

# Autogenic Training as a Non-Drug Approach to Improving Sleeping Patterns and General Health.

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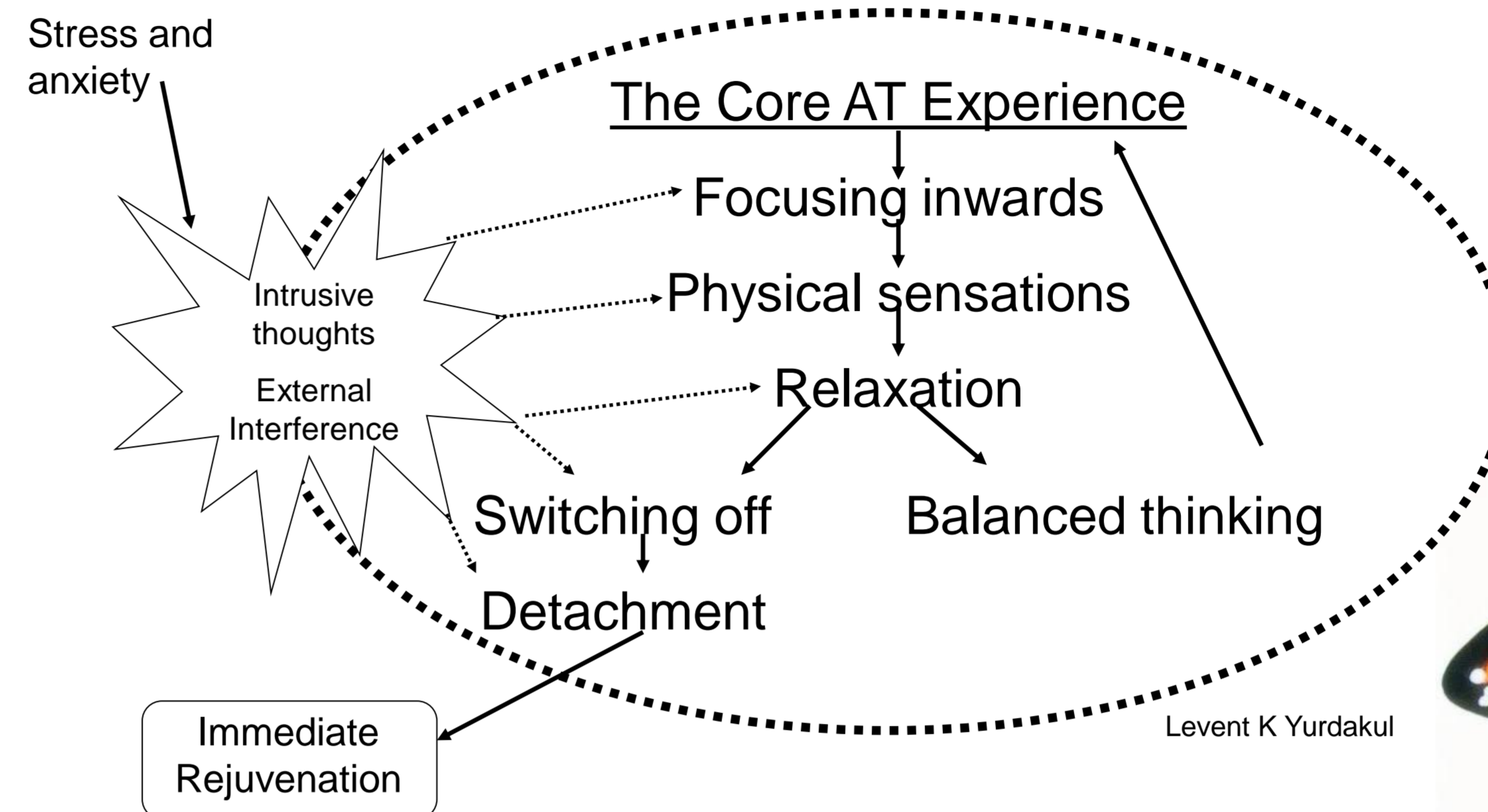
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## What is Autogenic Training?

Autogenic Training (AT) is a non-drug, natural, self-help approach, a form of meditation to initiate a psycho-physiological process of deep relaxation associated with mental, physical and emotional rebalancing. 'Autogenic' means generated from the self. It is known to improve sleep in a large proportion of patients both during and after training. AT consists of a series of simple, easily learned mental exercises which allow the mind to calm itself by switching off the body's stress response. It is a resource which develops mindful self awareness without dependence on a therapist or medication and once learned is a skill for life.



## Why Autogenic Training for sleep problems?

A third of adults experience difficulties sleeping, which is often related to stress. All current available drugs used to treat insomnia are capable of causing adverse effects and dependence with regular use and expert bodies have advised that their use is limited and also costly. The importance of non drug methods, such as behavioural and cognitive approaches including relaxation, has been emphasised and is likely to be welcomed by patients.

