



The word "Autogenic" means generated from within ourselves.

For many of us, life is hectic and stressful. Added to which, we may have unresolved issues relating to childhood or other traumas such as the break-up of a relationship. These can all activate our Stress Response (the Fight / Flight reaction), cause great inner distress, and prevent us from reaching our potential.

However, we all have within us a Natural Healing System which, with Mental Training, we can tap into on a regular basis; this will greatly help us to deal with the inevitable ups and downs of life.

Autogenic Training is an effective form of Mental Training, in which we activate our own innate healing systems.

### Autogenic Training

Autogenic Training (AT) was originally developed by Dr Johannes Schultz in Berlin in the 1920s. His research showed that AT "brings about profound relaxation and relief from the negative effects of stress". We may suffer from stress at work or at home; and indeed distressing feelings are themselves associated with distressed physiology in our bodies as well as our Mind-Brain [Panksepp & Biven 2012].

AT is a skilful means to help us deal effectively with stress and distressing feelings – however these arise. This means it can be an effective form of mental training if we are going through a difficult phase in our life, and / or as a form of mental training for personal growth and development.

Ian Ross, a member of the British Autogenic Society, has been teaching AT on a group and one to one basis for over twenty years in Edinburgh. The Spring 2019 courses will be the first AT group taken in North Berwick.

### The Basic AT exercises

The course involves learning a series of mental exercises over nine Sessions, the first eight of which are at weekly intervals. These exercises have the effect of mobilising our own, innate, self-healing powers. (In physiological terms, this involves switching off the potentially damaging Stress Response and *switching on the Relaxation Response*.)

- AT can thus re-balance physiological and mental disharmony by facilitating the rest, repair, and recuperative processes that are within each of us. A full sequence of these mental exercises will last from ten to twenty minutes. The course involves regular home work<sup>1</sup>. AT is a specific skill, and as with learning any type of skill (e.g. sewing, football, yoga, Tai Chi) we can only become competent with regular practice.
- Schultz was concerned that many therapies result in the client / patient becoming dependant upon the therapist. Once AT is learned, the *individual becomes independent of the therapist*, and has a life long skill which can greatly help us deal with the the challenges of life.

### Brief Mental Exercises

In addition to the above full exercises, very brief mental exercises are also learned which can be used when we are feeling stressed or upset – and when there is no time for the full sequence. These brief exercises can be used, *for example*, when we are in a queue at a post office; when we are waiting at red traffic lights; when we are feeling tense before a meeting – or when the phone rings.

### Dealing with negative / painful emotions and upsets

Anxiety, nervousness, anger, resentment, grief and / or loss are examples of emotions which we all experience from time to time. These reflect the human condition and the suffering that many of us experience. Often this involves negative ruminations in which we may end up in a downward spiral of distress. During the course we cover a number of skilful approaches to deal with such matters.

<sup>1</sup> This means that, ideally, we practice the AT mental exercises three times a day.

**A positive and wholesome attitude to problems and life**

Towards the end of the basic course in AT, individual / personal exercises are introduced which can have a positive effect on negative attitudes and on various physical & mental problems. These personal exercises allow us to develop a more wholesome outlook on life and living; these include exercises focusing on Constructive Feelings, which are integrated with concepts from Positive Psychology, Mindfulness, and CBT. In this way AT can facilitate in the development of our True / Authentic Self.

In addition, we look at teaching stories and metaphors, as a way of reframing our outlook and perspective.

**Duration and format of group and one to one courses**

The basic AT course consists of:

i.	A one to one pre-course orientation session (usually lasting ninety minutes to two hours).
ii.	Eight weekly sessions each lasting 105 - 120 minutes
iii.	A ninth (follow up) session six weeks or so after the eighth session.

AT for

- Resilience
- Autonomy
- Self-empowerment *and*
- Developing Authentic Self

Participants who have completed the course are invited to refresher sessions.

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**Two Spring Group courses** are scheduled for the Barefoot Sanctuary, North Berwick in 2019, starting:

- Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> February (a.m.); and
- Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019 (6.00 p.m.)

**Full Cost** (for Group) Course: £ 120, discussed at the one to one pre-course orientation session (negotiable, depending on means).

**Please note:** a place is secured on the course following the one to one pre-course orientation session, if we both then feel AT is appropriate.

For further details, Leith Group courses, and one to one AT courses, please contact Ian Ross direct:

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E-mail: [ross425@btinternet.com](mailto:ross425@btinternet.com)

Also see: [www.atdynamics.co.uk](http://www.atdynamics.co.uk) (which includes comments from previous course members).

Autogenic Training can be helpful for many of us, from all walks of life, including the following:

- Stress at home / work
- Anxiety and some forms of depression.
- Emotional upset and...
- ....difficulties in dealing with negative / distressing feelings
- Sleep problems
- Tension Headaches / Irritable Bowel
- Personal / Professional Development.

Previous course members have included: mums; teachers; college / uni students; singers; therapists; secretaries; lawyers; nurses; landscape architects; and garage mechanics.

**A few references and sources:**

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Goleman, Daniel: 2003; IN: Destructive Emotions – <i>and how we can overcome them</i> . A dialogue with The Dalai Lama	ISBN 0-7475-6182-6
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Segal, Zindel V.; Williams, J. Mark G.; & Teasdale, John D.: 2002 Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: <i>a new approach to preventing relapse</i>	ISBN 1-57230-7064
Sunderland, Margot. 2007 / 2007 What every parent needs to know	ISBN 978-1-4053-2036-8

Dr Ian Ross retired from General Practice in 2005, having worked in a Leith Practice since 1977. He has taken over seventy Autogenic groups at his old surgery (Rose Garden Medical Centre, Leith) since 1994. During the last twenty years, he has developed a specific interest in stress and stressors – and how these can affect us both physically and emotionally. Research in recent decades has confirmed that a number of disciplines, such as Meditation and Autogenic Training, can have a positive effect on our well-being. Ian Ross is a member of the British Autogenic Society and registered with the UKCP  
[www.autogenic-therapy.org.uk](http://www.autogenic-therapy.org.uk)