objectives: to train Alba Emoting teachers, diffuse the method internationally and hopefully write articles, papers or books on the method.

Authorized Use: training CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, and professional use, and teacher training. Apply its use to their profession.

Supportive Quotes and Testimonials on the Use of Alba from Ontological Coaches

I found the Alba method to be both personally & professionally transformative. It's been an excellent addition to my professional coaching practice and now shows up in all my coaching sessions in some form. Whether it's vehicle for creating awareness or designing actions & practices, I believe this is a powerful method to assist clients in observing their emotions and shifting them.

~Deanne Prymek, PCC, Newfield Network Director of Programs

When I first learned about Alba Emoting and the work of Dr. Susanna Bloch from Julio Olalla, I was intrigued enough to travel to Montreal and study with Laura in a combined Alba and Feldenkrais training seminar. The depth of the emotional experience and the self-awareness arising from the practice of Alba Emoting have informed my emotional growth and depth of life experience. I no longer see with the same emotional eyes as before. I have experienced greater emotional awareness and learned much to distinguish changes in body, breath and movement. Laura's skill has gone far to help me develop mastery of my coaching and criminal trial practice. Laura is a protege of, and was personally trained by Susanna Bloch. She has the knowledge, dynamic personality and emotional range to teach and demonstrate deep life skills.

~Milt Simon, J.D. Newfield Network Trained Coach and former Referee of the Los Angeles Superior Court

"Newfield launched my fascination with emotions as a necessary—albeit brand new-- territory of learning. Laura's work with Alba Emoting added another necessary skill— showing ways IN and OUT of a variety of emotions. Laura fully understands and teaches embodiment of emotions which for me simplified how to design emotional learning practices (ensuring our desired changes last!) Newfield + Alba Emoting is a wonderful marriage and remain at the heart of my "emotional agility" coaching and tele-classes."

~Carol Courcy, MCC, author and former Newfield Network Director of Coach Training

"Although my exposure to the Alba Method is limited to a one week intensive (CL1) I have found the training to be useful in my private practice. I find the Alba Method to be beneficial in providing another lens with which to view and understand emotional engagement. I have used "step out" as an effective method for shifting emotional states and for grounding. I also teach neutral breath to clients. Although I am not trained sufficiently to use Alba method in depth, following Laura's suggestion I have found that applying a particular pattern has been useful to clients who need assistance in feeling empowered. Given these experiences I feel the Alba Method is an effective and useful therapeutic tool."

~ Lisa Dveris MSW, RSW Therapist

"When I discovered Alba Emoting, I immediately recognized it as a powerful technology for integrating body, emotion, and language through a practice that accesses a more whole and complete way of being and acting that is naturally expressive. This is an extraordinary training process, and its application to Ontological Coaching is clearly evident in its somatic approach, offering expanded capacities from which to observe, listen, and speak. Training in a group setting with Laura Bond has opened up pathways to my own emotional life, providing me with an enriched experience of my Self, and allows me to perceive and empathize with others more authentically."

~Robert Fertman, Newfield Network Trained Coach

Participating in a week long Alba Emoting technique intensive in July of 2009 I experienced - on a very practical and essential level - the connection between breath, muscular tension/release and emotion. Laura Bond creates a trusting learning environment filled with warmth, clarity and care. I highly recommend this work for anyone interested in exploring their own coherence of body, breath and emotion.

~Jill Van Note, PCC, Newfield Network Program Coach, and Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner

For more information on the Alba Method, visit www.breathxpress.com or contact Laura Bond at Laura@breathxpress.com

ⁱ Email interview conducted in September, 2015

ⁱⁱ International Coaching Federation web page and FAQs

<http://www.coachfederation.org/need/landing.cfm?ItemNumber=978&navItemNumber=567>

ⁱⁱⁱ Email interview conducted in September, 2015

^{iv} Using alba emoting to work with emotions in psychotherapy, Juan Pablo Kalawski, Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, Wiley Online Library, DOI:10.1002/cpp.790

^v Email interview conducted in September, 2015

^{vi} Email interview conducted in September, 2015