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## Autogenic Training – Introduction

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### What is Autogenic Training?

Autogenic Training (AT) is a technique that teaches your body to respond to your verbal commands. These commands ‘tell’ your body to relax and control breathing, blood pressure, heartbeat, and body temperature.

The goal of AT is to achieve deep relaxation and reduce stress. After you learn the technique, you can use it whenever you need or want relief from symptoms of stress, or you can practice it regularly to enjoy the benefits of deep relaxation and prevent the effects of chronic stress.

Autogenic Training consists of six standard exercises that make the body feel warm, heavy, and relaxed. For each exercise, you get into a simple posture (sitting in a comfortable chair or reclining), concentrate without any goal, and then use visual images and verbal cues to relax your body in a specific way.

You learn each exercise by reading about it or watching an instructor, then practicing it for a few minutes several times a day. Learning the exercises usually moves at a slow, steady pace, taking 3 to 4 months to master all six exercises.

Without regular practice, Autogenic Training is not likely to have any effect. For this reason, only those people who are motivated and committed to learning it are likely to get any benefit from AT. However, for those who master the technique, it works, and it can be an effective treatment for chronic stress.

The way AT works is not fully understood, but its effects on the body are measurable. Experts believe that AT works in ways that are similar to hypnosis and biofeedback. The exercises allow communication between the mind and the body, allowing you to influence body reactions that cannot normally be controlled, such as blood pressure, heartbeat, and body temperature.

### What is Autogenic Training used for?

Most people use Autogenic Training (AT) to relieve the symptoms of stress. It can also be helpful with problems such as generalized anxiety, fatigue, and irritability. Some people use it to manage pain, reduce sleeping disorders such as insomnia, and increase their resistance to stress.

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In addition, AT has been shown to help treat:

- Hyperventilation (breathing that is deeper and more rapid than normal)
- Asthma (inflammation in the tubes that carry air to the lungs, resulting in periodic episodes of difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness, and coughing)
- Constipation and diarrhea
- Gastritis and stomach spasms
- Ulcers (sores on the skin or on a mucous membrane, such as inside the mouth, stomach, or intestines)
- Racing heart and irregular heartbeat
- High blood pressure
- Cold hands or feet
- Headaches
- Thyroid problems, such as an overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism)
- Sexual dysfunction
- Problems with concentration
- Mood swings

## Is Autogenic Training safe?

Autogenic Training (AT) is safe for most people. Before beginning a program to learn AT, see your doctor for a physical exam and discuss what physiological effects AT might have on you. If you have a serious disease such as diabetes, or a heart condition, learn and use AT only under the supervision of your physician.

Some people have a sharp increase or decrease in their blood pressure when they do AT exercises. If you have high or low blood pressure, have your physician or nurse check to see whether AT is bringing your blood pressure closer to normal.

If you use AT to help control any disease, including all heart and circulatory problems, do not use it to replace any conventional treatments such as medications.

AT is not recommended for:

- Children younger than age 5.
- People with severe mental or emotional disorders.

If you feel more anxious or restless during or after doing the exercises, stop AT or continue only under a professional AT instructor's supervision.