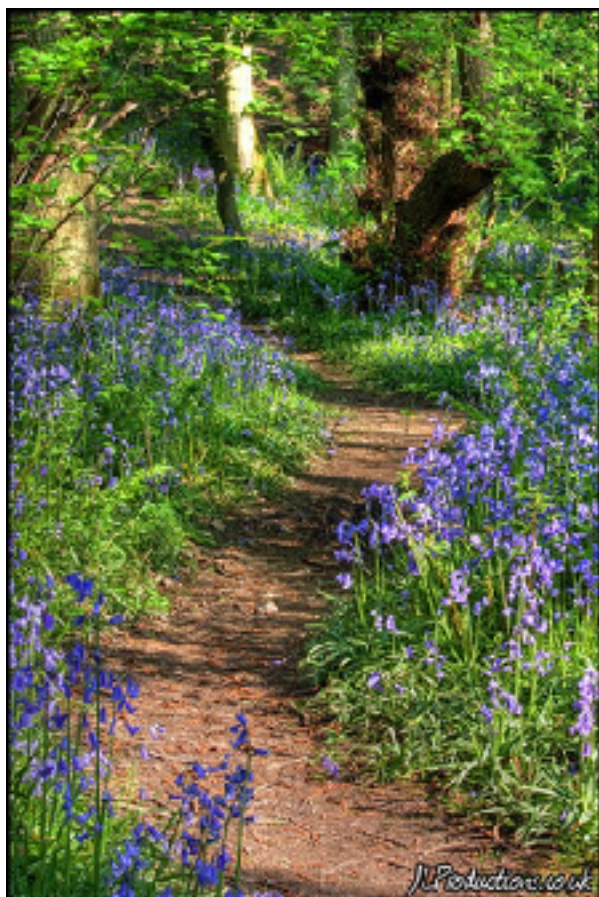


# THE BRITISH AUTOGENIC SOCIETY



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a poem by Kitty O'Meara © March 2020

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## SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2020

**Submission deadline: 1 August 2020**

## THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Spring 2020 newsletter – rather later than advertised due to the extraordinary circumstances in which we all currently find ourselves: living in Lockdown; coping with enforced isolation, dealing with drastically reduced commercial outlets and services; struggling to keep businesses afloat; and perhaps many of us quickly learning how to move to digital online platforms to offer AT and therapy to our clients. We have taken an enforced holiday from the life we knew, and are now watching on with silent support and prayers those battling Covid-19 in hospital wards and care homes; sharing in the sadness of loss; the inspiration and service of many; applauding the selfless heroism of staff and key workers keeping medical and other essential services going and supply lines open – and all this happening during the most glorious springtime of blossoming everywhere! Please take care and stay safe until we meet again.

Dr Alice Greene  
[newsletter@autogenic-therapy.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@autogenic-therapy.org.uk)



## TRUSTEE REPORT

by **Judith Wren**

We thank you for your continuing support for our trustee team who work very long hours to keep BAS legally compliant, whilst continuing to build its reputation for good practice. We are sorry that many plans have had to be changed because of Covid-19 restrictions. For the good of the organisation, all its members and especially the 2020 Students, we have had to prioritise our own health, so there are currently no plans to set dates for formal meetings that everyone could attend. We shall update you regularly about any changes, and opportunities for undertaking on-line CPD.

In line with the Charity Commission's code of conduct, we have increased our number by inviting, through Reach Volunteering, external trustees with the specific skills we need in areas where members have little or no expertise.

**Linda Baines** has been working with us since March 2019, helping with the accreditation of the BAS Training course. She also has skills in governance, assessment and research.

**Oscar Tang** recently joined us to help with legal matters and is already working on policy and procedure documents, and the proper processes to follow for breaches of professional standards. We hope he will help us update the BAS Code of Ethics procedures – especially looking at areas where a conflict of interest might necessitate calling in an external panel of experts on governance matters. He is also looking at our new draft Articles of Association so we have more clarity on procedures. Anyone in formal contact with BAS now needs to be included in the new draft Articles i.e. not only members and students as in the past, but also trustees, self-employed contractors, volunteers, and members of the public.

