Autogenics

by ERIC PATTERSON

Autogenic Training for Anxiety: A New Kind of Relaxation Technique

Deep breathing hasn't worked. Meditation and guided imagery haven't worked. Neither has progressive muscle relaxation. You are beginning to think that your stress, tension and anxiety are too much for any relaxation technique to handle. If this sounds like you, it is time to consider autogenic training. Autogenic training or autogenics works by progressively relaxing your limbs while calming your heartbeat and breathing.

You may be thinking that this seems like other relaxation techniques you've tried but it is not. The biggest, most beneficial difference between this and other relaxation techniques is that autogenics does not require a clear mind. The need for a clear mind is difficult for someone with anxiety. The more you try to reduce apprehension, the more apparent it is. Autogenics works by injecting positive, desirable thoughts into your mind. Read or listen to a statement and repeat it three times to yourself to achieve the desired result.

Train to Relax

Autogenics, like any other relaxation technique, requires time and patience to get the best results. Here are some tips:

- **Find the best script.** Autogenics uses scripts that progress through the series of relaxations. An online search will yield many results for such scripts, so find one that makes sense for you. Do you have excessive worry? Find one that targets unwanted thoughts. Do you have physical tension? Find one that targets the body! Ask your therapist for a recommendation but don't be surprised if he or she has not heard of autogenics; many therapists haven't.
- **Find the best delivery system.** Scripts can be read aloud by someone else or memorized and repeated by you. Memorization can be difficult at first when the process is new. Having a trusted person lead you through can prove helpful and reassuring. Plenty of online videos exist with autogenic training. Take note of the benefits of a recorded script versus having the script read to you in person. After some practice, complete a training based on memory.
- **Modify the script.** Even the best script may need modification. This is perfectly appropriate. After several trials, you will have a better idea of what is helpful and what can be removed for your specific circumstances. Autogenics should evolve as your needs and abilities change. Some people report that the positive effect from autogenics lessens over time, and modification is the solution to this problem.

- **Modify the process.** Autogenics is infinitely modifiable. This is a great strength of this type of relaxation technique. You may want to repeat each phrase twice to yourself, or maybe five times. You may benefit from three minute sessions or maybe seventy minute sessions; it's all relative. There is no right or wrong way to practice autogenics. If it is working for you, keep on going! If it is not working, keep trying; eventually you will have success.

Conclusion

Relaxation has not worked for you yet. Should you give up? Should you be resigned to the notion that medication is the only way to find relief? No. Autogenics is another source of relaxation that is just waiting for you. With the focus on positive self-talk, you may notice that your depression and anxiety are reduced after a few short sessions.