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Thanks to Annie Sturgeon and Michael Ross for their proof reading and most helpful suggestions.

1. Introduction:

This is the first of a series of meditations on constructive feelings, based on Luis de Rivera's approach [de Rivera 2018]. This contrasts with the series of Feeling the Feeling Meditations, discussed in the complementary F 5 series on the web.

Feeling the Feeling Meditations focus on distressing / upsetting type feelings, in which we recognise and acknowledge the feeling (as in the Rumi poem "The Guest House"¹) and approach the feeling with the idea that the feeling is giving us information, and our task is to correctly assess the information that it is giving us. Feeling the Feeling Meditation:

Facilitates the processing and deactivation of undesired feelings and follows the [Neutralisation Principle](#).....In short, you can think of Feeling the Feeling Meditation as a cleansing process of disturbing emotions.

de Rivera 2018 p 130

slightly modified from de Rivera's original text and his own English rendering

Meditation on constructive feelings is very different, in that we choose a wholesome / constructive feeling and then meditate / reflect on that. This can be a very powerful practice.

Meditation on (constructive) feelings increases the presence of feelings that have a constructive influence on your life and follows the [idioplastic principle](#).

de Rivera 2018 p 130

slightly modified from de Rivera's original text and his own English rendering

¹ See <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/guest-house/>

In this way, meditation on constructive feelings is a procedure to increase “the presence of constructive feelings” – and so, axiomatically, brings about positive change through the ideoplastic principle [de Rivera 2018 p 130]. Furthermore:

Meditation on (Constructive) feelings is a general approach. It does not follow a particular therapeutic aim, it is suitable for universal application, and it is appropriate for anyone wishing to expand their awareness about themselves and the universe. Therefore, the feelings selected are “truly constructive feelings”, taught by ancient schools of wisdom....

de Rivera 2018 p 132

slightly modified from de Rivera’s original text and his own English rendering

As indicated, this is the first of a series of articles on Constructive Feeling Meditations. The constructive feelings meditations covered by Luis de Rivera in his book are: Calm; Existence; Zest; and Love. This web series is planned to include the following.

F 6.1	Constructive Feeling Meditation I: Calm (this article)
F 6.2	Constructive Feeling Meditation II: Existence
F 6.3	Constructive Feeling Meditation III: Zest
F 6.4	Constructive Feeling Meditation: IV: Love and Self-Nurturing (especially in context of low self-esteem)
F 6.5	Constructive Feeling Meditation: V: Inter-Being
F 6.6	Constructive Feeling Meditation: VI: Compassion and Joy (the four immeasurables)
F 7	Meditation on Five Sounds that can Heal the World (after Hanh)
F 8	Meditation embracing Joy, Happiness, Inner Distress and Healing

2. Constructive Feeling Meditation I: Calm

2A. Calm – and the concept and awareness of Calm

This is the first Constructive Feeling Meditation suggested by de Rivera [de Rivera 2018].

It is of interest that in the Autogenic Standard Exercise format introduced by Luthe to Britain the final phrase in the series is:

- I am at peace².

In Luis de Rivera’s format, this phrase is not included. However, as we develop our skills in AT, we will often by the end of the sequence be experiencing Calm, and it is this that we are tapping into in this first of the Constructive Feeling Meditations. It is therefore perhaps the most appropriate one to start with.

² “I am at peace” is a lovely positive affirmation. In the final weeks of editing this paper, I had the great privilege to read and assess a wonderful essay by Alina Barrowcliff (for the Post Graduate Certificate in Autogenic Training BAS Level 1) called: “I am at Peace – an *Autogenic journey*”. In this article, she links IAAP beautifully to neuro-biology, including Porges’ Polyvagal Theory and a feeling of safety. [Barrowcliff 2019; Porges 2012 and Porges 2017]. See also: [A sense of Feeling Safe](#).

As we develop our skills in the practice of the Autogenic Training, we may become aware of an inner calmness. In this Meditative Exercise, we specifically focus on such an inner feeling. Luis de Rivera comments:

Calm emerges quite naturally during the practice of meditation^{ir} and constitutes a universal experience, a basic feeling tone common to all meditative practices. It is also the first constructive feeling to come to the awareness of the meditator [de Rivera & Trujillo 1996, 2010]. Some meditators affirm that they have never experienced this feeling before they learned meditation, while others recall a similar experience during spontaneous trance.....or during instances.... such as gazing at the sea.

de Rivera 2018 p 132

^{ir} Luis de Rivera is here, naturally, including Autogenic Training

Now, for some of us, calm may not be exactly how we feel. We may prefer to focus on, for example, the feelings of:

- Equanimity
- Peace
- Serenity
- Being-at-one

2B. Constructive Feeling Meditation focusing on Calm

The actual word or feeling that we focus on is a personal matter, as discussed above.

