

## Surrey Memorial Hospital Cardiac Rehabilitation Outpatient Program

### Change Your Body's Reaction to Stress

Mental stress leads to physical tension; break this cycle by approaching it from the other direction. Learn to relax your body and your mind will find it harder to be negative.

#### AUTOGENIC, OR SELF-GENERATED, RELAXATION

Autogenic training was developed by Johannes Schultz, a Berlin psychiatrist who combined the auto suggestions of hypnosis with some yoga techniques.

By repeating the simple phrases and focusing on your body, you can train yourself to enter a state of deep relaxation. Eventually, you may find this helpful in falling asleep, but it's best to learn while sitting then you can use it before any tense situation.

- Find a quiet place with no distractions.
- Loosen any tight clothing.
- Sit in a relaxed position: Put both feet flat on the floor, lean forwards, forearms resting on your thighs, let your hands relax between your knees, let your head and shoulders droop slightly.
- Close your eyes and think only of feeling relaxed.
- Focus on your right arm and think to yourself. "My right arm is heavy." Repeat this phrase and become aware of a sensation of heaviness.
- Focus on your left arm – "My left arm is heavy" – until it feels heavy.
- Repeat the sequence for your feet, legs and abdomen.
- Use the phrase, "My right arm is warm," and go through the sequence again.
- Additional phrases will lead to this eventual sequence:
  - ✓ My hands and arms are heavy and warm (5 times)
  - ✓ My feet and legs are heavy and warm (5 times)
  - ✓ My abdomen is warm and comfortable (5 times)
  - ✓ My breathing is deep and even (10 times)
  - ✓ My forehead is cool (5 times)
  - ✓ My neck and shoulders are heavy and warm (5 times)
  - ✓ When I open my eyes, I will remain relaxed and refreshed (3 times)
- To finish, open your hands and arms, then your feet and legs, rotate your head, open your eyes, and sit up.

Practice this 15 minutes a day. You may only reach your arms and legs at first, but with time, you may do the entire sequence in 15-20 minutes.

#### SPECIAL THEMES

These additional verbal formulas or those created by yourself can be interspersed with the standard formulas. "My throat is cool, my chest is warm." "My mind is quiet. I feel inward quietness."

SOURCE: *"Controlling Stress Before it Controls you"* by CMA, 1994