



Autogenic Training: A 4-Part Course Delivered by Craig Trafford;

Certified Stress Management Trainer, Kinesiology Consultant, Advanced EFT-Tapping Practitioner

Part 1 Introduction: The Nature of Stress and Stress Management Training

This is a 4-part training course in techniques of Stress Management Training. In this instance, techniques that lead up to and include Autogenic Training. The course is designed to teach you how to better manage the stresses in your life. It does not attempt to eliminate stress altogether, as we need a certain amount of stress [motivational stress is called Eustress] in our lives in order to achieve our goals. Too much stress, however, can lead to illness or unnecessary restrictions on our lives. Today, more people suffer from stress than ever before. The pace of life is stressful in itself. We expect to manage the major life changes and crises, such as marriage, parenting, unemployment, bereavement, overwork or ill health without the network of support that previous generations relied upon. For some, stress may not be related to such specific events, but may have developed in early childhood as an anxiety response to difficult situations. This response may have been carried into adult life as the characteristic way of dealing with difficulties

Stress affects us in many different ways. Some people develop stress related illnesses, such as asthma, hypertension, ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome and a host of others. Some suffer from free-floating anxiety, panic attacks, muscular tension and hyperventilation. Some people respond with obsessive compulsive agoraphobia and social phobia. It is estimated that one in four people suffer from anxiety at some time in their lives and it is one of the most common symptoms treated by doctors in the western world.

So what exactly is stress? Our bodies react to stress in a similar way that they react to fear. We experience fear when we have cause to be concerned about our well-being or safety. We experience stress when we are in situations where we feel under threat but I'm not actually in any immediate danger. When we feel under threat in this way our bodies respond with the **Fight-Flight-Freeze Syndrome**. This syndrome, which prepares our bodies to fight or flee, involves a number of physical changes. Our heartbeat increases, our breathing becomes shallow, all of our senses work better, we may have a desire to defecate, our



muscles tense to fight or flee, our hands and feet become colder and we begin to sweat to cool ourselves, as all of these changes make us hot.

This fight or flight syndrome is our instinctive reaction to danger. This response, however, can be set off by many situations that are not really dangerous or life-threatening. But our bodies are reacting as if our lives were actually threatened, and the reaction to such a threat is a powerful one. When there is no enemy to fight or run from, the physical feelings created by the fight or flight syndrome have no release, and so will begin to build up Stress. This stress will eventually find an outlet in chronic fatigue, anxiety and a variety of minor physical illnesses which may even develop into chronic serious illness.

Stress Management Training – which includes Autogenic Training - works by breaking down the fight or flight syndrome into three inter-related systems: firstly; our thoughts. Secondly; the physical changes which take place in our bodies, and thirdly; the behaviour which results from these. When we experience stress our thoughts are of perceived danger. Such thinking creates the physical changes we associate with fear or panic. This, in turn may result in behaviour which causes more stress, or in the avoidance of the stress provoking situation. With training in stress management techniques, we can learn to create relaxed and positive habits of thought and we can learn techniques of physical relaxation. These two changes together will result in relaxed and appropriate behaviour enabling us to achieve our desired goals in life.

This course achieves these results by a logical sequence of training in the areas of muscular and mental relaxation, deep breathing and breath control techniques, discovering and challenging negative thinking patterns, positive thinking, the development of self-confidence and the elimination of unwanted behaviours.

Each session of the course includes an **Information Giving** and a **tress Management Relaxation** exercise. The information given describes the origins and expressions of the symptoms of stress, and explains how we can learn to control, or manage, these symptoms. Research shows that the greater the understanding that individuals have about stress, the better they are able to



manage it effectively. The stress management exercise should be practised daily until the next session. Stress management training really can help you to change but, like any other skill worth learning, it takes practice, some work and commitment.