**Chris Perrin** and **Sue Holtum** were also invited to join the trustee team (at the meeting of trustees and fellows in February 2020), and we are very pleased they have agreed. We welcome their experience both as former Chairs of BAS, and for their professional expertise in dealing with any matters of clinical or psychological concern. They are now joining our Care-taking Committee that continues the work to manage our Society. Alongside Oscar Tang and Linda Baines as co-opted trustees, Chris and Sue have agreed to take on the same responsibilities as elected trustees, (myself, Ruth Naylor and Ruth Skinner) i.e. to fulfil the aims of the Charity in the most effective way, while communicating clearly with members what is happening so that all members can be involved in supporting good governance and training .

BAS trustees are required to deal with any conflicts of interest that may arise and to manage risk. Since 2018 **Corinne Davey** has been helping us by providing advice on issues of Safeguarding so that BAS is compliant with the changing demands of the Charity Commission. She also brings a wealth of international and organisational experience.

We are extremely thankful to all those who give their time and skills, pro bono, to enable the organisation to make positive changes. Look out for more details regarding the election of co-opted Trustees at the next AGM – whenever that becomes possible!

## ADMINISTRATION

Contact Numbers for Trustees are 07955310694 or 07714247809. If no reply, please text us with a brief message. We aim to respond within 3 days (Mon to Friday, 9am–5pm except Bank Holidays).

[admin@autogenic-therapy.org.uk](mailto:admin@autogenic-therapy.org.uk)  
[website@autogenic-therapy.org.uk](mailto:website@autogenic-therapy.org.uk)  
[trustees@autogenic-therapy.org.uk](mailto:trustees@autogenic-therapy.org.uk)  
[training@autogenic-therapy.org.uk](mailto:training@autogenic-therapy.org.uk)  
[newsletter@autogenic-therapy.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@autogenic-therapy.org.uk)

– to update or correct your contact details  
– to amend website entries /other queries  
– to contact Trustees / feedback.  
– for AT Training Course matters.  
– all articles, news and queries to the Editor

## RECORD RETENTION

Please contact your Insurer for their requirements regarding keeping any confidential records about people you work with. **GDPR Subject Access Requests** mean that the organisation, and you as individuals, need to be able to reply quickly, and without charge.

GDPR regulations mean BAS needs to have access to all information that is essential for business purposes and which complies with the Articles of Association. Members can at any time change their contact preferences. Thank you to those who have sent Website Agreement forms and completed CPD forms. Please contact [trustees@autogenic-therapy.co.uk](mailto:trustees@autogenic-therapy.co.uk) if you have lost your forms sent out last year. These forms are needed so that your Profile can stay on the website.

## FINANCE

BAS Accounts for the financial year 2019-20 are being completed by the Treasurer and **Andrew Alli**, our BAS Accountant. A draft copy will be sent to members when completed, in good time for discussion at the next AGM – whenever that becomes possible!

Past changes put in place by trustees are now enabling income to exceed expenditure. Andrew Alli continues to be very helpful to us, and provides many of his services pro-bono, as well as invoicing BAS at half his normal rate. **Mr Mike Dark** continues to assist us with figures – eg the budget for the 2020 Training Course – at no charge. The AFVS (Advice for the Voluntary Sector) provides support in all areas including with finance.

**The Care-taking Committee** now being established suggests there will be no increase in annual membership Fees when requests are sent out at the end of June. Members who can pay more are encouraged to make donations, especially if they can 'gift aid' their contribution which adds a further 25%. BAS has updated Gift Aid forms and a Gift Aid account with HMRC. Signing up to [www.smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk) with BAS as your chosen charity will also help to raise funds.

The AT Ireland Fast Track course has provided funding to BAS this year, and several students on the 2020 London Course have already paid in full, which means the CAF Bank Account is showing a very healthy positive balance. This will rise even further before the end of the Financial year, although much of this income will of course be used to pay for the BAS AGM to come, and the PGCert AT Training venues, plus fees for Training (including Administration, Supervision, Assessment and fees to BPS, as well as Governance costs).

## TRAINING

The first AT Therapists Course in Ireland has run successfully. The students who were all Specialist Nurses in pain management, have now completed their AT Foundation Course. If you would like to read Shelagh Wright's Report on this, please contact [trustees@autogenic-therapy.co.uk](mailto:trustees@autogenic-therapy.co.uk) for a copy.