## The Setting

Autogenic Training (AT) is one of a range of Complementary and Alternative Medicines (CAM) provided within the National Health Service (NHS), UK at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital (RLHH). It is a non-drug approach to conditions where stress plays a major role in producing symptoms and it is also used to help to manage the stress and anxieties of chronic ill health. At least 60% of patients currently referred for AT at the RLHH indicate that they have difficulty sleeping either as their most important health problem or, as could be expected, as a symptom of chronic disease

## Aims

Identify whether AT as part of routine care is an effective self-help non-drug approach to improving sleep and general health. Record reported changes in health and use of medication experienced by patients receiving AT.

## The Study

All patients (approximately 200) attending an AT course at RLHH over 12 months. Patients are referred from primary, secondary and tertiary care. Participants are given information sheet and sign a consent form. The Hospital Anxiety and Depression scale (HADS), Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile (MYMOP) and a sleep questionnaire are used to identify changes in anxiety and depression, general well being and quality of sleep. Questionnaires are administered at initial consultation, at the start and the end of eight week course and at three month follow up. Frequency tables and t tests are used for quantitative analysis. Focus groups are planned and will explore the effects of AT on sleep patterns in-depth.

## Methods

### The course

- Standard AT training course at the RLHH (in line with British Autogenic Society).
- Individual assessment with a therapist
- Group setting with 8 patients per group.
- 8 weekly sessions of 2 hours with follow up at 2½-3 months and continuing informal follow up.
- The 8 sessions focus on the physiological experience of the body in a state of relaxation engaging the following systems: musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, respiratory, central nervous. Additionally, emotional and psychological health is addressed.

## Respecting the process – A Story

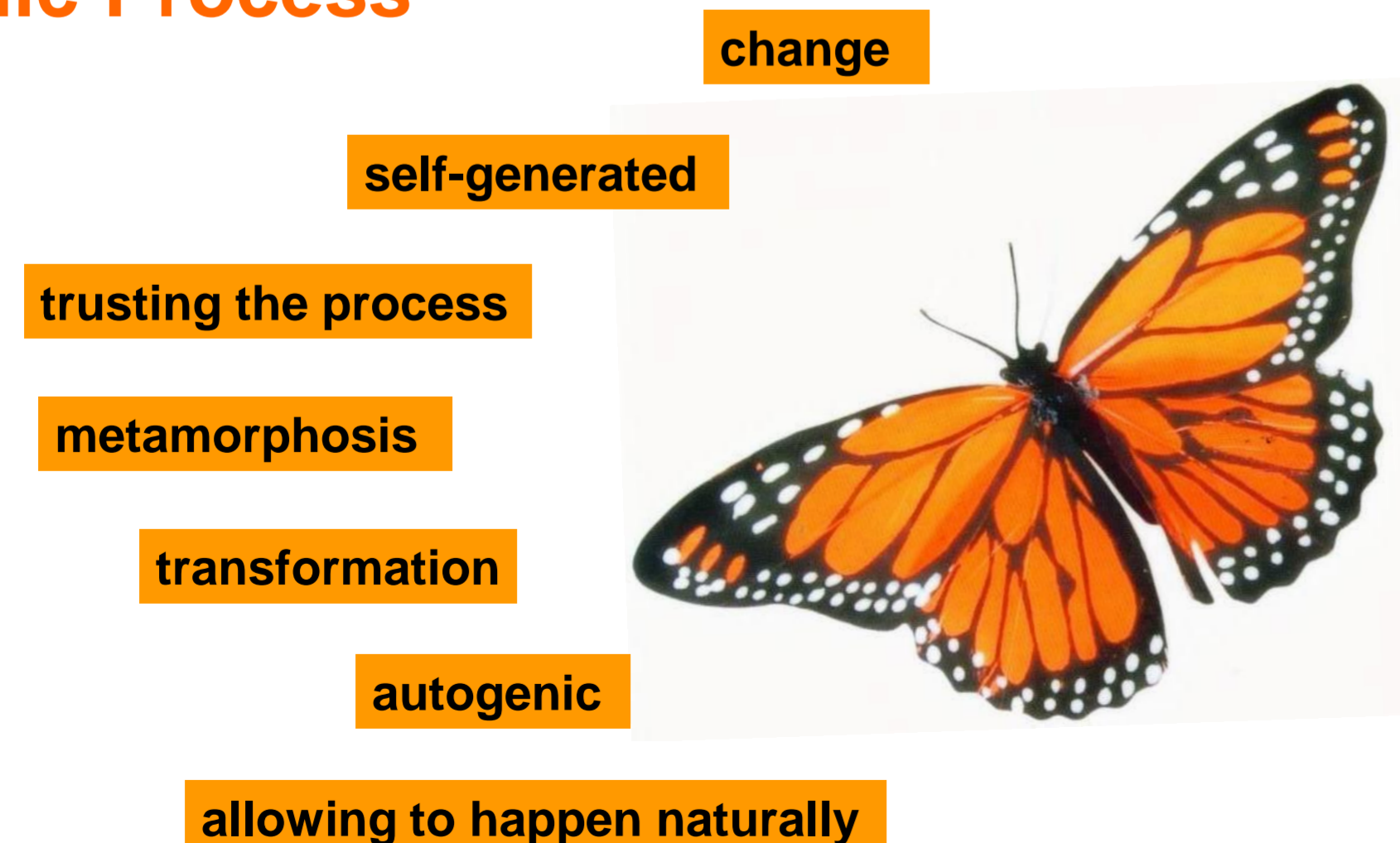
A gardener observed a butterfly trying to break free of its pupa. He watched the delicate creature struggling violently to get out. The pupa shook and trembled with the butterfly's efforts to emerge. This struggle went on for what seemed like an eternity.