Now that we have been practising the Autogenic sequence for a couple of months or more, we will, from time to time, have experienced a feeling of calm or the equivalent¹. It is this feeling / sense that we are recalling / sensing..... in this Constructive Feeling Meditation.

We start with a full Autogenic Sequence, and then, after the final “Life Breathes Me” (or “It Breathes me”) of the sequence, we simply focus on the feeling of calm (or other similar tranquil feelings) within. Stay with this feeling for a little time – say up to a few minutes

- ⊗ As we become adept at this meditation, the duration can be increased to ten or more minutes.

In essence, as suggested above, this Meditation is no different from feelings we may have had from time to time when previously practising an Autogenic sequence. However, in this meditation we are consciously focusing on such a feeling for several minutes or more, and allow it to permeate our whole being.

3. Other articles with inter-linked themes (F series)

B20	Separation Distress and Well-Being – Neuro-physiological reflections on developing a Secure Base
<u>The F series below are all based on, or extrapolated from, de Rivera 2018</u>	
F 1	An introduction to Autogenics 3.0 – <i>based on the work of Luis de Rivera</i>
F 2	Autogenic 3.0: an approach to the 10 Standard Exercise format for those familiar with, and practising, the Six Standard Exercise format
F 3	Basic Principles of Autogenic Training
F 4	Some Consequences of Blocking Feelings – <i>of not allowing ourselves to feel the feeling</i>
F 5A	Feeling the Feeling Meditation I
F 5B	Feeling the Feeling Meditation II
F 6.1	Constructive Feeling Meditation I: Calm (this article)
F 6.2	Constructive Feeling Meditation II: Existence
F 6.3	Constructive Feeling Meditation III: Zest
F 6.4	Constructive Feeling Meditation: IV: Love and Self-Nurturing (especially in context of low self-esteem)
F 6.5	Constructive Feeling Meditation: V: Inter-Being
F 6.6	Constructive Feeling Meditation: VI: Compassion and Joy (the four immeasurables)
F 7	Meditation on Five Sounds that can Heal the World (after Hanh)
F 8	Meditation embracing Joy, Happiness, Inner Distress and Healing
F9	Transmutation ^(Transformation) of distressing feelings into positive feelings (after de Rivera)

4. References / sources

Barrowcliff, Alina 2019: "I am at Peace – an <i>Autogenic journey</i> " (Submission paper for the Post Graduate Certificate in Autogenic Training BAS Level 1 2019)
Benson, Herbert; and Klipper, Miriam Z; 1975 <i>The Relaxation Response</i> ISBN 0-00-626148-5
Cannon, W. 1936 (May). The role of emotion in disease. <i>Annals of Internal Medicine</i> 9
de Rivera, Luis. 2017 / 2018*. <i>Autogenic 3.0 The New Way to Mindfulness and Meditation</i> ISBN 978-1548-162054 (*The 2018 edition has a useful index)
Porges, Stephen W. 2011. <i>The Polyvagal Theory – Neuro-physiological foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, Self-Regulation</i> ISBN 978-0-393-70700-7
Porges, Stephen W. 2017. <i>The Pocket Guide to The Polyvagal Theory: The Transformative Power of Feeling Safe</i> ISBN 978-0-393-70787-8
RUMI, The Essential: Barks, Coleman, & Moyne, John, et al: 1995. page 109. Harper ISBN 0-06-250959-4
Luthe, Wolfgang; & Schultz, J.H; 1969. <i>Autogenic Therapy: Volume I; Autogenic Methods.</i> [BAS 2001] ISBN 0-356-22736 -7

Glossary /

5. Glossary

Including cross-reference for terms used only in the Glossary (and not in the main text).