On 7 March 2020, a group of 10 new students who were accepted into the new London Course, began their PGCert AT training together via Webex online. It is planned that they will be the first to be given a new Membership number, as is required by Accrediting bodies.

As with all meeting plans, there have had to be changes. All course students are now working online both for study weekends and for completing course homework.

A review of the 2020 Foundation Course will be produced, and shared in the most effective way for all members to be able to understand and engage with all the changes that are happening.

## INTERESTED TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED?

We welcome hearing from any BAS Members who are interested in getting involved with the new AT Course Students in 2020. For this, you will need to show that you already have up-to-date:-

- (a) Safeguarding and Supervision Training;
- (b) Insurance cover for Training and Supervision;
- (c) A CPD record of any courses done where you have learnt skills in teaching others how to teach.

Once agreed, you will be asked to sign a Self-employed Contract or a Volunteering Agreement. Please email [training@autogenic-therapy.org.uk](mailto:training@autogenic-therapy.org.uk) for if you need further help or information.

## BAS STRATEGY DAY OUTCOMES

At the BAS Strategy Day on 6 September 2018, members' views and ideas, solicited through Claire James' helpful organisational overview, showed the need for:-

### **1 More AT PG Cert Course students:**

*We now have more students signed up, and more enquiries.*

### **2 Offering more courses outside central London:**

*These are now in the early stages of development.*

### **3 Raising the standards of the AT Diploma Course and the 2014 PG Cert AT Course in order to gain Accreditation:**

*This is now happening. With thanks to Sue Holttum and the educational and training team in 2014, and to everyone since who have contributed to this effort following the strategy meeting with Claire James in November 2018.*

### **4 Establishing BAS as a trusted resource for Autogenic Training – for therapists using AT training for themselves and their patients, and which can be offered as a training to any interested clinicians, psychotherapist and complementary therapists to be used in their work with their clients/patients.**

*Establishing this resource is currently being put in place through modifying course standards to fulfil the necessary criteria in applying for BPS Accreditation.*

### **5 The BAS training to focus on safeguarding, including client/patient safety and clear boundaries, as well as individual choice and empowerment:**

*These requirements have now been clarified in the new AT course.*

The Review Meeting following the completion of the 2020 Foundation Course will be organised as soon as it becomes possible to fix a date. Meanwhile, please keep in touch with us, and with one another, through this difficult time. We hope you all keep safe and well.

With all good wishes from the Care-taking Committee.

Judith Wren  
for the Trustees

[trustees@autogenic-therapy.org.uk](mailto:trustees@autogenic-therapy.org.uk)



## **BAS EDUCATION AND TRAINING TEAM - FINAL REPORT**

**by Jane Bird and Ann Bowden**

This will be the last report from the BAS Education and Training Team (ETT). We are writing to say goodbye, not only on our own account, but also on behalf of all the members who served on the ETT over the years. The BAS teaching and training programme, hitherto carried out by the ETT, is transitioning into an updated form with more focus on online teaching.

As the last members of the ETT, we thought that it would be of interest to the membership to know how the training has evolved over the years. In particular we would like to acknowledge the contributions of the many members of the Society who have taught on past courses: each person leaving a legacy and flavour of themselves and their expertise. Their work is safely stored in the BAS archives as a firm foundation upon which succeeding courses can be built.

### **The start**

In the 1970s Dr Malcolm Carruthers, who had been exploring the link between stress and heart disease coincidentally heard about the work of Dr Wolfgang Luthe and his use of Autogenic Training (AT) at the International Institute of Stress in Montreal. Out of interest, he and his wife, Vera, decided to go to Canada to meet Luthe face to face. They spent four weeks there, in a log-cabin on the lakeshore, undergoing his intensive teaching course in Autogenic Training (AT), and learning about his work on Autogenic Neutralisation (AN).

Once back in London in 1978, they set up the first Centre for AT which combined clinical practice with a drive to recruit medical and health professionals to train in AT. In those early days, there was neither a formal body of members, nor an organised training structure to award a qualification. However, Dr Luthe remained in close contact and offered his support to check that AT was properly understood and delivered. So it was quite a coup when he agreed to come over from Canada to teach on the London training course in 1982; and also in 1983, when he additionally led Vera and others through a shortened course in Creativity Mobilisation Technique (CMT). With his approval, the British Association for Autogenic Training and Therapy (BAFATT) was founded in 1984, later achieving charitable status thanks to a hard-working and committed steering group.

