

ACHIEVING EQUILIBRIUM

A Simple Way to Balance Body and Mind



An Introduction to Autogenics

GAYLIN TUDHOPE & ROS DRAPER

PRAISE FOR *ACHIEVING EQUILIBRIUM*

“The guidance from this book, through the practice of Autogenic Therapy (AT), has immeasurably enhanced both my personal and professional life. AT should be a standard part, not only of every mental health professional’s therapeutic toolkit, but recognised as a necessary resource for us as ‘humans’ to manage the inevitability of this often unsafe and uncertain world in which we live. *Achieving Equilibrium* is an eloquent, accessible, engaging manual that can be used across cultural, professional, and personal domains, to maintain our homeostasis.”

Marianne Le Coyte Grinney, specialist family & systemic psychotherapist and clinical lead

“I very much welcome *Achieving Equilibrium* as a comprehensive introduction to Autogenic Therapy. It provides a step-by-step guide to this powerful technique. This book is a useful tool, offering readers the opportunity to learn this deceptively simple technique, and allowing them to take control of their anxiety and stress, improving general wellbeing.”

Shanagh Telford, homeopath

“Achieving Equilibrium is a very welcome book. Our world presents us with serious issues, all of which impact our wellbeing and cause us to experience stress in our bodies. The authors have given us a clear and comprehensive pathway using AT exercises to help us heal our bodies from the effects of this stress. As a psychotherapist and mindfulness teacher, I will be recommending this book to my clients as a tool to support their wellbeing and to manage and heal the symptoms of stress in their lives.”

Maureen Treanor, psychotherapist, supervisor
and mindfulness teacher

*“As a doctor working with patients with sleep behaviour problems, I have found that patients who don’t respond well to cognitive behaviour therapy can benefit from AT. I believe that readers of *Achieving Equilibrium* can benefit from learning AT, as it is a proven effective stress reduction process, and it is well known that many physical conditions improve once people have learned to profoundly relax.”*

Dr. Peter Gruenewald, MD, psychologist

“This volume will enable many to become aware of Autogenic Therapy in this year of the celebration of 100 years of AT’s development and years to come. The authors are to be commended for providing both theoretical and practical insights into the many beneficial aspects of AT. I appreciate the comprehensive detailed Glossary, so good to have some details of the history and people who have been instrumental in the first 100 years of AT. It will be a pleasure to share copies with colleagues and friends.”

Judith Wren, former British Autogenic Society chairperson

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A Simple Way to Balance
Body and Mind

Gaylin Tudhope and Ros Draper

AEON

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The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another. Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together, and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling which is not.

—William James
American Psychologist

The coordinated physiological processes which maintain most of the steady states in the organism are so complex and so peculiar to living beings—involving, as they may, the brain and nerves, the heart, lungs, kidneys and spleen, all working cooperatively—that I have suggested a special designation for these states homeostasis. The word does not imply something set and immobile, a stagnation. It means a condition—a condition which may vary but which is relatively constant. Homeostasis describes the adaptive mechanisms that preserve functional stability in the face of environmental change. Great emotional stress could trigger uncontrolled hormonal secretion, particularly from the pituitary, thyroid and adrenal glands, which would play havoc with our internal adjustments and lead to disease.

—Walter Cannon
American Physiologist

*Once the body achieves a state of neuromuscular homeostasis
the mind will follow suit.*

—Edmund Jacobson
American Physician

*Stress like relativity is a scientific concept, which has suffered from
the mixed blessing of being too well known and too little understood.
Man should not try to avoid stress any more than he would shun food,
love or exercise. It is not stress that kills us, it's our reaction to it.
Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one.*

—Hans Selye
Hungarian-Canadian Endocrinologist

*Self regulation depends on having a friendly relationship with your body.
Without it you have to rely on external regulation—from medication,
drugs like alcohol, constant reassurance, or compulsive compliance with
the wishes of others. Neuroscience research shows that the only way we
can change the way we feel is by becoming aware of our inner experience
and learning to befriend what is going on inside ourselves.*

