

Autogenic Training and CBT

Some Reflections

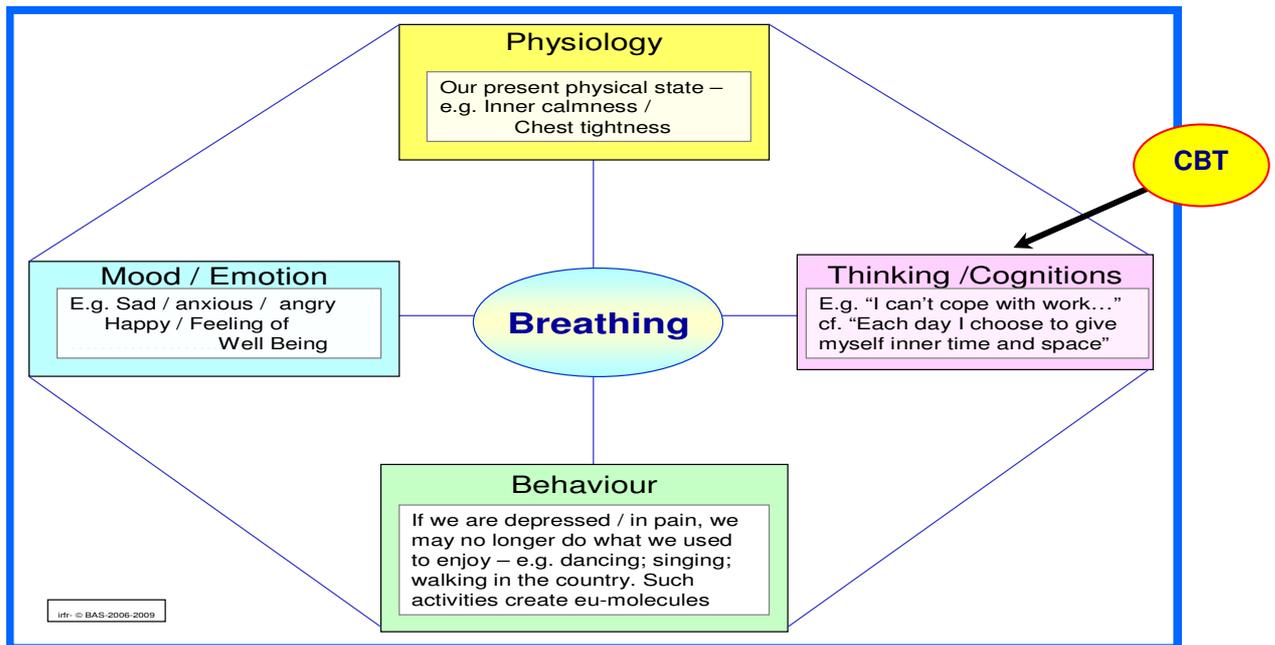
If we reflect on the nature of the world, we see that everything is inter-related with everything else. Take for example a Tree. Thich Nhat Hanh says:

I see the sun in a tree; for without the sun, there can be no tree.
 I see the clouds in a tree; for without clouds, there can be no rain; and so no water for the tree.
 I see the air in the tree; for without air, there is no oxygen; and so no tree.
 I see the earth in the tree; for without the earth, there can be no soil and nutrients for the roots of the tree; and so no tree.

As human beings, we share these characteristics with trees. Furthermore, our consciousness is inter-related both with the external environment and with the internal environment of our body-mind. There is a clear link between consciousness, our thinking, our emotions, our physiology and our behaviour. For example, if we are feeling low and depressed, this will have an effect on our behaviour. If, on the other hand, we are feeling well in ourselves, and – as it were – “Walking Tall”, this may also be reflected in our behaviour and our interactions with others. Thus our mood / emotions can have a profound effect on our well-being.

If we are afraid, this will have physiological effects, such as an increase in adrenaline, which in turn may affect our behaviour. Whereas if we have just completed an Autogenic sequence, our physiology will be in balance and this can have a positive effect upon our attitude, behaviour, and relationships with others. Similarly, our thinking can have a profound effect upon our whole being. Negative thinking tends to lead to negative outcomes and behaviours. Whereas positive thinking tends to have positive outcomes (Fredrickson 2009). If we change our behaviour, and one day decide to go for a walk in the country, we may experience the wonders of nature and of simply being; and this will affect our physiology, mood and thinking.