Eventually a Training Committee formed which became recognised as the educational arm of BAFATT. Most of the training at this stage was carried out by the steering group: Dr Malcolm Carruthers, clinical psychologist Jean Coleman, Dr Brian O'Donovan, Brian Davidson, and with Vera and Kate Ker taking subsidiary roles. The first comprehensive teaching manual on Autogenic Training was written by Jean Coleman, based on Luthe's workshop notes. It was launched to much acclaim in 1988 at the first International Conference on Autogenic Training in London, organised by Malcom Carruthers and Jean Coleman.

**Jane writes:** 'I attended Luthe's 1982 training course, having fulfilled the entry criteria which then included being a health professional (I was a nurse), learning basic AT and undergoing AN. I was very grateful for the extra understanding that I gained from AN. My student group included Dr Brian O'Donovan, Brian Davidson, Dr John English, Kate Ker, and many others whom sadly we never saw again.'

'The AT course was run over five days. Mornings were devoted to the nuts and bolts of teaching AT, including the function of the autonomic nervous system and its impact on physical health; an introduction to sports psychology courtesy of Jean, and the theory of autogenic neutralisation. Dr Luthe taught in the afternoons, introducing his new and innovative work in offloading (Intentional Exercises). His English was excellent, and he had a commanding presence no-one could deny and only the ill-informed would defy. At the core of his teaching was passion, commitment and pure common sense which has stayed with me ever since. "Does Autogenic Training work?" a doubter once asked him. "Of course it works", Dr Luthe replied, "But not always in the way we might wish. AT does its own job. The brain knows what things, emotional or physical, need to come up, and when".

'The final exam was on Friday afternoon. Luthe devised six exam papers with six questions on each. Candidates could practise answering all the questions in advance – a clever way of getting students to learn. On the day, a dice was thrown to select which paper would be used for the real exam. We did no coursework or case studies then, but we were given the contact details of a tutor whom we could always ask for help if needed.

'From 1983 onwards, exam tutorials, a case study and a viva were required and I began taking tutorial groups: supervising students work and answering their questions. When I was invited to join the training team in 1992, despite my initial apprehension, I appreciated the opportunity to share in the practical work with like-minded colleagues. Later I took on additional administrative responsibilities on behalf of the team simply because I had time that others did not. Over the years, the training developed in response to the many questions posed by eager students, and so in 2001, to incorporate these new additions, Chris Pinch and I were invited to develop a new AT training manual from source material. This has become an ever evolving body of documented knowledge.'

**Ann writes:** 'I did my AT training in 1987 which turned out to be a bumper year for BAFATT. From that student cohort, Alice Greene, Colin Marsh, Christine Pinch and myself all later joined the teaching team, while Anne Whybrow took on many different roles within BAFATT, and later BAS. The tutors on that course were Malcolm Carruthers, Brian Davidson, Jean Coleman and Brian O'Donovan. Again the training lasted five days, but this was now followed up with tutorial days, an exam, a case history and a written piece of original research. Having run AT groups with great success in my general practice, in 1989 I took over Dr Brian O'Donovan's work at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital (now RLHIM) and in 1993, resigned from my GP practice to concentrate on developing the AT service at the hospital. I was very pleased to be invited to join the Training Team in 1994.'

Over the years, teaching methods gradually developed from using pen & paper, flip charts, overhead projectors and power-point slide presentations, to include lectures online. Irrespective of the methods used however, at its very core and greatly appreciated by the students, was the development of a cohesive functioning group through face-to-face classroom teaching. Of paramount importance was the focus on helping students develop their therapist skills in relation to non-interference in the client's autogenic process: how we listen; how we advise and how we keep neutral. This helped students to model the process for their clients; and to experience their emerging teaching styles safely in the group supervision sessions.