He decided to help the process along; with a pair of scissors he cut a large opening in the pupa, allowing the butterfly to tumble out onto the ground. What the well-meaning gardener did not realise is that the struggle is part of the transformation process.

A young butterfly's wings are engorged with fluid, and the struggle out of the pupa forces the fluid out from the wings into the body, to be absorbed and processed. Deprived of its transformative process the butterfly's wings remained fluid-filled and it couldn't fly. The gardener watched in despair as the butterfly lay on the ground, slowly dying.

Similarly in Autogenic Training, it is essential to trust the process and allow it to happen without interference.

## The Autogenic Process



The autogenic technique, when practised daily, becomes a powerful tool for mindful awareness of all the mind/body systems. The individual becomes ever more self-reliant and self-knowledgeable.

## Results

Data has been collected on 72 patients so far, 81% female, 46% single, 28% married.

Presenting symptoms were in the following categories:

Stress	45%	Cardiovascular	11%
Miscellaneous	10%	Women's problems	7%
Musculoskeletal	6%	Neurology	4%

13% were on anti-depressants

78% suffered from a sleep problem (42% yes, 36% sometimes)

### HADS (Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale)

- Anxiety reduced significantly from a mean of 11.66 to 8.96 ( $p < 0.000$ )
- Depression reduced significantly from a mean of 7.43 to 5.21 ( $p < 0.000$ )

### Sleep questionnaires

- 61% reported an **improvement in sleep**, 11% no change.

After completing the AT course:

- **Time taken to fall asleep** fell significantly on average ( $p = 0.005$ )
- **Number of times waking** in the night fell significantly on average ( $p = 0.025$ )
- **Feeling tired/refreshed** on waking improved significantly on average from a score of 3.95 to 5.20 (scale 1 to 10) ( $p < 0.000$ )
- **Energy levels** improved significantly on average from 4.68 to 5.88 (scale 1 to 10) ( $p = 0.038$ )

There were no significant changes in these variables in the same subjects in the period before doing the AT course.

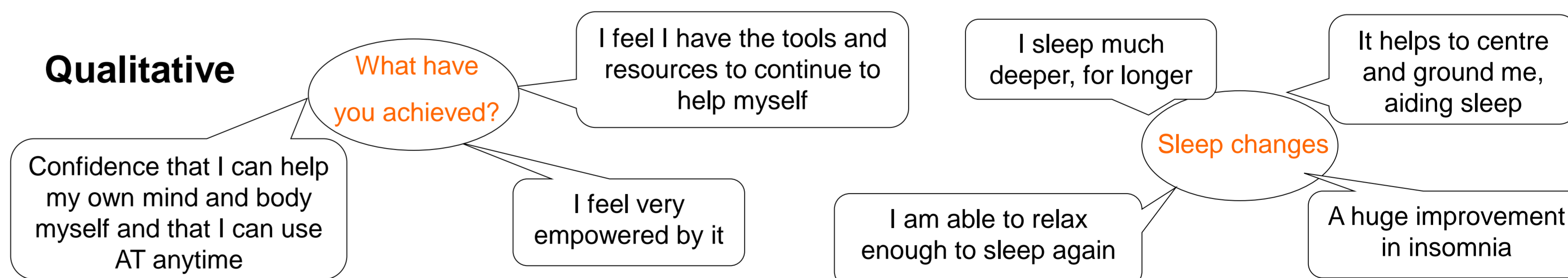
### MYMOP

All scores of MYMOP showed great improvement after the course (all  $p < 0.000$ ), except use of medication.

Measure	Before (mean)*	After (mean)*
Symptom 1 score	3.94	3.06
Symptom 2 score	3.84	2.63
Activity score	4.07	2.53
Wellbeing score	3.53	2.44
Worried score	4.08	2.53

\*all on scale of 1 (very good) to 5 (very bad)

### Qualitative



## Conclusion

AT, a self-help approach, had a significant positive effect on sleep disorders which also led to improvements in mental health, at low cost to the health service and the individual.

## Implications

The benefits shown for using AT for sleep disorders may in turn lead to an increased availability within the NHS in line with recommendations for patient choice and NICE guidelines for treating insomnia.