—Bessel van der Kolk
Dutch-American Psychiatrist

*The research literature has identified three factors that universally lead to
stress: uncertainty, the lack of information and the loss of control. Well
self-regulated people are the most capable of interacting fruitfully with
others in a community and of nurturing children who will also grow
into self-regulated adults. Anything that interferes with that natural
agenda threatens the organism's chances for long-term survival.*

—Gabor Mate
Hungarian-Canadian Physician

Because of what's called experience-dependent neuroplasticity whatever you hold in attention has a special power to change your brain. Controlling your attention—becoming more able to place it where you want it and keep it there ... is the foundation of changing your brain, and thus your life, for the better. As the great psychologist William James wrote over a century ago 'The education of attention would be the education par excellence'.

*—Rick Hanson
American Neuropsychologist*

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The authors are two psychotherapists with many years of experience working with individuals, couples, families, and organisations. Naturally, we each have a different story about our relationship with and experience of autogenic training (AT).

Gaylin: I completed my AT training in 1998 and as an AT trainer and practitioner I have trained numerous people around the world. I believe strongly that daily use of AT has enormous health benefits and I collaborate with many GPs whose patients with stress-related symptoms such as anxiety, high blood pressure, and sleep issues are helped through learning AT practice with me. The healing power of AT always astounds me each time I teach it and use it.

Ros: I began learning AT in 2019 and was so impressed with the healing potential of AT that in 2020 I undertook the BAS (British Autogenic Society) AT training. I have found AT practice to have enormous health benefits personally and now recommend AT to many of my clients. My wish is for more people to know about this wonderful self-care skillset which fits completely with my belief as a psychotherapist that there is an innate drive towards healing and health in every human being.

We (Gaylin and Ros), along with other AT practitioners, feel that AT urgently needs to be more accessible to a wider public and not only to those who can pay for training with a qualified AT practitioner. So this book offers people the possibility of teaching themselves the six AT standard exercises. We are convinced AT has substantial health benefits to cope with and navigate the demands of today's world.

FOREWORD

Dr Geoffrey Leader MB ChB FRCA Dip ION

Lucille Leader Dip ION CNHC Reg

We congratulate the authors of this book, Gaylin Tudhope and Ros Draper, on their presentation of the art and science of autogenic training (AT). It is academically based, yet in a practical, comprehensive format, easy to understand and apply to life situations. Their mission to enable calm and relaxed focus is accomplished.

AT plays a vital role, not only in integrated medical, paramedical, and psychological management, but also in everyday life situations. Whatever the need for spontaneous decision-making, whether it be general, business, or academic, or in health issues, these challenges can be optimally supported by the application of AT techniques acquired by training.

These specialised techniques, described by the authors in their easy-to-follow text, allow for the feeling of being 'centred', calm, and relaxed, and can then become part of spontaneous responses and decision-making by the individual. AT is eminently suitable for adults. It is also invaluable for children to acquire its techniques in order to support them during the stress of life's educational challenges, as well as with interpersonal relationships during youth and adulthood.

We have introduced the acquisition of AT techniques and their application to children who have thereafter reported better control of stress at exam times and when confronted with

personal and sleep issues. We have had the pleasure of including autogenic training in our integrated medical management clinics for patients with chronic illnesses and also for their carers. This has been presented to our patients by Gaylin Tudhope, psychologist and co-author of this book.

Feedback from patients has been exceptional and they are appreciative of the tools gained to enable better management of their stress, anxiety, medical symptoms, and sleep problems—the latter facilitating body regenerative processes. However, as the authors of this book have highlighted, it is important for people with significant chronic illnesses to consult their integrated medical team before commencing a course of AT training.

We have great pleasure in recommending this book to all individuals who wish to acquire calmness and relaxation. The helpful techniques presented are logical and easy to understand.