In the late '80s and early '90s, BAFATT was working hard towards application for membership of the UK Council for Psychotherapy, and our training was upgraded and extended to fulfil their requirements. In 1995 our bid was successful through winning the debate on AT being a psychotherapy and not just a technique. However, to remain in the UKCP we needed to develop Level 2 training, comprising Autogenic Neutralisation (AN), Creativity Mobilisation Technique (CMT) and Autogenic Meditative Exercises (AME). A pilot course to address this was developed and run in 2003-4 although unfortunately, small applicant numbers meant Level 2 Training could not be established and eventually BAS withdrew from the UKCP. In recent years however, Nida Ingham, who also trained with Luthe, offered a modified Level 2 course in CMT and AME, enabling several BAS therapists to take these forward. And in 2014, an important step was taken under the chairmanship and guidance of Dr Sue Holttum with the help of the ETT, when the AT Training course gained formal approval from the British Psychological Society.

In 1999, BAFATT was transformed from an Association into the British Autogenic Society under the chairmanship of Dr Alice Greene; and the Training Committee was renamed the Education and Training Team (ETT) to oversee the necessary course developments required by UKCP membership, while continuing its fundamental training role within the organisation. The ETT continued to revise, develop and update training course delivery to trainee AT therapists from 1979 right up until our last cohort (2018/19) completed their Postgraduate Certificate in Autogenic Training (PGCert-AT) – a proud legacy of 40 years.

#### **EDUCATION AND TRAINING TEAM 1979 to 2019**

After Dr Wolfgang Luthe, the earliest teachers were Malcolm Carruthers and his wife Vera, Brian Davidson, Jean Coleman, Kate Ker and Brian O'Donovan. These were followed (in alphabetical order) by: Jane Bird, Ann Bowden, Marion Brion, Tamara Callea, Mark Draper, Ben Edwards, Tom Goss, Alice Greene, Nida Ingham, Nasim Kanji, Oliver Klott, Colin Marsh, Lucy O'Hagan, Claire Pigott, Christine Pinch, Ian Ross, Brigitte Vogelmann, John Young, Pauline Young and including guest lecturers: John Butler, Ruth Naylor and Nic Straiton.

Since 2016, the number of members available to teach on the ETT, for various reasons, fell from seven leaving just two of us to teach the six students on the 2018/19 course – which we have now done. So as we say farewell from the ETT for the last time, we would like to acknowledge with gratitude the many contributions made by those members who brought their expertise, experience and fellowship to the task. It has been a great pleasure and privilege for us to have served the Society by playing our part within the teaching team. We remember with affection and many great memories all the students who trained with us over the years, and we wish them all every success in their practice. We look forward with interest to seeing how the new AT training course develops and grows, and how it evolves over time.

Dr Ann Bowden  
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Jane Bird  
[jane@autogenic-therapist.co.uk](mailto:jane@autogenic-therapist.co.uk)



## THE SELF-HEALING POWER OF AT – Part IV

by Dr Kai Kermani

Having found it difficult to get into some of Dr Luthe's advanced meditative exercises, I and my trainees began using an alternative form of '**Healing Light Colour Meditation**'. This may be used either on its own (eg for those with serious or advanced disease like cancer) or, it can be added onto the full AT exercise to greatly deepen the AT process and add to its healing powers.

### HEALING LIGHT COLOUR MEDITATION

This Colour Meditation may be used with your AT exercise, by inserting it **between** 'My neck and shoulders are heavy and warm' and 'I am at Peace' as usual.

Having first rooted yourself well (as suggested in my previous article), imagine earth's energy coming up from your roots into your legs and gradually moving right up through your body until it reaches the top of your head (Crown). As you perceive the energy/light travelling up, imagine the following light/colour changes are happening, making sure that you allow each one to illuminate the whole area mentioned.



Spreading Red up the legs as far as the lower tummy (just below the bladder)

Then going Orange at your belly button region.

Imagine it going Golden Yellow at the top of your tummy (Solar Plexus).

It goes Green in your chest and arms.

Then Sky Blue at your throat region.

(Electric Blue at the occipital region (back) of your head).

Dark Blue or Indigo in your forehead.

Finally going Purple-Violet at the top of your head (Crown region).

Now, imagine a great source of silver white light above you, which is a symbol of Universal love and healing. Bring this white, high-energy, healing light into the whole of your body from the top of your head, and eventually overtaking all the other colours or lights by gradually taking it down through to your feet and roots.

The energy cycle, and thus the relaxation, is now complete; earth to sky and sky to earth. The white light symbolises your own healing energy and power which is being reinforced and augmented by the Divine Universal Energy.



As you are bringing the white light down into your body, be sure to focus it more fully on any area that is diseased, in pain, discomfort or distress – not only to help it relax but also to heal any particular problem present.