Thus our mood, physiology, thinking and behaviour are inter-dependent. The Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) approach aims at linking these four through changing our thinking patterns. However, changing any one of these four can, as indicated above, have an effect on all the other three. Figure 1 illustrates this; breathing has been added to the model, as breathing is in many ways the link between consciousness and our physiology.



The CBT model as originally conceived focused very much on the thinking / cognition quadrant, as suggested in Figure 1.

Cognition: The mental act or process by which knowledge is acquired, including perception, intuition, and reasoning - Collins English Dictionary 1994.

If we went to see a CBT therapist a decade or so ago, they might well have said something that made us feel there was something wrong with our thinking. More recent research suggests that this is not the case: it is more that we tend to over-generalise – which is sometimes called catastrophising. Something happens, and from that we imagine the worst. Say our boss frowns, and we feel that he is frowning at us and we may get the sack by the end of the week: such internal reasoning by us is a form of catastrophising¹. Our boss may simply have had an upset with his / her partner that morning, or be suffering from a pain in the back.

One of the reasons that Autogenic Training can have such a powerful effect is that it can have a direct impact on a variety of parameters, including: our physiology, our mood, our behaviour, our thinking and our breathing. This is shown schematically in Figure 2.

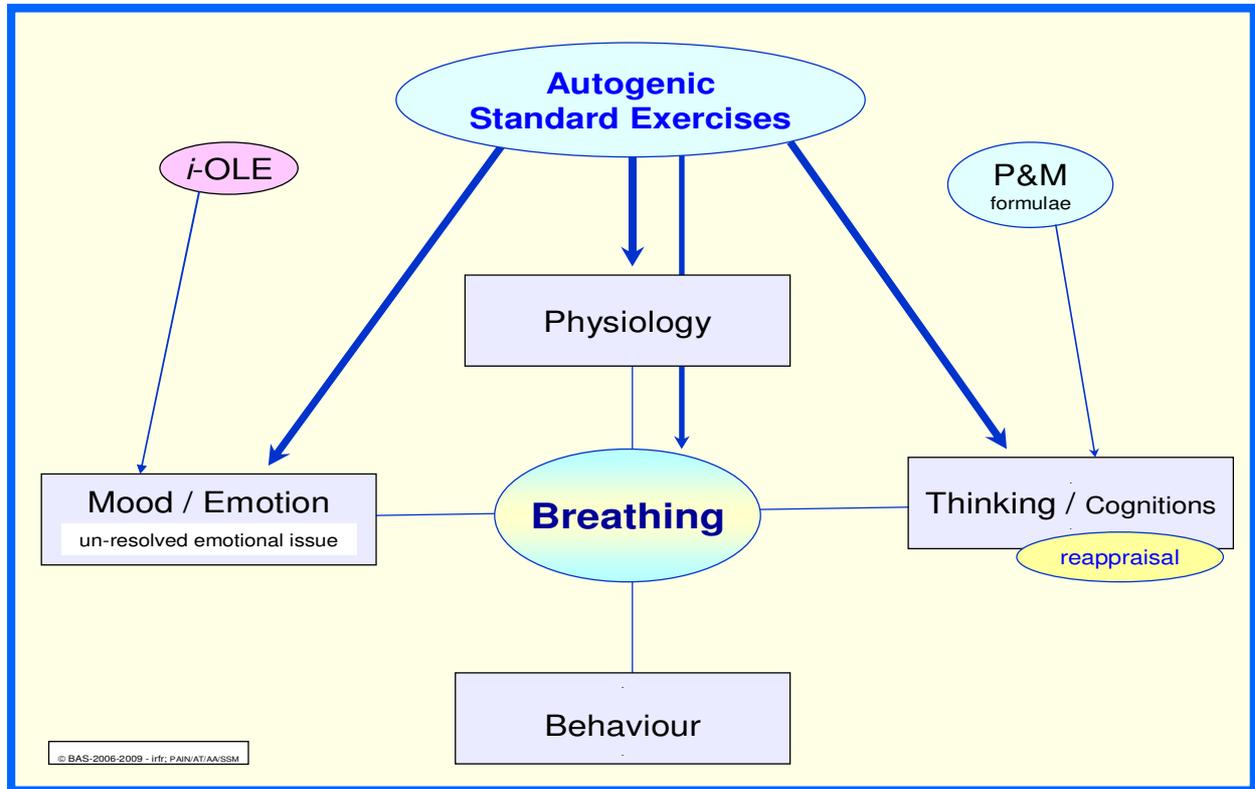


Figure 2
Autogenic Training in relation to our
Physiology, Emotions & Mood, Behaviour, Thinking and Breathing