PREFACE

The idea for this book emerged in 2020 during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected people in all corners of the globe as we realised how important it is for as many people as possible to have easy access both to an understanding of the health value of Autogenics and instructions for learning and practising Autogenics. Specifically, we wanted to provide people with a way to teach themselves the six AT standard exercises, which are the core of Autogenics, without having to rely on professional help. Indeed, it was the vision of Johannes Schulz, the creator of Autogenics, that people be able to use this self-care skillset without the need to depend on a professional they had to pay. With this book, we want people to be able to teach themselves the basics of Autogenics.

Both of us authors are experienced psychotherapists who, through practising Autogenics ourselves, share a conviction that understanding and learning about Autogenics can help anyone interested in optimising their capacity for self-regulation of their body mind system. In this book we hope we explain how understanding this innate capacity of our body mind system means we can at will activate our parasympathetic nervous system—our rest, repair, restore, and relax mechanism. It is knowing how to self-regulate that enables us to maintain physical and emotional balance in the inner and

outer worlds of our body mind system, which is an essential ingredient of self-care. So it follows that we wanted to find a way to share the information necessary for people to teach themselves the six AT standard exercises, which we know can enhance our wellbeing and strengthen our resilience.

We could see from our own work with our clients since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic that many people have become more and more aware of the everyday stressors to their autonomic nervous system (ANS) created by the pandemic and are therefore recognising the importance of having a repertoire of skills for taking care of their wellbeing. We also already knew from our own experience of regular daily practice of the six standard exercises that Autogenics has a very important part to play in self-care, the promotion of wellbeing, the strengthening of our immune system, and we believe in disease prevention. We wanted therefore to make the six AT standard exercises available to anyone who would read this book so as to increase their sense of agency as they focus on their self-care, maintenance, and promotion of their own wellbeing and resilience during these most challenging 21st century times.

In this book, we want to convey our conviction that knowing how to use the six AT standard exercises can provide us all with direct access, when professional help maybe unavailable or unaffordable, to a means of restoring balance to our body mind system. When our nervous system (ANS) is out of balance, there is a greater potential for illness as our immune system can become compromised by chronic stress. By restoring the balance (homeostasis) needed between our sympathetic (SNS) and parasympathetic (PSNS) nervous systems, we create conditions for our body mind system to self-regulate, thereby minimising the impact of adverse experiences and the unavoidable imbalances stressors create in our autonomic nervous system (ANS).

We say unavoidable imbalances because life always has its up and downs with bumps in the road. Autogenics is a skill-set that helps us navigate these bumps and restore the balance

which is vital for the robust body mind system we need if we are to be able to bounce back from adverse experiences. It is this balance (homeostasis) that provides us with the highway to wellbeing and it is our body mind system's innate capacity to self-regulate, which is the core idea that we want our book to get across to readers.

We are all born with this capacity to self-regulate and just need to understand how we can with intention tap into this innate capacity as we journey through life, navigating more or less stress due to the inevitable internal and external stressors we all regularly experience.

Predictably, partly because of our own ongoing work commitments and the honing of our thinking about how best to present these ideas, we encountered delays as we worked on the book and we now find ourselves writing this preface in April 2022.

Spring 2022, when we are writing this preface, turns out to be the year of the Russian invasion and war with Ukraine, which is an additional stressor to our nervous systems (ANS) already on high alert, whether we are conscious of this or not, from the effects of two years of living with the pandemic. Among the people we meet, we see a continuum of the different ways we can react to the 'bad news' either with denial, e.g. wars are a long way away and won't affect us ... or with paralysing fear, e.g. we may be about to be reduced to dust by an atomic bomb, and anywhere in between those two extremes. Given everyone's nervous system (ANS) is being impacted in some way by anxieties, regarding climate change, wars, global disease infections, and economic hardships, where would you place yourself on the continuum—paralysed by fear or in denial or somewhere in between?

We believe it is important for our ongoing self-care and wellbeing to understand where on the continuum our own reactions at any given time to tragic and frightening news place us. However, it is as important that regardless of our responses to the impact of say the present war in Ukraine, we all recognise

our need to know how to protect our body mind systems and to self-regulate. In the face of any adverse experiences that activate our sympathetic nervous system—our fight, flight, freeze response, our ability to self-regulate—both our physical and mental wellbeing is affected. Self-regulation and resilience are close cousins that help us cope with stress and adapt to change as well as support our wellbeing and self-esteem.