[Whilst doing this, some people report a darker coloured energy coming out from the area being healed. Allow this too to be dissolved in the white light, and remove it out of your body through your roots]. Spend as long or as little as you like doing this exercise. However if you are aiming to heal a specific ailment in your physical body, for maximal results, the more you do it, (eg twice daily), the more you will get out of it.

Once you have mastered this simple technique, you may also start adding in positive affirmations while using it to markedly enhance its effectiveness. You can find more information about using this 'Healing Light Meditation' in the link at the end of the article.

Chakra is a Sanskrit word meaning 'wheel' or 'disc'. They are spinning energy centers in the body which process subtle energy and convert it into chemical, hormonal and cellular changes in the body.



Each of the chakras relates to different levels of consciousness, developmental stages of life, emotions, thoughts, colors, sounds, body functions and much more. In order to bring more harmony to our entire system, subtle energy healing and/or vibrational medicine tries to assist the individual in bringing the chakras into balance when they are blocked or overactive.

There appear to be seven major chakras, each associated with a major nerve plexus and a major endocrine gland. They are situated in a vertical line ascending from the base of the spine to the head. The lowest, called the root chakra, is near the coccyx. The second is located near the spleen. The third or solar plexus chakra lies in the upper middle abdomen below the tip of the sternum. The fourth, also known as the heart chakra, can be found in the mediastinal region directly over the heart and thymus gland. The fifth or throat chakra is situated in the neck near the Adam's apple. The sixth or brow chakra is in the region of the mid-forehead and the seventh or crown chakra is located on top of the head.

I also use techniques of distant healing which can be a very powerful tool and not one to be used lightly and flippantly. Distant healing must only be used with the permission of the receiver, because such healing can sometimes affect the course of their life and destiny.

I am sure that many of you, like myself, find there are times you feel completely drained and fatigued – usually because of absorbing unconscious negativity. That's why I often do the following **protective exercise** before going to bed, and sometimes during the day before meeting patients, or even before going to the supermarket!

## SELF PROTECTION EXERCISE

Sit or stand comfortably. Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths and relax as much as possible under the circumstances. Imagine as if great big roots are coming down from the soles of your feet and going deep inside the earth. (Omit this step if you are in a moving vehicle).

**Breathing in**, imagine a sheet of golden yellow light starting from the soles of your feet and spreading up behind your body to the top of your head (Crown) with the in breath. **Breathing out**, now imagine the golden yellow light spreading out in front of your body from your crown, back down to the soles of your feet.

Next **in-breath**, imagine the golden yellow light starting from below the soles of your feet spreading up your right side to your crown.

Next **out breath**, imagine this golden yellow light spreading downwards from your crown on the left side and going down to below the soles of your feet.

**Repeat the above 4 steps again**, but this time imagining as if four sheets of blue light form themselves outside the already existing yellow envelope. By the end of this process you should be covered by two layers of light – golden yellow light within a blue light on the outside, like a double egg shell of protective lights. It is very important that this double shell of protective lights is surrounding the outside your body, but NOT attached or touching it.

While surrounding yourself with light, you may repeat a phrase such as, 'May these beautiful lights protect me from absorbing any negative energies coming towards me'.

If you still feel that you have been drained, despite protecting yourself, then you can imagine a shower of golden light coming down from above, circulating around and through you to wash out any negativity you might have picked up, and sending it down below into Mother Earth to be reconverted into healing energy. You could add in any simple phrase such as 'I release any negativity that I might have picked up inadvertently'.

Another helpful method can be to imagine wrapping up all your problems or unwanted emotions into a parcel, placing it on the outstretched palms of your hands and offering it up to the Universe to sort it out. This very simple exercise can be quite effective – especially when we need to do an off-loading exercise, but don't have time for a session just then.

I sincerely hope these four articles I have written have been a good and useful resource for you for self-healing, and in your work with others. Please feel free to use any of the methods I have described, so long as their source is acknowledged.

You may download my free self-healing book at [www.healingwithdrkermani.co.uk/kai.pdf](http://www.healingwithdrkermani.co.uk/kai.pdf)

I should love to hear back from you with your comments, experiences or any questions you have? Meanwhile, may I wish you all continuing positive development, empowerment and good healing for the rest of your lives.