A more comprehensive glossary is to be found in F1

<p>A Sense of Feeling Safe</p>	<p>Fundamental to Autogenic Training is the shift in physiological state that it can bring about towards a state of inner calm that is sometimes reflected in the phrase “I am at Peace”.</p> <p>Schultz described this in terms of the “psycho-physiological shift” (<i>Umschaltung</i> – Schultz 1932; 1991; Luthe & Schultz; 1969; p 1) which can be described in terms of a shift from an SNS dominated state to that of the rest, repair, recuperation modality of the PSNS.</p> <p>More recently, Porges’ work on the Poly-Vagal Theory has emphasised the role of the myelinated supra-diaphragmatic vagal (PSNS) [Porges 2011] in bringing about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ positive social engagement and nurturing (e.g. the in mother-infant dyad) that is crucial to our well-being and flourishing. ⊗ This can be considered in terms of ‘feeling safe within ourselves’ [Porges 2017; e.g. pp 48-50; Barrowcliff 2019]. <p>So we can refresh our view of the “psycho-physiological shift” in terms of this concept of a feeling of deep safety within. In this psycho-physiological condition, even when external events are difficult / problematic, we can keep an inner equanimity if we allow ourselves stay grounded in our AT practice (e.g. Standard Exercises, Partial Exercise(s), and the Three Minute Exercise).</p>
<p>Active Concentration</p>	<p>A term frequently used by Schultz and Luthe to indicate a form of concentration when we are focused on striving to get a particular result / solution to a problem; this means that Active Concentration is goal directed.</p> <p>Widespread research indicates that if AT students adopt such a striving, goal-orientated approach to the Autogenic Exercises the results will not be moving towards “neutral or pleasing / relaxing” states [see Luthe 1970 ^{Volume 4} Table 2 page 16].</p> <p>Cf. the non-striving approach in Autogenic Training, which is generally called Passive Concentration. Wallnöfer (2014) uses the term Autogenic Concentration.</p>
<p>Amplified State of Consciousness Induction ASCI (after Luis de Rivera)</p>	<p>“ASCI principle: Passive Concentration induces an Amplified State of Consciousness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benson’s Relaxation Response is identical to the autogenic state described by Schultz and co-workers, so we could name this principle the Relaxation Principle. ○ I prefer ASCI (Amplified State of Consciousness Induction) because it conveys better the notion that, besides the psychophysiological changes, there is an amplification of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the mental field, b) inner world perception and c) self-discovery. ○ The standard exercises work on this principle.” <p style="text-align: right;">[de Rivera 2017 /2018B]</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Bullet points etc added - IR</p>

<p>Autogenic Acceptance</p> <p>This phrase, suggested by IR as an outgrowth of Wallnöfer's Autogenic Concentration, is an alternative expression for de Rivera's Passive Acceptance [de Rivera 2018].</p>	<p>An alternative expression for Passive Acceptance.</p> <p>Passive Acceptance is a term that de Rivera uses to distinguish it from the Passive Concentration taught in Autogenic Training (see also Autogenic Concentration) [de Rivera 2018].</p> <p>Passive Acceptance is the suggested mental state we adopt when our Passive Concentration wavers, with perhaps a thought intrusion or a memory or emotion. In this situation, we recognise the intrusion, yet we do not get hooked into it.</p> <p>As soon as we recognise the intrusive thought / feeling (Passive Acceptance), we return to the focus of our concentration (e.g. "Solar Plexus Warm") without judgement (or criticism that our mind has wandered).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ See Passive Acceptance in glossary for a more thorough exposition of the term. <p>See also Autogenic Concentration and Mindful Concentration.</p>
<p>Autogenic Concentration</p>	<p>An alternative term for Passive Concentration used by Wallnöfer (2014).</p>
<p>Autogenic Neutralisation</p> <p>For further details, see Glossary of F1 in this series.</p>	<p>An approach used to transform more severe forms of mental distress developed by Luthe. In essence, it can (initially) be seen as a subtle form of psychotherapy / brought about by the AT student entering the Autogenic State in the presence of the AT Therapist, and then allowing her / himself to express verbally and non-verbally anything (feeling, thought, awareness etc.) that comes to mind. The session is recorded, and then transcribed (with comments and reflections) by the student before the next session.</p>
<p>Autogenic State</p> <p>See also:</p> <p>Luthe & Schultz 1969 p 217 and de Rivera 2018 pp 156-160</p>	<p>On page one of Autogenic Therapy: Volume I; <i>Autogenic Methods</i> Luthe and Schultz [Luthe & Schultz 1969] describe the psycho-physiological shift (<i>Umschaltung</i> – Schultz 1932; 1991) that comes about with Autogenic Training (i.e. during the Standard Exercises). This state was later described by Benson in terms of the Relaxation Response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Luis de Rivera prefers the term Amplified State Consciousness (<i>to the Relaxation Response</i>) which is induced during the Standard Exercises (SE) [de Rivera 2018]. <p>At the end of an AT sequence, the Autogenic State can be maintained without the repetition of any SE formulae (see Section 2 in main text).</p> <div style="border: 1px solid purple; border-radius: 20px; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Going back to basics, we can understand the term autogenic to mean what is generated within ourselves in terms of balance, homeostasis, and towards inner harmony and Well-Being.</p> <p>The neuro-physiological underpinnings of the Autogenic State embrace a shift towards increased PSNS activity [Porges 2012], the afferent impulses that arise from this state that go to the brain [Craig 2015], and subtle changes in the Pre-Frontal Cortex with the associated nine specific functions [Siegel 2007; (see also F3)]; and is a state that is equivalent to, yet greater than, that brought about in Benson's Relaxation Response: that is, by the Amplified State of Consciousness [de Rivera 2018].</p> </div>

