

Don't Waste Time Beating Yourself Up

Biofeedback uses technology to help you learn true relaxation faster. The idea of biofeedback is clever and simple: if you can develop sensory awareness of an involuntary function, you can learn to change it. In all practice, efficiency is key. If you learn your lessons and act on them, growth progresses quickly. If you don't, it won't.

If I were to tell you to relax your sympathetic nerves or let more blood flow into your hands, you would not have a clue where to begin, because your conscious mind has no way of perceiving these functions. But in the biofeedback arrangement, you will quickly discover that you can influence the rate of the beeps and make them go faster. You will not know exactly what you are doing. Instead, you will learn what it feels like when you relax the right area, and the reinforcement of faster beeps will soon have you doing it with more and more efficiency. Learning in this way is interesting and fun.

Changing the balance of the autonomic nervous system away from dominance by its sympathetic division has a large spillover effect throughout the body, leading often to lowered heart rate and blood pressure and better digestive function, for example. Biofeedback is recommended by physicians attuned to alternative and complementary forms of medicine for migraine, hypertension, cardiac arrhythmias, ulcers, chronic intestinal problems, and bruxism, as well as by patients dismayed by pharmacological options. It's also recommended to people who feel they need outside help in learning to reduce anxiety and internal stress, who doubt they can do it on their own. Of course, when you do biofeedback you are doing it on your own, and much of the fun comes from realizing that fact.

Brain-wave biofeedback helps one learn to focus awareness and direct it with documented immediate benefits in terms of lowered blood pressure, decreased heart and respiratory rate, increased blood flow, and other measurable signs of the relaxation response. It can calm an agitated mind, creating optimal physical and mental health; undo our sense of separateness, which is the common root of fear and misery; and unify consciousness, putting us in touch with our higher self and connecting us to higher consciousness. Neurofeedback restructures the mind, allowing us to achieve our full potential as human beings.

What you want to learn is to withdraw attention from the endless chains of associated thoughts that stream through the mind, putting attention instead on the present moment. Obstacles to efficiency include such things as struggle with oneself, neurotic self-preoccupation, non-

acceptance of what has already happened, blame, guilt, and obsession with the stories of one's difficult life, or the stories of one's family, group, or nation. Time spent struggling with oneself, especially in the vicious recycling of negative thoughts, attitudes, and feelings, binds energy and attention and impedes growth. Some of these things may be inevitable, but they need not be prolonged. Flexibility defines the ability to move through to other brain states rather than stay stuck.

Practice by its nature brings unskillful unconscious patterns into view. Waste as little time as possible regretting or justifying them. When you see that you've been blindly self-possessed, and that you've wasted valuable time and created suffering in others and yourself, and you feel disgusted and ashamed – that's great! You don't have to defend, remedy, or explain it. Appreciate and welcome this precious awareness. It brings the opportunity to make a new and different choice in the next moment. Focus on that. Practice is making good use of such unflattering self-awareness, again and again, not resisting it.

In some moments, this comes naturally. In others, it can be tremendously difficult. It's hard to violate and abandon your ingrained habits. It's important to know that in forgiving your past mistakes and focusing on free, right action, you are doing something important. You are changing your luck, creating a better future. You are taking responsibility for the part of the universe for which no one else can.

The best way to relate to what you want to leave behind is not to engage it. In any moment when you notice that circumstances, within or without, have shaken your practice intention, attend quickly to the business at hand: take right action. Right action means healthy, regenerative, compassionate, constructive, effective, efficient participation in life. It includes both subjectivity and behavior. Show up, make the best choices you can and embody them as well as possible in your actions, thoughts, and feelings. Neurofeedback can lead you to the flow of the eternal present where all potential lives.

Without avoiding responsibility for past mistakes, accept that they cannot be changed. Choose to show up in life in the next moment as wisely, courageously, and fully as you can. No matter how challenging a hand you were dealt, or how poorly you played it up until this moment, you can play your current cards intelligently and honorably – starting, always, right now.