Dr Kai Kermani  
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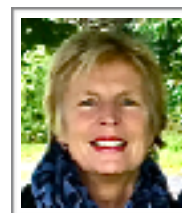
## DR J BRIAN O'DONOVAN 1924 – 2020



It is with much sadness I report the death of Dr Brian O'Donovan, aged 96, peacefully at his care home in Chichester on 4 February 2020. As a greatly loved Grandfather, Father, Brother, Uncle and Friend he will be missed by all who knew him. Brian was a founder member of BAFATT (British Association for Autogenic Training and Therapy), and its acting Chairman from 1990–1994. He was not only a medical and AT colleague, but also a valued friend.

While a Medical Consultant at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital, Brian set up the Department for Autogenic Training and trained out patients in AT for many years until he was succeeded by Dr Ann Bowden in 1989. He also published his introductory handbook on 'Autogenic Training in Organic Illness' to aid students learning the ropes of how to teach AT.

In 2019, Ann Bowden and I paid a last visit to Brian at his home in Chichester. We took him out for a wonderful lunch together, sharing many rich memories, much laughter and good conversation. I often thought privately of Brian as 'a monk living inside a happily married family GP'. He trained as a spiritual director when he retired, and became a supportive counsellor to many people. I shall miss him, with his gentle manner and wise friendship.



Dr Alice Greene  
[alicegreene@icloud.com](mailto:alicegreene@icloud.com)

My tribute to Brian is a Big Thank You; Thank you Brian. Thank you for setting up the AT service at the Homeopathic Hospital ( RLHIM) in 1987; Thank You Brian for asking me to take it over in 1989 and, since my retirement in 2016, it still continues to thrive in the safe hands of Jane Bird and Stephen Ashby.

When teaching AT Groups at the hospital, I would tell them how Brian set up the first AT Service in an NHS hospital in the UK, and how indebted we are to him. I gave the group handouts of an article he wrote many years ago for the Society's Newsletter, '*Being Friendly to our Feelings*'. It was beautifully written and captured the elements of what we endeavour to communicate to the trainees about emotional health. It is reproduced in full below.

Brian was a dear lovely man, spiritual and wise, with an elfin sense of fun. He was a very special kind of doctor and, as an AT therapist also, a model of what we should all aspire to be in our own practice. Thank you Brian.



Dr Ann Bowden  
[ann.bowden1@virgin.net](mailto:ann.bowden1@virgin.net)

## BEING FRIENDLY TO OUR FEELINGS by Dr Brian O'Donovan

'Our emotions provide us with the most common experience of being in the grip of forces outside our control. We frequently regard them as a nuisance, as a threat, or as unacceptable and needing to be controlled and suppressed/

The Intentional Exercises help us to recognise and accept that anger, crying need and anxiety are normal and natural. They provide us with ways of offloading unhelpful excesses of these emotions. I believe we need to do more than this, and make a conscious effort to befriend our emotions and really adapt them as part of us.

It is possible to engage with them and allow their energies to help us to a deeper understanding of who we are. In allowing ourselves to feel what we feel, without judging or condemning it, we could be much more confident in facing whatever life presents us with.

In the West, emotions are treated as passions – our 'lower' nature, alien, primitive and chaotic, controlling, dominating and then overwhelming us. John Welwood (1) writes about our feeling life as a whole spectrum of expressions, from global and diffuse to sharp and intense. He pictures it as a 'spectrum of felt energy'.

*EMOTIONS*

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*FEELINGS*

-----

*FELT SENSES*

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*BASIC ALIVENESS*

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Welwood describes Basic Aliveness as a basic persistent wholesome feeling, just being alive – joie de vivre. This is not about feeling happy or sad or what ever, but just about being ALIVE. This aliveness is also the source of sensitivity and tenderness. Our five senses (hearing, seeing, tasting, touching and smelling) and central nervous system let the world in. Our response to this lies in sensations, feelings and emotions. Our aliveness surrounds, pervades and nurtures us, as does the light of the sun, the air we breathe and the food we eat.

