

# FROM THE EDITOR

Donald Moss, PhD

## Special Issue: Teaching Children and Youth to Self-Regulate

The cover of this Winter 2005 issue of *Biofeedback* shows a schoolhouse.<sup>1</sup> This special issue focuses on the challenge of providing children and youth with an *education for life*. The articles address the question, How can we best teach our young people to self-regulate their bodies, minds, and emotions in order to better manage the stress of life?

In March 2002, I proposed an Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback (AAPB) initiative to develop a curriculum and a set of resources for teaching children to self-regulate. AAPB's education section has accepted this challenge, and this special issue is a beginning step in the process of developing that curriculum. The education section, and its cochairs Elizabeth Stroebel and Ingrid Pirker-Binder, will now develop a Web page on the AAPB Web site that will feature a growing collection of handouts and educational articles dedicated to teaching kids to self-regulate.

## Ethics and Standards

Sebastian Striefel discusses the process of encouraging children to accept responsibility for their own health and health care. He emphasizes the role of biofeedback, which creates a sense of immediate self-efficacy, and a cognitive behavioral approach to show children the role of attitude and belief in impacting emotions, physiology, and health.

## Feature Articles

Rollin McCraty describes the large-scale, school-based projects of the HeartMath Institute, which guide children to cultivate positive emotion, positive social behaviors, and better academic performance. The HeartMath approach utilizes "heart rhythm coherence training," a specific form of heart rate variability biofeedback, as a teaching tool for school-age children.

Elizabeth Stroebel, author of the Kiddie QR program for children's wellness education, introduces George Whatmore's concept of dysponesis and shows its application with children of school age and younger. Her article shows how children can identify misplaced effort and

strain in their physiology and behavior via very simple strategies, and redirect their energies in a more playful and health-enhancing fashion.

Linda Thomson, author of the recent book *Harry the Hypnopotamus*, introduces the GEMINI program, which uses imagery and animal stories to guide children to relax, breathe diaphragmatically, and transform their images of their own bodies and symptoms. Thomson advocates using this indirect hypnotic approach both in schools and in clinical settings.

Ingrid Pirker-Binder and Christine Lang present the Active Stress Training International (ASTI) program for self-regulation training, which was developed for elementary schools in Austria. ASTI also utilizes lovable fantasy figures to guide children to learn relaxation, diaphragmatic breathing, muscle relaxation, and handwarming.

Daniel Hamiel of Israel presents cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) as a useful but incomplete tool in helping individuals to cope with anxiety and posttraumatic distress. He highlights the importance of emotional disturbance and the emotional brain in contributing to the severity of emotional disorders. He suggests that combining biofeedback and mindfulness training with CBT will produce more effective relief from anxiety and traumatic experiencing.

Dmitry Burshteyn, Ting Lei, and Juan Cea-Aravena describe a recent study that combined neurofeedback and James Pennebaker's expressive writing paradigm with a group of undergraduate college students. The authors encourage others to combine biofeedback with expressive writing in clinical settings.

This special issue draws on biofeedback professionals from around the world, yet many commonalities emerge. The authors emphasize the role of negative emotions, maladaptive beliefs, and excessive physiological activation in children's health and behavioral problems. Several specifically highlight the neurobiology of negative emotion. The authors emphasize simple and child-friendly strategies for transforming negative emotions into positive feelings and for modifying destructive beliefs. They emphasize such useful tools as biofeedback, relaxation skills, and expressive writing for alleviating physiological distress. Finally, most of these authors draw on the right brain to bring the complexities of self-regulation to a child's level by using imagery, metaphors, and story.

<sup>1</sup>Photo courtesy of Craig de Fasselle, Dead Tree Photography, [www.deadtreesphotography.com](http://www.deadtreesphotography.com)

### Handouts

The special Handouts section includes brief practical exercises to guide clinicians and educators in teaching children to self-regulate. Two of the handouts illustrate principles introduced in feature articles. Pirker-Binder and Lang provide an exercise using fantasy characters to guide the child to learn handwarming. Following principles developed by Pennebaker, Donald Moss provides a set of instructions guiding a middle school or high school student (or adult) to engage in expressive writing. Finally, Edna Tune of Israel provides instructions for an exercise using play with soap bubbles to effectively master diaphragmatic breathing. Additional handouts from Dr. Stroebel will appear in future issues of *Biofeedback*, based on her program, *Kiddie's Quieting Reflex: A Choice for Children*.

We invite readers to send in additional handouts for future issues of *Biofeedback*. The handouts will also be considered for inclusion on the AAPB Web site.

### Historical Perspective

Mary Lee Esty provides an historical perspective on the work of several biofeedback pioneers in contributing to a group-based mind-body self-regulation approach.

### AAPB News and Events Section

The News and Events section includes columns from AAPB's President Richard Sherman, President-Elect Richard Gevirtz, and Executive Director Francine Butler, as well an announcement about a new Web site for the Biofeedback Certification of America (BCIA).



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#### Proposals and Abstracts

Proposals and abstracts are now invited for future special issues of *Biofeedback*: Pelvic Floor Disorders for Spring 2006, EEG Signatures of Common Disorders for Fall 2006, and Integrating Lifestyle Change Into Applied Psychophysiological Therapies for Summer 2007. The editor also welcomes proposals for future special issues of *Biofeedback*.

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