

Biofeedback Matters®



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Not that Bart, B.A.R.T

“Everyone must take time to sit and watch the leaves turn,”
— Elizabeth Lawrence

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In Biofeedback when we talk about B.A.R.T we are not talking about that crazy kid on the popular cartoon series, The Simpsons, we are



talking about a very popular protocol which can be widely applied for various conditions. Rather than seeing it as a specific protocol I see it more as a concept. When practitioners are learning biofeedback for the first time, they are usually very interested in learning very specific protocols for the conditions they expect to be working with like headaches, anxiety, insomnia, and depression.

They expect a specific guide as to which modalities, what goals,

and the number of sessions to work on each modality for each application. That would be nice. It makes things simpler and makes it easier to plan. It

doesn't always match reality for the individual that is in front of you. Now, what is B.A.R.T.? It is an acronym for Biofeedback Assisted Relaxation Therapy. It's kind of like a generalized protocol that helps to counter the stress response by using biofeedback to teach clients to regulate their physiology using multiple modalities including surface EMG, Skin temperature, Skin conductance, Heart Rate/Heart Rate Variability, Respiration, and EEG. I decided to talk about this after reading Don

Moss's article, Biofeedback-Assisted Relaxation Training: A Clinically Effective Treatment Protocol, in the Summer 2020 issue of Biofeedback Magazine.

With the B.A.R.T. protocol you look at how a person's physiology reacts to stress, i.e., increased muscle tension, respiration, skin conductance, heart rate, high beta EEG, and decreased skin temperature, and alpha EEG, and teach them to reverse it using the appropriate biofeedback modalities to do it. Clients are also instructed to practice appropriate relaxation exercises between sessions at home to initiate the relaxation response more often than when they are in the office for biofeedback sessions. They are also instructed to keep records of their frequency and severity of symptoms and the conditions sur-



Reducing Stress At Work

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HRV Biofeedback Tutor is a multimedia tutorial that is designed to prepare providers and students for BCIA's Certificate of Completion and Certification in HRV Biofeedback. **\$125**

Most of us spend at least 8 hours of our day at work. If you ask many people they will say they hate their job. Even if you don't hate your job there are usually many moments every day at work that you would describe as stressful. It's nice to visit a therapy office for a biofeedback, talk therapy, or relaxation session where you sit in a nice comfortable chair and listen to relaxing music. For a moment your troubles can seem to disappear and you feel totally relaxed. This is helpful. It can break the chronic stress condition that many people are stuck in. The problem can be that after the session you go back out into the real world and have to manage until the next visit that may be a week or two away.

While you are at work what can you do to break the stress response that is being turned on so frequently?

Doing 15-10 minute relaxation exercises may be easy to do at home but they may not be so easy to do at work. You can take part of your lunch break to do a 15-20 minute relaxation exercise so it is possible.

I also make the argument that non smokers should get the same amount of time for breaks to do whatever they want including, relaxation exercises. They shouldn't have to work more just because they don't smoke.

An important and effective quick relaxation exercise you can do is to notice, when you are typing at the computer if you are tensing your arms, neck, upper back and shoulders

more than necessary. When you are typing, it is easy to start tensing muscles more than necessary, especially when you are feeling stressed. Sometimes when you are under pressure to get a project done quickly you tense up more while you are typing, which of course does not help you type any faster and can lead to symptoms like neck and upper back pain and headaches. Doing a quick mental scan now and then can limit the amount of time that your muscles are tensed more than they need to be for the task you are working on.

Another thing you can do is just stop and take some deep breaths for two to five minutes. It is surprising how much of a change shifting your breathing even for a short time can make on your physiology and mood. If you are feeling anxious or stressed, those few slow breaths can take the edge off and help to calm you down. If you are using a biofeedback device like the emWave, Inner Balance, or I-Feel, that monitors your heart rate variability you will be able to see the measurable difference it makes in your HRV levels. For several months I used an emWave Desktop HRV device, that connected to my work computer USB port, to practice biofeedback and relaxation during the day. After a stressful phone call I would connect the ear clip heart rate sensor to my ear and play one of the 3-10 minute HRV biofeedback games to help to calm my autonomic nervous system. I slowed my breathing down to

about 6 breaths per minute and thought about something that helped me to feel positive and relaxed. As I watched the screen I could tell how I was doing by watching how the game was progressing and noting if a light or bar on the screen was red, blue, or green. Even though I didn't spend more than 10 minutes doing this, I could feel the difference in my mind and body. I felt a clear, positive difference. Simple tools like this can help to bring your stress level back down when it starts to rise.

There are also many Apps that can be installed on smartphones or tablets that help you to relax by taking quick stress breaks. A couple I know of are CALM and Insight Timer.