<p>Autogenic State <i>continued</i></p>	<p>A broader perspective of the Autogenic State is embraced by de Rivera [de Rivera 2018 pp 156-160] in the <i>section</i> of Chapter 10 called “<i>The cartography of the internal world</i>”.</p> <p>The Autogenic State will facilitate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Autogenic Concentration, an alternative phrase for Passive Concentration [Wallnöfer 2014; see BAS Newsletter Spring 2016 p 12] ○ Autogenic Acceptance: this phrase, suggested by IR as an outgrowth of Wallnöfer’s Autogenic Concentration, <i>is an alternative expression</i> for de Rivera’s Passive Acceptance [de Rivera 2018]. <p>For further details of the above, please also see glossary of F1 on website</p>
<p>Ideoplastic principle</p>	<p>This is one of the four fundamental principles of AT emphasised by Luis de Rivera, and discussed in the companion web article F1 in Section 6.2.</p> <p>“A mental presentation or activity produces physical changes in the brain, which, in turn, induce changes in the rest of the systems/functions. This is related to, but larger, than the well-known ideomotor principle. Autogenic Modification works on this principle.” [de Rivera 2017 /2018B]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Autogenic Modification embraces Personal and Motivational Formulae [BAS notation; the original Schultz / Luthe notation for these was Intentional Formulae³] and Organ Specific Formulae. <p>It is important that we clearly understand the difference between the Ideoplastic Principle and the Neutralising Principle:</p> <p>“When entertaining a negative feeling state, you have to be aware if this is serving the neutralization principle or the ideoplastic principle.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. If it is the first, it is homeostatic and salutogenic . ii. If it is the second, it is anti-homeostatic and iatrogenic.” <p style="text-align: right;">de Rivera 2018B</p> <p>Autogenic Neutralisation (Autogenic Abreaction) is effective because it is, by and large, carried out in an Autogenic State, i.e. in an Amplified State of Consciousness with the PSNS dominant, and hence is homeostatic and salutogenic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Personal and Motivational Formulae are carried out in a positive mental state, and so the physical changes in the body will be homeostatic and wholesome (being modulated through increased Para Sympathetic Nervous System activity). ➤ Expressing anger out loud <i>when our SNS is activated</i> will, axiomatically, not be embracing the Neutralisation Principle, but rather the “dysfunctional” side of the Ideoplastic Principle, and therefore will (tend to) be anti-homeostatic and iatrogenic.

³ Not to be confused with the BAS notation of “Intentional”: meaning Intentional Off-Loading Exercises, which were a development from Luthe’s Autogenic Verbalisation [Luthe & Schultz 1969 p 2; and Luthe].

<p>Neutralisation Principle</p> <p>Notation for the spelling of Neutralisation in this article:</p> <p>With an “s” unless when quoting from de Rivera or Luthe (where their American spelling is being used)</p>	<p>The Neutralisation Principle is fundamental to the developments of Autogenic Training realised by Luthe; and it comes to fruition in the context of the Autogenic State. Luis de Rivera comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Disturbing, contradictory or traumatic mental/brain recordings tend to rearrange and dissipate while in the autogenic state. This was discovered and reported by Luthe in 1961, when he clarified the therapeutic value of the Autogenic discharges, and led him to develop the autogenic neutralization methods to facilitate the therapeutic effect of autogenic discharges.” <p style="text-align: right;">de Rivera 2017B / 2018B</p> <p>In the autogenic state we will, neuro-physiologically, be primarily within the domain of increased PSNS efferent and afferent activity. This is vital to the dissipation / healing of ‘Disturbing, contradictory or traumatic mental/brain’ states during Autogenic Neutralisation.</p> <p>Compare with: Ideoplastic Principle</p>
<p>Passive Acceptance</p>	<p>A term used by de Rivera to distinguish it from the Passive Concentration taught in Autogenic Training (see also Autogenic Concentration).</p> <p>Passive Acceptance is the suggested mental state we adopt when our Passive Concentration wavers, with perhaps a thought intrusion or a memory or emotion. In this situation, we recognise the intrusion, yet we do not get hooked into it.</p> <p>As soon as we recognise the intrusive thought / feeling (Passive Acceptance), we return to the focus of our concentration (e.g. “Solar Plexus Warm”) without judgement (or criticism that our mind has wandered).</p> <p>Luis de Rivera puts it this way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Passive Concentration is fixing your attention on the autogenic focus, without any expectation or demand. ○ “Passive Acceptance is, in a way, the opposite of Passive Concentration. Images, memories, and other contents may come to your awareness, but you ignore them, you <i>pass</i> so much that you do not even care to reject them. At the same time, you accept that those elements come to your mind, but do not entertain them.... ○ “.....as soon as you notice that you are driftingreturn to passive concentration in mental contact and with the autogenic formula. In nautical terms, passive concentration is the anchor that moors you into the somato-sensory experience, while passive acceptance keeps you aware of the currents and winds⁴.” <p style="text-align: right;">de Rivera 2018 pp 148-149</p>

