Biofeedback Certification Institute of America Educators Who Have Made a Difference (Part 2)

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Keywords: biofeedback, certification, education, neurofeedback

The Biofeedback Certification Institute of America values its partnership with the dedicated educators who teach biofeedback and neurofeedback to our certificants. This article is the second in a series that introduces the dedicated educators who have helped us succeed in our mission to protect the welfare of biofeedback consumers, to provide credibility to biofeedback practitioners, and to advance the field of biofeedback. This article also reports on the international growth of biofeedback and neurofeedback training programs.

This article is the second in a series that celebrates the contributions of our finest teachers. An anonymous author wrote, “A mind once stretched by a new idea never regains its original dimensions.” The educators featured in this series have challenged the minds of thousands of students. They have supported Biofeedback Certification Institute of America (BCIA) certification by teaching our blueprints, modeling our ethical standards, and mentoring new professionals.

This article highlights the contributions of Celeste DeBease, Harry Campbell, Les Fehmi, Tony Hughes, Erik Peper, and Leslie Sherlin. Future issues will honor the achievements of educators in biofeedback, neurofeedback, and pelvic muscle dysfunction biofeedback. We also celebrate the opening of two university training programs in biofeedback and neurofeedback, which promise to provide further momentum to BCIA's University Initiative.

Celeste DeBease has taught biofeedback at Widener University at the Institute of Graduate Psychology, in Chester, Pennsylvania, for 6 years. She teaches about 10 graduate students and 8 online nonmatriculated students each semester. Her specialty is psychophysiological psychotherapy. She served tirelessly as BCIA Chair and provided the vision for our University Initiative.

Celeste was offered a job in biofeedback at Northwestern hospital soon after she graduated. Her mentors were Marie Stoner and Frank Echenhoffer.

Celeste’s vision for the future of BCIA and the field is that as the field grows, the number of subspecialties will grow and the level of expertise will deepen. As a psychologist, she sees biofeedback technology as the modern-day psychoanalytic couch. It is a way to get in and uncover parts of ourselves that we might not have conscious access to and to mirror those parts to ourselves.

Harry Campbell has taught biofeedback/neurofeedback to more than 5,000 students in more than 12 years. His specialties are biofeedback for stress management and muscular pain as well as alpha/theta neurofeedback for deep relaxation.

He has taught for Biofeedback Resources International and the American Biofeedback Corporation at BCIA seminars in New York. He has also trained staff at universities, colleges, hospitals, military bases, and veterans’ hospitals across the United States.

Adam Crane, who also mentored Harry, came to his high school and demonstrated biofeedback to Harry’s class for Science and Technology Day. Harry was amazed and intrigued at how the body’s reaction to thoughts could be measured and fed back. He had always been interested in science and technology, so this was very exciting to him. Harry started working part time for Adam in his biofeedback instrument business after school and continued throughout college. He continued to work with Adam after graduation. They worked together for more than 21 years, providing biofeedback and neurofeedback instruments and BCIA certification training to health care professionals. Harry bought Biofeedback Resources International from Adam on January 1, 2007, and continues to provide equipment and training.
Harry would like to see more people entering the field and becoming BCIA certified. He would like to see more of the people who use biofeedback become certified because there are still many people who use biofeedback but do not pursue certification.

Les Fehmi has taught neurofeedback since 1967 as an assistant professor of psychology at the State University at Stony Brook of New York. He has presented and given workshops every year since the late 1960s. Les has been in private practice since 1973. His biofeedback clinic is located in Princeton, New Jersey. His specialty is neurofeedback with children and adults, emphasizing attention training using Open Focus exercises for home practice. If we count all the workshops and 40 years of clinical practice, he has taught thousands of students. The publication of his book, The Open Focus Brain, has helped him reach a larger audience.

He hosted the first meeting of biofeedback researchers in Snowmass at Aspen in the winter of 1968. Joe Kamiya definitely inspired his involvement with neurofeedback.

Les’s vision for the future of BCIA is that it continues to grow and attract younger generations to our field, emphasizing current and real-life practical knowledge in the testing process.

Tony Hughes actually started by teaching autogenics training for a biofeedback training program in San Francisco during the late 1970s. That is when he first met Steve Stern of the Stens Corporation. In 1980, Steve suggested that they start their own biofeedback training program, which they did in Berkeley, California. That 1-day program grew into a 3-day seminar, then into a 5-day seminar, and finally into a 9-day seminar divided into two parts. Now, as Tony begins his 29th year of teaching biofeedback, they have comfortably settled into the Stens 5-Day Professional Biofeedback Certificate Program.

Tony primarily teaches for the Stens Corporation and conducts a 5-day general biofeedback seminar once a month in various cities during the year. Five years ago, HeartMath of California and Stens Corporation asked Tony to co-teach a 1-day program using the instruments, tools, and techniques of stress management that they had developed. Tony did that for 3 years and restarted this heart rate variability (HRV) training program in spring 2009. Tony also teaches for Our Lady of the Lakes University in San Antonio, Texas. This class is open to both undergraduates and graduate students, and it is the only course that is offered over a 5-day period. Teaching young students, whose computer skills are amazing, has been one of Tony’s most rewarding experiences. New to biofeedback, they pick it up quickly and easily and really seem enjoy their self-regulatory training experiences. A few have gone on to use biofeedback in their dissertations and now practice at various locations in Texas.

