

Understanding Neurofeedback – a new way to heal

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Our understanding of the way the brain develops and functions has grown phenomenally in the last five years. The capacity of the brain to change in function and in structure as it adapts to new information has proven to be astounding. Neurofeedback, an outgrowth of biofeedback, is based on this new understanding of the brain and makes use of current technology to help people to improve their brain function and to resolve chronic conditions of the central nervous system as well as past trauma.

Neurofeedback is a safe and non-invasive alternative to help people resolve conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, migraine headaches, depression, anxiety and stress related problems. Neurofeedback trains the brain to function in a different and more effective manner. It works much like learning a new skill. That is, the brain learns as the client interacts with a computer based feedback system that monitors brain waves by use of sensors placed on the head. The two sensors don't hurt, and they don't send anything into the brain, they simply show which parts of the brain are most active at the moment. The client's role is to focus on the task on the computer screen, such as keeping an image of lotus flower open and floating in space. This teaches the client to change brain wave and nervous system reactions and after several sessions, these skills become automatic. So, a child with adhd can learn to slow down his brain function and to focus. A person with anxiety disorder can learn to calm her heart beat and eliminate the panic. A person with migraines can learn to reduce or eliminate the pain.

Neurofeedback also helps to reduce the long term symptoms of trauma. When trauma happens, we develop response patterns that impact how we perceive every new situation that comes along. Sometimes we perceive interactions and events appropriately, but sometimes, the long term impact of the trauma causes us to behave in ways that are dysfunctional and lead to sleep problems, insecurity, depression, or chronic illness. Neurofeedback can calm the "flight or fight" response that is common after effect of trauma and the client can learn healthier, more effective means of responding to life.

Sometimes, neurofeedback opens the client up to other problems in his or her life, and so traditional therapies, such as family therapy, marital counselling, or EMDR, might be an option as well.

Neurofeedback is not a quick fix. It generally takes 12 to 20 sessions for the changes to become automatic. But, it is shorter, and less intrusive to your body and mind, than years of medications.

And, as a caution, no one should go off medication without first consulting with their prescribing physician.

