

## **Autogenic relaxation training**

After many years of investigating and teaching a variety of relaxation techniques I am convinced that Autogenics offers the best combination of effectiveness and simplicity. It is also very well proven in research

### **What is autogenics?**

Autogenics is a series of simple mental exercises designed to promote health by inducing deep relaxation and stimulating the body's self healing mechanisms. Autogenics means literally generated from within and is in practice a combination of auto suggestion and meditation which allows a person to generate a systematic relaxation response within by focussing on specific physical sensations in the body.

Autogenics was developed by a Dr Johannes Schultz in 1930. He noticed that people who meditated regularly and who were deeply relaxed noted various physiological characteristics, including sensations of warmth and heaviness throughout the body. He then surmised that it would be possible to use these sensations to generate a state of deep relaxation. Thus the standard exercises of Autogenics were developed as set out below.

Internationally there are now over 3000 scientific studies which demonstrate the positive effects of the training, both as a preventative medicine and as an antidote to stress related disorders.

Like any skill Autogenic exercises may seem difficult at first but perseverance is rewarded and regular, preferably daily, practice produces benefits for almost every person who sticks with it. Begin with 10 minutes and work up to 20 to 30 minutes per session.

### **Instructions for Autogenic Relaxation Exercises**

1. You can adopt a sitting or lying position. Ensure that you are comfortable and have emptied your bladder if necessary. Adjust your sitting or lying position so that there is little or no discomfort or strain on any limbs.
2. Ensure that you have a quiet environment which will be free from distractions for the time that you need for the exercises.
- 3.. First , it is important to understand the cancelling procedure which you always use at the end of an autogenics session. It is a bit like the first yawn and stretch of the day. It helps to bring you from a relaxed state of consciousness to full waking.

For autogenics you do the following:

- clench both fists tightly
- bend elbows briskly and stretch both arms out.,either in front of you or sideways.
- take a deep breath in
- open your eyes and breathe out.

If, at any point in the exercise, you feel uncomfortable sensations or emotions you must use this cancelling technique.

exercises themselves.

4.You then begin the exercises proper,starting with a scan . This just means taking your mind to your feet and then gradually working through each part of the body, noting how it feels. Just notice the sensations in each body part

5.You then begin the 'Heavy' exercise. Begin with either legs , or arms .Choose either left or right to start and repeat mentally " my arm ( or leg) is heavy" Repeat at least three times and try to keep your mind focussed on the limb.

Then go to the opposite side and do the same. Practise this for several minutes. Only when you begin to notice a change in sensation should you then move on to other parts.

6. Repeat the 'heavy ' exercise for the other limbs. If you have started with the legs now move to the arms, and repeat the heaviness formula for left and right side ( obviously if you have started with the arms, now move to the legs).

7. Once you begin to really notice the sensations of heaviness , move on to the 'warmth 'exercise. This follows the same pattern, only now you create warmth in each part to go with the heaviness. You mentally repeat, several times, " my..... feels warm".

8.Once you master the main heaviness and warmth exercises you can add in the heartbeat one. For this you focus on your heartbeat and simply repeat "my heartbeat is calm and regular" several times. Do not be tempted to change the wording of the phrase.

9. Now add in the solar plexus, which is a key nerve centre in the body. This is where you feel the butterflies in the stomach. It is about midway between the front and back of your body , above the navel. Repeat " my solar plexus feels warm".

10. The last exercise is different, but there are sound physiological reasons for this. You focus on the forehead becoming cool, rather than warm. Repeat “my forehead feels cool.”

With all of the exercises you will find that you are distracted and that your mind wanders. This is OK. Just gently bring your focus back each time onto the instruction and the body part.

Remember to cancel at the end of each session.

Best results are achieved by short sessions two to three times a day. For many people three times a day is not practical. The vast majority of people notice a benefit after two weeks of practising at least three or four times a week. Although experienced trainers report that THREE MONTHS is usually required for people to realise the full benefits.

**Results** : I have observed a range of benefits in people who learn Autogenics, as well as using it myself with great benefit. The most common and obvious benefit I have witnessed has been in lowering blood pressure: I have known a number of people come off medication when using Autogenics when using a combination of Autogenics and Homeopathy

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