Learning the six AT standard exercises as described in this book will help anyone, whether impacted by war or less dramatic bumps in the road we call life, learn and know how to self-regulate. AT is therefore a reliable resource for the promotion of health and wellbeing available to us all if we set aside the time to learn the six AT standard exercises, so we have a skillset that we can use anywhere and at any time.

Our fervent wish is for people reading this book to feel empowered not just in an emergency situation when Autogenics is definitely helpful but to know they are able to self-regulate before, during, and after any difficult situations they may encounter. It is our hope that once people have experienced and understood the homeostatic balancing effect of self-regulation they will be determined to hold onto the knowledge of how to activate this innate capacity available to all human beings as part of their self-care repertoire.

In order to reach the maximum number of readers in an era of audio books and apps, we have arranged the sections of the book so that if you just want to learn the six AT standard exercises there is a discreet section with all the information you need plus links to video recordings you may want to use as prompts as you are learning. If, on the other hand, you are interested in the ideas behind Autogenics, some of the history and development worldwide of Autogenics, there are sections in the book with this information. We have also included a section where we offer answers to questions we and others have asked as we have worked with Autogenics, as well as a section with some case studies. Each section is discreet and stand-alone.

We acknowledge there are other books about Autogenics as well as online resources available many of which go beyond what we are calling the basics. However, we hope rather boldly perhaps that this book, aiming as it does to provide a way for readers to teach themselves the basic ideas and practices of the six AT standard exercises without needing input from a professional, can make a significant contribution to the self-care literature. If readers' appetites are whetted to learn more, so much the better.

Gaylin Tudhope and Ros Draper
England, 2022

INTRODUCTION

This book introduces readers to autogenic training (AT), which like its name, auto = self and genic = generating—self generating, means that it allows for self regulating of the mind and body. AT is a unique self-help tool created in the 1920s by Johannes Schulz, a German physician. AT is for those of us concerned about learning a skillset that can help us optimise and support our resilience as well as restore our health and well-being anytime we develop symptoms in response to stressors in our lives. For health maintenance, we each need to recognise what causes negative stress to our body mind system and also to learn how to insulate ourselves from the effects of these stressors. It is our belief that understanding and being able to use AT, via the six AT standard exercises we are offering in this book, provides us with this much-needed insulation.

Offering this book at this time is part of our response to the many challenges we are all facing in the changed world of the 2020s and because we know AT can contribute to helping us successfully navigate unfamiliar territory without undue damage or suffering to our body mind systems. Early 21st-century challenges, whether from the adaptations required by the pandemic, the consequences of wars, daily working in front of a screen, or commutes to and from an office, mean our body mind systems are exposed to many different stressors.

Practising AT regularly can mitigate some of the bodily stress from sitting at a computer for prolonged periods of time. Practising AT regularly can also mitigate the effects, which of course vary from individual to individual, of constant exposure to news and information good and bad via electronic platforms.

As the 20th century progressed, health professionals increasingly emphasised the need to learn self-care, calming, and self-soothing skillsets to counteract the effects of everyday stressors; put another way, how to learn to access our body mind system's inbuilt relaxation response. So today, healthcare practitioners of both conventional allopathic Western medicine as well as functional, alternative, or complementary medicine practitioners routinely assess a patient's understanding of, relationship with, and motivation for acquiring self-care skills.

AT can sit comfortably alongside popular, effective, well-documented, and researched self-care skillsets, like meditation, tracking heart rate variability, yoga, massage, BioFeedback, swimming, breathwork, hiking, walking, and other pursuits, all of which can support our wellbeing. What we believe distinguishes AT from other self-care skillsets is that its goal is to directly activate the body mind system's own inbuilt capacity for self-regulation. It is self-regulation that promotes or restores the balance (homeostasis) our body mind system needs in order for relaxation, rest, and repair to happen or for our parasympathetic nervous system to be activated so our resilience can be supported and maintained. It is this innate capacity for self-regulation that triggers the relaxation response in our body mind system. Relaxation is therefore a by-product of a body mind system in balance so not the primary goal of practising the six AT standard exercises.

