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*Mental Health Services*

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**NEUROFEEDBACK**

**A NON-PHARMACOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVE**

**FOR THE TREATMENT OF**

**ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER**

**Feedback: The Basis of all Learning**

Feedback about our success or failure is the basic process by which learning takes place. As children shoot a basketball at a basket, they are continually provided with visual information as to the accuracy of the shot. When they see the ball go slightly to the left side of the basket, they readjust their muscles and stance so that they can now shoot the ball a little more to the right. By this visual feedback, they are able to improve their performance until their frequency of making baskets is greatly enhanced. Thus the eyes have fed back to the brain information and an opportunity to improve functioning.

**Biofeedback Defined**

Biofeedback is merely the feedback of biological information or information about our body. When we look into a mirror and see a physical image and are able to change that image in a way that improves it, we are experiencing biofeedback. Likewise, one of the most simple biofeedback instruments which we utilize is the bathroom scale. The scale provides basic information about our weight at any given moment. With this information, we are then able to modify our diet in order to have an effect on the next scale reading.

There are other processes within the human body which we can learn to control with conscious intent and results in an improvement in our physical functioning. Biofeedback is a proof of the mind/body relationship. That is, what we think and feel results in physiological change in the body. Likewise, the sensations from the body can result in feeling different emotions. A good balance between the mind/body processes are extremely important in maintaining adequate physical and emotional health. When these processes get out of balance, it is possible to use a system called biofeedback therapy to promote better health and well-being.

### **Symptoms of ADD**

ADD is a neurological disease. It ranges from mild to severe and is usually present from birth. Children with ADD are easily distracted and often seem to be daydreaming. They do not finish what they start and repeatedly appear to make careless mistakes. Being on time, obeying instructions, and following rules are extremely difficult for them. They tend to switch rapidly and without reason from one activity to another and are very distractive to themselves and others.

### **Adult ADD**

ADD begins in childhood, but is also a disorder of teens and adults. While some of the hyperactivity tends to subside with age, the difficulty of focusing, attending, and getting tasks completed is still extremely difficult. There also is still a tendency to fidget, feel restless, and squirm. One of the common characteristics of adult ADD is having many things begun and few things completed. They frequently appear as procrastinators or people with good ideas but little follow through.

### **Treatment for ADD**

Before any treatment, a complete psychological assessment including parent rating schedules and psychological testing must be undertaken. There are many other conditions which resemble ADD which need to be ruled out before treatment is initiated.

Traditional treatment methods which have been used are mainly systems of behavior modification with rewards and medications. Some psychoactive medications have been used, but the most often prescribed, and some feel over-prescribed drug, is a stimulant called Ritalin.

Ritalin can have some possible problem side effects such as growth stunting, headaches, insomnia, and suppressed appetite. A non-drug treatment utilizing biofeedback has become available in the past few years.

### **New Non-Drug Treatment for ADD and ADHD**

Over the past 15 years, researchers have developed a new method of treatment which is based upon the finding that persons with ADD have low cycle per second brain wave energy in a small section of their brain. This is probably why Ritalin, which is a stimulant, has been used to reduce the effect of ADD. However, it unfortunately energizes the other parts of the brain as well and often results in various other negative side reactions. Using a technique called biofeedback, psychologists are now able to teach a person how to increase the brain wave energy and often alleviate the symptoms of ADD.

For more information on this method, please contact Elliott & Associates, Inc., 5600 Monroe Street, Sylvania, Ohio 43560, (419) 885-1910.