Tony’s specialty is teaching. He has been so fortunate to develop a professional-level biofeedback course and teach it for all these many years. Regarding modalities, he has found that respiration and HRV biofeedback are the most satisfying and rewarding to teach to both seminar participants and clients.

When one has been in the same field for as long Tony has been in biofeedback, the list of significant and influential people grows long. In the mid-1970s, Tony was introduced to Erik Peper. Tony’s work then was with families, trying to keep children in school and out of trouble with the police. While working with families, he noticed that in addition to having a child that was acting out, there was often a parent...
suffering from some sort of stress-related disorder. Perhaps mom had migraine headaches or dad struggled with high blood pressure. As a family therapist, he thought that if he were successful in improving family communication skills, or redefining family roles, or resolving issues of power and decision making, then a child’s behavior would improve. In addition, he thought these family systems should also experience lower levels of stress and hypothesized that the victim of the stress-related disorders would improve. At the end of family therapy, however, this did not seem to be the case. Too many moms still had their headaches and dads had their high blood pressure. He just did not have the right tools.

Erik Peper, however, did have the tools and a fascination with healthy family systems. Along with a few other therapists, Erik and Tony started the Biofeedback and Family Therapy Institute in Berkeley to study how biofeedback could be used more creatively within a family system context. Tony studied biofeedback at San Francisco State University, and Erik became Tony’s first instructor and mentor. To this day, the work Tony does with respiration, attention, mindfulness, sensory awareness, mastery, and autogenics he credits to Erik.

Tony first heard Ira Rosenberg lecture on HRV back in 1989, and intuitively he knew that this would be his next clinical direction. The study of HRV has taken Tony down a long road, but he attributes the most important ideas on how to do HRV biofeedback to Ira.

Finally, regarding his own work as a biofeedback therapist and trainer, Tony would be remiss in not mentioning the contributions of Richard Gevirtz (his favorite HRV instructor) and the good people at HeartMath.

The Stens Corporation has estimated that they have trained at least 7,000 participants in the general biofeedback course over the past 30 years. Tony recalls that on more than one occasion, he has had a young therapist come up to him at the start of a seminar and announce, “You taught biofeedback to my mom!”

Tony thought when he started in biofeedback back in the 1970s that the field would reach its maturity well within his professional career. Although biofeedback continues to grow, he believes that full maturity has yet to be achieved. Most of the professionals whom he mentors go on to pursue their certification. Certification provides clinicians with direction for continued clinical development. To the credit of BCIA, the reworking of the certification exam over the past few years has really helped promote certification. Still, the exam itself could be better. Tony emphasized that it would be great if the exam were given completely by computer, rather than by paper and pencil (that is now done!). He would also like to see biofeedback certification required by states and insurance companies.

Erik Peper is professor of Holistic Health Studies/Department of Health Education at San Francisco State University. He is president of the Biofeedback Foundation of Europe and past-president of the Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback (AAPB). He is a BCIA senior fellow. He was the behavioral scientist (sports psychologist) for the United States Rhythmic Gymnastics team. He received the 2004 California Governor’s Safety Award for his work on healthy computing and the 2005 Sheila Adler Award from AAPB for his efforts to support and encourage student participation.

Erik is an author of numerous scientific articles and books. His most recent coauthored books are *Biofeedback Mastery, Muscle Biofeedback at the Computer,* Make
Health Happen: Training Yourself to Create Wellness, and De Computermens. He is also the co-producer of weekly Healthy Computing Email Tips. His research interests focus on psychophysiology of healing, illness prevention, voluntary self-regulation, holistic health, healthy computing, respiratory psychophysiology, and optimizing health with biofeedback.

Leslie Sherlin has taught neurofeedback and quantitative electroencephalography (EEG) principles in professional workshops and other venues since 2000. He currently teaches biofeedback/neurofeedback at the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine and Health Sciences in Tempe, Arizona. Leslie’s specialty is in the area of quantitative EEG and integrating psychopathology and psychophysiology with regard to establishing better diagnoses and interventions with the use of neurofeedback and biofeedback protocols. Although he sees a wide range of clinical clients, he most often treats attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and anxiety.

The Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine (SCNM) has offered a formal elective course in biofeedback and neurofeedback since 2005. This course was originally packed full of new students for six consecutive quarters. Now, both courses are offered once per year as an elective and have a minimum of 12 students, with classes sometimes reaching as many as 25 students per course. As many as 180 medical students have taken SCNM’s neurofeedback and biofeedback electives, which involve classroom instruction. The number of students who have been exposed through the teaching clinic and rotations exceeds 200 to date.