⁴ (by IR) i.e. aware of the thoughts / feelings as passing phenomena that we do not get hooked into. If we get hooked, that is no longer Passive Acceptance, and there is a danger that we may ruminate into a downward (and often negative) spiral (cf. the [Second Arrow](#) in Buddhist Psychology).

Passive /	
<p>Passive Concentration</p> <p>[From glossary of F1, itself an extract from Ross 2016; based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luthe & Schultz 1969 Glossary p 232 and 238] 	<p>A term used by Schultz and Luthe to describe the state of mind in Autogenic Training that will facilitate the psycho-physiological shift [e.g. Luthe and Schultz 1969 page 1]. They distinguished Passive Concentration from Active Concentration with which most people are more familiar – the latter being goal directed concentration that is often associated with striving.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Their research, and that of others, indicated that Active Concentration – (associated with striving) – was associated with relatively poor results in Autogenic (Standard Exercise) Training [e.g.: Luthe 1969 Volume IV pp 11-17].
<p>Psychophysiological shift</p> <p>Adapted from Glossary of Ross 2010</p>	<p>A term originally used by Schultz (<i>Umschaltung</i> – Schultz 1932; 1991) to describe the psychological and physiological changes that come about unconsciously when we are doing a session of Autogenic Training (Standard Exercises). These changes are associated with activation of the Para-sympathetic Nervous System and the concomitant rest, repair and recuperation modalities associated with this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This psycho-physiological shift “facilitates and mobilises the otherwise inhibited activity of recuperative and self-normalising brain mechanisms” (Luthe & Schultz; 1969; p 1).
<p>Relaxation Response</p> <p>Adapted from Ross 2010 glossary</p> <p>For further details, please see glossary of E-03 on web</p>	<p>In neuro-physiological terms, this can be seen as the opposite of the Flight / Fight / Freeze Response (the Stress Response).</p> <p>The Relaxation Response is associated with rest, repair, and recuperation – and increased PSNS activity, and was studied extensively by Herbert Benson (Benson 1975; 1985).</p> <p>An understanding of the Relaxation Response dynamics is fundamental to understanding the healing and therapeutic aspects of, for example, Meditation, Therapeutic Hypnosis, Positive Mental Training and Autogenic Training / Therapy.</p> <p>See also Amplified State of Consciousness Induction (ASCI).</p>
Second Arrow	<p>A term, borrowed from Buddhist Psychology, to indicate our tendency as humans to negatively ruminate about an event, thought, or feeling. The initial cause of this is implicitly the first arrow; but this first arrow is not the real problem. The real problem is what we then do, think, feel, or ruminate about.</p> <p>The Second Arrow tends to take us into a downward spiral that (in this sense) is self- inflicted.</p> <p>Epictetus states a similar idea in his famous:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Men are not disturbed by things, but the view they take of things.” [Epictetus 55 – c 135 PE] was a Greek Stoic philosopher]
Stress Response /	

Stress Response	<p>As originally conceived by Walter Cannon (Cannon 1936), the Stress Response is the set of adaptive biological systems that enable an organism to return to homeostasis following a physical / environmental challenge – cf. the Relaxation Response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Notwithstanding Cannon’s concept, the Stress Response these days (2018) is often taken to include potentially damaging effects. <p>For further details, please see B20 on Web: <i>Neuro-physiological reflections on developing a Secure Base</i>.</p>
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