Biofeedback as a Treatment for PTSD

A recent study in which 33 male combat veterans were asked to participate measured the effects of using biofeedback over an 8-week period to help control their PTSD. The article, published in the journal Biofeedback, focuses on three case studies out of the 33 participants to show that biofeedback can be effective tool, in conjunction with weekly group support sessions, which included further coaching for biofeedback practice.

Lawrence, KS (PRWEB) February 06, 2015 -- Biofeedback – Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects nearly 20% of post-9/11 veterans, and one-fourth of US soldiers have already experienced a mental health issue before their deployment, which only increases the risk of returning with PTSD. Researchers have found that recovery lies in the body’s own ability to self-regulate. One important method for helping to understand and control this ability is “heart rate variability biofeedback.” In this relatively new form of biofeedback, individuals learn to use paced breathing to maximize the variability in their heart rate. This variability is a marker for health and resilience.

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The study took place in two phases over 8 weeks. During phase 1 (the first 4 weeks), the participants learned in the clinic how to properly use biofeedback, using their breathing to increase heart rate variability. For phase 2, the participants were guided to keep a journal of their experiences, train their heart rate variability on a portable device at home, and attend group coaching sessions once a week.

The authors compared the three case studies and determined that the most successful participant had completely embraced all aspects of biofeedback and was most diligent in staying with the program. The other two participants had varying degrees of commitment. The second participant had to drop out and re-enroll, but still experienced a level of success. The third participant had a harder time using biofeedback on his own, but in a group setting he too saw a decrease in his stress levels.

This study demonstrates a success rate among the participants who use heart rate variability biofeedback as a tool, coupled with group support sessions. Further research is necessary to help put these ideas into everyday, practical application, not just for PTSD but for other mental health disorders.


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About Biofeedback
Biofeedback is published four times per year and distributed by the Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback. AAPB’s mission is to advance the development, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge about applied psychophysiology and biofeedback to improve health and the quality of life through research, education, and practice. For more information about the Association, see www.aapb.org.
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