AT then refers to the way in which our mind can influence our body and our body influence our mind to come to a state of balance (homeostasis) in which the inbuilt self-regulating capacity of our autonomic nervous system (ANS) can do its job. This balance can occur only when our sympathetic nervous

system (SNS)—our fight, flight, freeze protective mechanism and our parasympathetic nervous system (PSNS)—our rest, restore, digest, and repair mechanisms are working in tandem to enable balance (homeostasis) for the wellbeing of our body mind system. Thus AT provides a way to enhance the positive and mitigate the negative effects of the inevitable stressors we encounter in life. Of course, each of us has a different threshold for tolerating levels of stress. So only when stress starts affecting our physical and mental wellbeing do we know our sympathetic nervous systems (SNS) has taken over. It is then that we need a skillset like AT so we are able to activate our parasympathetic nervous system (PSNS) in order to bring our body mind system back into balance.

AT is a series of easy to learn mental exercises for self-use designed to restore this balance (homeostasis) to our autonomic nervous system (ANS). Regular daily use of the six AT standard exercises enables us to turn off the sympathetic nervous system's (SNS) fight, flight, or freeze mechanism, which is designed and needed to deal with any real or perceived danger or threat we encounter, and turn on the parasympathetic nervous system (PSNS), which is designed and needed for repair, restoration, and relaxation of our body mind system. It is when these two systems, together with the enteric nervous system (ENS), are in a state of balance (homeostasis) that the inbuilt capacity of our ANS to regulate our body mind system can function efficiently—do the job it (ANS) was designed to do for us.

In the 21st century, it is now widely recognised by health professionals that it is our capacity for self-regulation of our autonomic nervous system (ANS) that is an important factor in the prevention and/or mitigation of the severity of many physiological and psychological problems and resilience building. What is less well known is that we can learn by regular use of the six AT standard exercises to access our body mind system's inbuilt capacity for this self-regulation. So AT,

whilst not necessarily a cure for any condition and not aiming to replace standard medical treatments, can nevertheless help people better manage symptoms. This means people who practise AT and who are sufferers of anxiety-based disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), eating disorders, and even some learning disorders such as ADHD, to mention a few, can have an improved quality of life.

We aim with this book to enable readers to have easy access to the information they need to learn how to be able to switch at will from a body mind state dominated by the activity of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) to a state in which the parasympathetic system (PSNS) is doing its job of rest, relaxation, and repair. Knowing how to restore body mind balance (homeostasis) prevents us from getting stuck in the overactive state of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS). It is the prolonged or chronic overactive body mind system state of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) that can lead to anxiety, depression, insomnia, exhaustion, and other stress-related conditions, which in turn can effect vital body organs. Navigating this increasingly challenging and complex world of ours requires us to have a repertoire of skills to help us cope with stressors and adapt to change if we are to protect our mental and emotional wellbeing and remain resilient.

When practised daily, the six AT standard exercises provide a self-help skillset that promotes resilience, as practising AT calms the sympathetic nervous system (SNS), which is our body mind system's default neural network. This default network is constantly on the alert for perceived or actual threat but needs the parasympathetic nervous system (PSNS) to be on line too if we are to effectively manage stress, adapt to change, and maintain our resilience and wellbeing. When our sympathetic and parasympathetic mechanisms are working together and balanced, there is a reduction in symptoms of stress: anxiety, insomnia, dangerously high blood pressure, nausea, etc. as these and other symptoms are generally a consequence of

imbalances in our body mind system when our self-regulating capacity is under functioning or compromised.

As well as introducing the reader to the six AT standard exercises, which are the foundation of AT as developed by the originator Johannes Schulz, we describe the background and development internationally of AT; how AT works to balance our body mind system; how to teach yourself the six AT standard exercises; how to access more AT resources in person or on line.