If we connect with this aliveness we discover our deepest sensitivity from which all our feelings and emotions arise. Between 'aliveness' and specific feelings and emotions, we have 'felt senses' about the life situations we are in. I may be aware I feel anger towards, or about someone, but that is not the only feeling I have about him – the anger may only be a small part of the many ways in which I relate to him. I can make contact with all these ways through the body – 'How does this person or situation or 'anger' feel to me as a whole? Or how does this whole situation or all of this anger feel to me? How does it make my body feel? We need to be patient doing this. It can be quite vague at first – a heavy feeling in the stomach – a tightness in the chest – a heaviness in the head – and so on... After spending sufficient time making contact, I address this 'felt sense' by asking it questions – letting it 'speak to me'. (It can work better if you have someone else ask you these questions.)

All this is not as difficult as it may sound. After all we very often 'body language' to describe how we feel. I am 'shaking with anger' – 'I have a pressure on my head' – 'my head feels as if it would burst' – 'it's a heavy weight across my shoulders'.

Pick a problem in your life right now. Ask yourself how you feel about it as a whole – focus on your body – how does your body 'hold' the problem i.e. its felt sense? How are you holding that in your body right now? Someone who is feeling angry might reply – "something sitting in my gut" or "a feeling like a heaviness" or "a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach" or "a tightness like a band in the centre of my chest holding something in".

One of my clients was talking about the anxiety she was feeling about her husband's behaviour. I asked her how she held this anxiety in her body. After a pause of about a minute she replied, "Something in my stomach... a clenched sort of feeling..." I asked her to focus on that feeling and stay with it patiently to see what emerged. She was beginning to be in touch with that feeling on a fresh way, getting under or behind the anxiety. She said, "I need someone to rely on, to lean on. D (her husband) is so unreliable". She continued talking about this for a few minutes. Then when asked, said she felt better. The sensation in the stomach had "unclenched a bit". (FELT SHIFT)

In another example about an angry man, given by John Welwood, the client said, "it is so frustrating living with her... I have wanted to communicate with her for so long... but it is really me I am angry with and disappointed with... (sighs, voice shaky) ...I have just realised I haven't told her how much I care about her in a long time ... sat on my love...that's what the heavy feeling is all about." (FELT SHIFT)

If we judge our feelings or emotions and see them as bad, they turn bad on us. As the poet says, 'Parting is such sweet sorrow', but my feelings of sadness can become feelings of profound loss, separation, despair; irritation can turn to anger and rage. Sadness has a tender quality about it, but when judged, it may become frozen. Beneath my anger there may lie hurt, or feelings of abandonment or rejection.

Giving vent to our emotions by use of the Autogenic Intentional Exercises may well be necessary to release the overwhelming pressure and charge of destructive energies. BUT it is also necessary to understand and accept our feelings, to let them speak to us and then they may tell us what we need to be looking at in our life right now. I stand back from, look at and listen to my feeling/emotion in a calm detached way.

Meditation helps also, cultivating a sense of detachment (or non-attachment). Then I can keep my seat in the midst of emotional turbulence and see the bigger picture under the storms of emotional frenzy or swells of deep feeling, remaining in touch with a sense of peace and detachment at the centre.

In summary, I teach myself to **be with** the emotional turmoil of my anger, anxiety, fear or hurt. I begin to experience its bodily sense (its 'felt sense'). I no longer need to judge or label the feelings, but simply be in touch with their energy, as part of my basic aliveness. This confused and tangled web of emotions may then be transmuted into the wisdom of seeing ourselves, our feelings, our inner and outer world as it really is.

(1)John Welwood. Befriending Emotion in 'Awakening the Heart' – East/West approaches to psychotherapy and the healing relationship', edited by John Welwood, Shambhala 1985.

Dr Brian O'Donovan © 2000

**And the people stayed home.**

And read books, and listened, and rested,  
and exercised, and made art, and played games,  
and learned new ways of being, and were still.

And listened more deeply.

Some meditated, some prayed, some danced.

Some met their shadows.

And the people began to think differently.

And the people healed.

And, in the absence of people living in ignorant,  
dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways,  
the earth began to heal.

And when the danger passed,  
and the people joined together again,  
they grieved their losses, and made new choices,  
and dreamed new images, and created new ways  
to live and heal the earth fully,  
as they had been healed.

*Kitty O'Meara © March 2020*

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case histories, stories, humorous anecdotes, preferably with colour photos.

to the editor at [newsletter@autogenic-therapy.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@autogenic-therapy.org.uk)

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