i-ole: Intentional Off-Loading Exercises.
P&M: Personal & Motivational Formulae

Note: the Autogenic process will facilitate our ability to re-appraise and re-frame in a positive light.

As we enter an Autogenic session, we gently settle down and become mindfully aware of various aspects of our body – for example, “Neck and Shoulders Heavy”. The slow and focused repetition of these Standard Exercise formulae (phrases) bring about a gradual change in our being and our physiology (the psycho-physiological shift – Umschaltung – Schultz & Luthe 1969 p 1). Instead of any disturbance that we may have been feeling before the session, that would have been associated with cascades of mal-molecules, with the AT sequence we now move into a different space associated with rest, repair and recuperation – and with cascades of eu-molecules².

Mental Training practices such as Meditation increase Left Frontal Lobe activity on EEG; this has been shown to be associated with an increase in positive type emotions – which act as antidotes to negative and destructive mental states (Davidson 2003A; 2003B). It is thought that Autogenic Training has a similar effect.

¹ Note: a thought is just a thought. It is not necessarily a fact.

² See page three for a brief description of mal-molecules and eu-molecules.

The transformation of our neuro-physiology during an AT session has the potential to modify and harmonise our thinking, our bodily sensations, our mood, and our subsequent behaviour. This will all help us to develop a more mindful approach to life – i.e. develop Mindful Awareness.

References and sources

Davidson; Richard J. et al; 2003A Alterations in Brain and Immune function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation ; Psychosomatic Medicine (2003); 65: 564 - 570 (From the Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience, Dept. of Psychology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin: Stress Reduction Clinic.)
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Linked themes in this Autogenic Dynamics section;

A3	Towards a concept of happiness and well-being [Zz-36]
B5	Emotions, Frontal Lobe dynamics, and Meditative type practices [Zz-64]
B6	Perceptions, flowers, and reality
D1	Reflections on foundations for mindful living [Zz-18]

Comment on eu-molecules and mal-molecules

Eu-molecules	<p>Similar in concept to Selye's <u>Eustress</u>. A term coined by IR (Ross 2007B – unpublished) to describe the cascades of life-enhancing informational substances that flow through the body when we are in a state of harmony; when our thoughts are positive and / or nurturing; and when we are in a positive mental state / emotion (affect). If we smile gently, that will be associated with cascades of informational eu-molecules. (Compare with <u>Mal-molecules</u> - see below.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that molecules are, obviously, not in themselves good or bad. However, on-going cascades of informational substances that flow through our body when we are in harmony and / or in a positive mood / affect will have beneficial effects on our health and being. In such a context these informational substances are called eu-molecules.
Mal-molecules Also see <u>Molecules</u>	<p>A term used by IR derived originally from Selye's concept <u>Eu-stress</u>; hence <u>Eu-molecules</u> (see above in this glossary; and referred to in Ross 2005X – unpublished).</p> <p>Mal-molecules is a term used to describe on-going and persistent cascades of informational substances when we are stressed and / or when we are in a negative / destructive mood or affect. For example, every time we recall a past event that still makes us angry, we are actually setting in motion cascades of (potentially) mal-molecules. Recurrent cascades of such mal-molecules can, over time, lead to <u>Allostatic Load</u>. [Unresolved and unremitting persistent grief would be another example].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that molecules are, obviously, not in themselves good or bad. However, persistent and unremitting cascades of some <u>informational substances</u> (molecules) that flow through our body when we are stressed / emotionally disturbed can lead to damage; and these we call mal-molecules.
<p>Extracts from Glossary of Ross 2010 Words notated <u>thus</u> are also in the glossary; should you wish to have a copy of Autogenic Dynamics, please discuss with Ian Ross – thank you.</p>	