Recognising we all have different learning and reading styles, we have structured the book so there are four main sections and it is possible to dip in and out of the book depending on your interests. The four main stand-alone sections together give an overview of the theory and practice of AT.

However, anyone just wanting to learn the six AT standard exercises will find all they need in Part 1, where we introduce, describe, and give instructions for learning the six AT standard exercises for you to learn, practise, and use daily.

We include in Part 1 detailed information on how we need to prepare ourselves for AT practice: a brief body scan, using our dominant arm as a helpful cue for our body mind system to access the relaxation response, which means going into a Theta brainwave state, how to keep ourselves in a state of passive concentration/awareness, the various body postures recommended for use when practising the six AT standard exercises, plus the cancel, which is the final step in each AT practice session.

For anyone who learns best with audio-visual cues, there are accompanying videos (accessed via a token when you purchase the book) which Gaylin has made of the complete sequence of the six AT standard exercises in a format to be accessed week by week over the eight-week period recognised as an optimal way to learn AT. Once learnt, however, AT is best practised when we silently and interiorly repeat the exercise formulae to ourselves without the use of prompts from someone else. AT is a self-care skillset!

A video guide to Autogenics

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/9750652>

Part 2 is structured in the form of answers to questions each of us have asked at different times as we learnt to work with AT. When not to use AT (contraindications) is one of the questions we address in Part 2 as well as throughout the book, as it is vital that people with certain medical conditions only learn AT in consultation with a qualified AT practitioner.

In Part 3, we describe the history and international development of AT. This section includes descriptions of people, places, and ways in which professionals from different disciplines and in many different countries on all five continents have and are continuing to demonstrate the importance of AT as a self-help skillset.

In Part 4, we review common diseases encountered by medical practitioners whose patients have benefitted from the use of AT either as a stand-alone treatment intervention or alongside other treatments. We also include four case studies of familiar everyday disease situations where AT has been helpful in symptom relief with patients reporting becoming calmer, more focussed and less stressed, as well as a reduction in symptoms.

There are of course other resources already available for learning AT, and we list some of them in the section at the end of the book, along with some references for anyone wishing to explore and read more about AT.

We have put the 'Glossary of terms' relevant to AT and used throughout this book at the beginning of the text so you can easily reference any unfamiliar terms as you read.

Our hope is that you will want to learn AT which we believe in a few weeks can benefit your whole body mind system. More than that, if practising the six AT standard exercises whets you're appetite for more that you will want to explore in consultation with a qualified AT practitioner other applications of AT that can promote your wellbeing and contribute to your health maintenance.

A unique approach to self care in the form of easy to learn exercises for self-regulation

Written by two experienced psychotherapists, *Achieving Equilibrium* provides a simple and reliable means of restoring balance from body to mind through the six standard Autogenic Training exercises. The authors provide readers with the skillset to self-regulate at any time or place, through breathing and bodily awareness.

“The guidance from this book has immeasurably enhanced both my personal and professional life. *Achieving Equilibrium* is an eloquent, accessible, engaging manual that can be used across cultural, professional and personal domains to enable self-regulation.”

Marianne Le Coyte Grinney, specialist family & systemic psychotherapist and clinical lead

“This volume will enable many to become aware of Autogenic Therapy. It will be a pleasure to share copies with colleagues and friends.”

Judith Wren, former chairperson of the British Autogenic Society

“This is a very welcome book. The authors have given us a clear and comprehensive pathway using Autogenic Training exercises to help us heal our bodies and mind. I will be recommending this book to my clients as a tool to support their wellbeing.”

Maureen Treanor, psychotherapist, supervisor and mindfulness teacher

Gaylin Tudhope is a psychologist and psychotherapist with over three decades of professional experience in Autogenic Psychotherapy, Lifespan Development and more recently, Coherence Therapy. Gaylin is a proponent of Autogenic Training as a simple antidote to the extreme stressors we encounter in the modern world.

Ros Draper is a systemic therapist who, as teacher and supervisor, has made major contributions in British psychotherapy over the last forty years. Discovering Autogenic Training has expanded Ros’s appreciation of the interconnectedness of our body mind system.

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