

CALM YOUR BRAIN TO REDUCE STRESS

By Terri Phillips, MFT

One of the most common concerns clients voice in my office is that they are worried or anxious. There are certainly many outside stressors that contribute to these feelings. Unemployment is at an all time high, the economy is uncertain at best and many are required to work longer hours or more jobs putting a great deal of stress on the entire family system.

Anxiety issues occur in adults and children and can exist in people from all walks of life. Anxiety does not discriminate. While we cannot control the outside factors, we do have some control over how our brain responds to life's challenges. There are some steps we can all take to minimize our brains negative response to stress. To list a few: eating a healthy diet; getting regular exercise; 7 - 8 hours of sleep nightly; adding recreation and fun to your life; and developing a strong support system full of family and friends. When these steps are not enough, professional assistance may be necessary.

Anxiety is a state of being in which the focus is on the future and worry about what may take place. Generally these worries are about things over which we have no control. The brain then goes into "overdrive" and functions at a state of heightened awareness which is completely unnecessary for the circumstances. This state of heightened awareness is typically our brains response used only briefly for emergencies. When this "fight or flight" type response is used daily for long periods of time, it can produce damage emotionally, physically and within our family system.

Stress is also a force of concern within the medical field. Often emergency rooms are filled with people who exhibit physical symptoms which doctors then attribute to anxiety as their cause after physical causes are ruled out. These may include heart palpitations, headaches with no physical cause, panic, obsessions over problems, stomach upset, inability to sleep, and general fatigue. The body feels fatigue when the brain is experiencing over exertion or over arousal. This type of anxiety can cause people to feel paralyzed and unable to function.

Neurofeedback is a non-invasive way to help regulate brain wave patterns and therefore reduce anxiety. With sensors connected to your scalp, a computer, and a trained neurofeedback professional, your brain can learn to relax and decrease all of the physical and emotional complications related to anxiety. Just like your brain becomes "conditioned" to worry it can be "conditioned" to relax. Research studies have indicated many have had a successful response to neurofeedback without the side effects that occur with medications used to address anxiety. For further information on this topic and the studies that have been completed to date, www.eeginfo.com and

www.eegspectrum.com are excellent sources. Don't waste another minute of energy and worry over everyday issues you cannot control. You have the power to take steps to calm your brain today!

Terri Phillips is a license Marriage and Family Therapist specializing in Neurofeedback located in Temecula. Call 909-730-0410 or visit www.terriphillipsmft.com for more information.