

AUTOGENICS

Johannes Schultz, a German neurologist, had experimented with hypnotism and noted the changed perception of bodily states, feelings of heaviness, warmth and deep relaxation, that could be induced. He wondered to what extent people could be taught to induce these feelings themselves through a process of self-hypnosis, or as Wolfgang Luthe, one of his students, was to call it, autogenic training. Schultz advocated the repetition of repeated phrases to relax the body. The kind of formula he suggested followed the lines of, "My left hand is feeling warm and heavy. My forearm feels warm and heavy etc."

The technique can be practised more or less anywhere when there is some spare time in a quiet place, and it can be self-taught or taught by a therapist. It has been found to be useful in a number of psychosomatic conditions including anxiety, high blood pressure, some allergies and other "stress-related" and other conditions which may be psychogenic in origin.

It can be linked to other forms of therapy. For instance, Elmer Green (not Fudd) married up the findings of autogenic training with his own discoveries from studying Yoga in developing Biofeedback.

METHOD

Assume one of the following positions according to circumstances:

1. The Coachman Sit with your head hanging slightly forward, forearms and hands resting loosely on your thighs, your legs positioned comfortably, feet parted slightly outwards.
2. The Easy Chair Sit comfortably in a lounge chair, your head resting against the back. Arms and hands are on the chair arms or resting on your thighs, legs and feet comfortably positioned with feet turned slightly outward.
3. Reclining Lie down on your back, your head slightly pillowed, your arms a little bent at the elbows, and rest your palms down beside your body. Your legs are relaxed and not touching each other, feet slightly apart.

Warm-up

Imagine you are putting on a "relaxation mask". This mask smoothes out frowns and tension wrinkles. All the muscles in your face relax, let go. Your eyelids close and rest gently, with eyes aimed at the tip of your nose. Your jaw hangs loosely, your mouth slightly open. Your tongue touches the gum-line of your upper teeth. Start a gentle cycle of breathing with strain (belly breathing). Breathe slowly, exhaling for twice as long as you inhale. Spend 2-3 minutes on the warm-up, then move into the exercises.

First Exercise - Heaviness

Begin with your dominant arm. Silently, meaningfully, repeat the formula:-

- a) My right arm is growing limp and heavy (6-8 times)
- b) My right arm is growing heavier and heavier (6-8 times)
- c) My right arm is completely heavy (6-8 times)
- d) I feel supremely calm (Once)

Then open your eyes and "throw away" the heaviness. Bend your arm back and forth a few times, take a few deep breaths, then begin the cycle again. Including the "warm-up", spend about 7 to 10 minutes at this 2 or 3 times a day.

Do the heaviness exercise with your right arm for 3 days. After that, for the following 3 days, continue with the same formula but with the following substitution:-

- a) My left arm is growing limp and heavy 6-8 times
- b) Both my arms are growing limp and heavy 6-8 times
- c) My right leg is growing limp and heavy 6-8 times
- d) My left leg is growing limp and heavy 6-8 times
- e) Both my legs are growing limp and heavy 6-8 times
- f) My arms and legs are growing limp and heavy 6-8 times

Second Exercise - Warmth

This is to teach you to arouse a feeling of warmth in yourself at will. Steps to follow:-

- a) (a) Begin with the "warm-up" for about 2 minutes.
- b) (b) Do one cycle of the previous formula for heaviness in the arms and legs. The exercise then follows the same general formula, e.g.:-

- a) My right arm is growing limp and warm 6-8 times
- b) My right arm is growing warmer and warmer 6-8 times
- c) My right arm is completely warm 6-8 times
- d) I feel supremely calm Once

Do the above exercise for three days then bring together the formulae for heaviness and warmth:-

- a) My arms and legs are growing limp and heavy and warm 6-8 times
- b) My arms and legs are growing heavier and warmer 6-8 times
- c) My arms and legs are completely heavy and warm 6-8 times
- d) I feel supremely calm Once

Third Exercise - A Calm Heart

You are learning to have a calm, steady heart-beat.

Warm-up. Repeat in short form the heavy/warm formula reciting each phrase 3 or 4 times. In the beginning do this exercise on your back. Mentally feel for your heart-beat. Sense it in your chest, throat or wherever. (If you are subject to headaches, do not feel for it in your head.) Repeat silently:

- a) My chest feels warm and pleasant 6-8 times
- b) My heart-beat is calm and steady 6-8 times
- c) I feel supremely calm 6-8 times

Do this exercise 2 or 3 times a day for 7 to 10 minutes for 2 weeks.

Fourth Exercise - Breathing

You will learn to have better control over the rhythm of your breathing. Repeat the following:

- a) My arms and legs are growing limp, heavy and warm 1-2 times
- b) My arms and legs are growing heavier and warmer 1-2 times
- c) My arms and legs are completely heavy and warm 1-2 times
- d) My heart-beat is calm and steady 1-2 times
- e) I feel supremely calm Once
- f) My breathing is completely calm 6-8 times
- g) I feel supremely calm Once

Do this exercise for 14 days, 7 to 10 minutes, 2 to 3 times per day.

Fifth Exercise - Stomach

You are learning to arouse a pleasant feeling of warmth in your stomach area. Do the warm-up. Repeat in short form the heavy/warm formula, the heart and breathing formula. Then:

- a) My stomach is growing soft and warm 6-8 times
- b) I feel supremely calm Once

Do this exercise for 7 to 10 minutes, 2 or 3 times per day for 2 weeks. The exercise is considered mastered when you feel a definite warmth.

Sixth Exercise - Cool Forehead

Begin with the warm-up. Repeat in short form the formula for heaviness, warmth, heart, breathing and stomach. Then:

- a) My forehead is cool 6-8 times
- b) I feel supremely calm Once

Imagine a fresh breeze cooling your forehead and temples. If necessary, to catch the feeling, stand in front of an air conditioner or fan.

Repeat the exercise 2 or 3 times a day for 7-10 minutes, over a period of 14 days.

CONCLUSION

With these six basic exercises, you have access to a powerful form of self relaxation. Twice daily practice for 5-10 minutes will help it become a permanent, positive, feature of your life.