Our stress levels vary from very relaxed to very stressed all day. We have the power to affect this based on the decisions we make. If we don't do anything to turn on the relaxation response during the day then we will be more stressed than we need to be. The effects of these decisions add up over time causing us to be more stressed or more relaxed.

Just because you have to spend much of your time at work doesn't mean that you have to allow it to affect your health negatively. Taking some simple steps that take only a small amount of time relative to the amount of time you are on the job can do a lot to help to break the chronic stress response many people experience at work. This can help improve health, wellness, and even performance. There are no good reasons not to do it.



B.A.R.T continued

rounding when they experience the symptoms as well and their practice sessions.

This is very much what I was exposed to during the many biofeedback training seminars that I experienced with Adam Crane when he was teaching our classes. I remember him responding to students who were looking for standardized protocols. He would suggest that they teach clients generally how to regulate all of the appropriate modalities to turn on the relaxation response to counter the frequent or chronic turning on of the stress response. If they still pressed for standardized protocols, he would refer them to the Schwartz book, *Biofeedback A Practitioner's Guide* which he used to call a cookbook for biofeedback. Schwartz still preferred to call it a practitioner's guide. I don't recall Adam referring to what he was teaching as B.A.R.T. though it sounds about the same to me.

When I talk to clients who are suffering from stress related disorders I like to discuss the concept of levels of stress response that they may be walking around with. The level is variable. If the level is low then they have more capacity

to deal with the stress that comes along to add to it. If they already have a high level of stress then their capacity to deal with more is not as great. For those who suffer with things like panic attacks, those times when their stress level is already high are times when it is more likely for them to go into a panic attack. During times when their stress level is lower it would be less likely for a stressor to push them into a panic attack.

They would still feel stressed but be more able to manage it. I suggest that training with biofeedback and doing home relaxation practice can help bring their average stress level lower and thus increase their capacity to manage the stress that they will inevitably have to deal with in life. Besides the biofeedback we do during office sessions, I ask clients to practice relaxation exercises at home and to practice awareness of muscle tension by passively scanning their bodies for areas of tension and releasing any tension that they identify. I also suggest that they take opportunities during everyday situations like standing in lines or waiting at red lights to practice slow breathing for short periods of time so that they are not always having to find 15-20 minutes for

relaxation practice. This also helps them to be turning on the relaxation response more often during the day.

Besides helping to reduce specific clinical symptoms the B.A.R.T. protocol can be used for general wellness and peak performance. If we can teach people to turn off the stress response and turn on the relaxation response more often and at will, it makes sense that they will be less likely to develop any stress related disorders.

Since it is known that most doctor visits are related to stress in some way, people who go through this type of training should be healthier in general. It also should help people perform better at whatever they are doing because stress tends to reduce effectiveness in just about any type of performance.

When in doubt, if you don't find the ideal protocol for biofeedback, the B.A.R.T. protocol is a good option. It involves a thorough intake and history, tracking symptoms, doing a stress profile measuring multiple modalities under baseline, stressor, and recovery conditions as part of a complete initial assessment followed by training on the appropriate modalities plus homework of practicing relaxation exercises outside of the office.



Biofeedback/ Neurofeedback

Seminar Schedule

BCIA Certification

Biofeedback

Oct 9-11, 2020 – Hawthorne, NY

February 17-19, 2021-Miami, FL

Fees: \$1,195

Neurofeedback

November 6-8, 2020,

Hawthorne, NY

February 20-22, 2021 –Miami, FL

- Fees: \$995

Health Training Seminars is approved by the American Psychological Association to offer continuing education for psychologists and maintains responsibility for the program.





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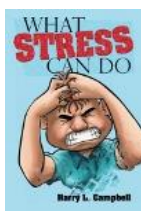
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Harry L. Campbell



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Over the years we have had hundreds of people contact our office looking for a biofeedback or neurofeedback provider in their area. We search our database and give information as much as we

can to help. It would be much easier to point them to our provider database web page. Here, all of your contact information, information on services, your credentials, and qualifications can be listed and easily accessed by potential clients. This listing will also help to improve your internet search engine ranking because it will include a link to your website.

Call our office at 877-669-6463 to let us know that you are interested in adding your listing.

Bronze Listing including contact information, credentials, services listings \$55

Silver Listing adds a YouTube video interview to your listing \$75

Gold Listing adds access to you of our webinar library archive \$125

Listing is renewable annually

Why Do We Work So Hard?

Working hard allows us to take care of our families. I am happy to report that my first granddaughter is doing well. It's hard to believe that she turned one year old in July and she's getting bigger and bigger. She's running around and getting into everything. My wife and I are having a ball spending time with her. She helps me to remember that you can't just work all of the time. Making time for family is important for happiness and health.