Leslie became interested in neurofeedback originally after studying at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) under the mentorship of Joel Lubar. Dr. Lubar pioneered the use of neurofeedback in the ADHD population. While studying psychology at UTK, Leslie became fascinated with the use of quantitative EEG and low-resolution electromagnetic brain topography and its ability to help identify psychopathology and physiological states. From there, it was a natural progression as he began working in a clinical population to apply the same principles to neurofeedback. Later in his career, Leslie began to recognize the importance of integrating biofeedback concepts and modalities along with neurofeedback. As his understanding of the mind-body connection increased, the importance of using both modalities became clear.

Because Leslie had many contacts at the University of Tennessee, including his fellow students and Dr. Lubar, he was introduced to other pioneers in the field. He feels very fortunate to have had personal and professional connections with leaders, including Tom Budzynski, Barry Sterman, Jay Gunkelman, and many other private-practice clinicians, who have afforded him a wealth of knowledge that could be equaled only by the number of years of experience they have each obtained.

Leslie’s vision for the future is that BCIA will become a leader in setting practice standards in the specialties of biofeedback and neurofeedback. Because biofeedback and neurofeedback are encompassed within many state licensures, his vision for BCIA is to be representative of all licensed professionals and yet uniquely set professional standards and minimum requirements that demonstrate competency across all content areas applicable to biofeedback and neurofeedback. In addition, he would like to see BCIA have advanced certifications and specializations so the practitioners who have particular expertise and specialties can demonstrate to their peers and the public advanced knowledge and practice abilities, while additionally paving the way for increasing the competency standards that are sought by incoming professionals.

His vision for the field of biofeedback and neurofeedback is to continue along the current path of establishing scientific rigor based on efficacy outcome studies in order to be competitive in a struggling health care system. He hopes that biofeedback and neurofeedback will not only be characterized and sought after in the alternative health care circles but will also be widespread and thus available as an option for many health care professionals across a wide spectrum of specialties.

New Programs

BCIA is pleased to announce the addition of two new university programs—Saybrook Graduate School and Sigmund Freud University—which significantly advance our University Initiative. Both programs are unique. Saybrook provides graduate degrees in mind-body medicine to prequalified students using a blend of distance education and face-to-face learning styles to teach the BCIA blueprint for general biofeedback. Sigmund Freud University is the first university outside of the United States to adopt and teach BCIA curricula leading to certification in both general biofeedback and neurofeedback.

Saybrook Graduate School is in the process of implementing a 1-year training program in general biofeedback for 2009, with 24 hours of didactic teaching in January, 24 hours in June, and 12 hours of telephone mentoring between January and December 2009. Students will follow the BCIA blueprint in their didactic learning as well as in their mentored practice. They will earn 6 academic credits for this year of training, in the form of two 3-credit courses. BCIA-certified faculty members include Don Moss,
Eric Willmarth, and Fred Shaffer. Saybrook is a regionally accredited graduate school, accredited by WASC, the Western states accreditation body. Students should contact dmoss@saybrook.edu. This program is open to students enrolled in the Mind-Body Medicine degree program, the Integrative Health Studies concentration, and the Mind-Body Medicine Certificate program.

The Sigmund Freud University of Vienna (SFU) was accredited as a private university by the Austrian Accreditation Council in August 2005. As a university in the field of human sciences, SFU specializes in the science of psychotherapy and will begin to offer curricula based on both the BCIA general biofeedback and neurofeedback certification programs. The SFU staff includes BCIA certificants Erik Peper and Monika Fuhs. Other staff members include Alexander Fink, Friedrich Vogt, and Giselher Guttmann. The addition of SFU to our list of universities teaching the BCIA curricula is an important first step toward making BCIA certification the international standard.

**BCIA’s University Initiative**

The heart of the University Initiative is BCIA’s partnership with both new and established programs at regionally accredited academic institutions to help them build curricula based on current certification requirements, enabling their graduates to apply for general biofeedback, neurofeedback, and pelvic muscle dysfunction biofeedback certification. We believe that university support will enhance the perception of our field and increase the study of mind-body relationships. BCIA is committed to strengthening the current programs and expanding the number of new university programs. As a BCIA certificant, how can you help? Where do you fit?

Many universities are already teaching some basic biofeedback within another course. In addition, health centers are employing biofeedback modalities to help their students deal with everything from the routine stress of juggling course work, test anxiety, and headaches to peak performance issues and the rehabilitation of athletes. Does an institution near you provide biofeedback? If so, please let BCIA know so that we may communicate with them to let them know that we are here to help.

And how can we help? BCIA has the complete course outline and reading lists for people wishing to offer this coursework. Because the basics of the class are already built, it is much easier to add this to a university’s offerings. Perhaps you’ve wanted to share what you know, and this would be a way to offer your expertise teaching and mentoring biofeedback and neurofeedback at the college level. If biofeedback is already being offered in the health centers, we can help by providing direction to quality education, mentoring support, and certification. You might develop the health centers as practicum sites for the students you mentor. Let’s hear from you.

**Conclusion**

The educators profiled in this series have enriched our field by training ethical and competent biofeedback and neurofeedback professionals. The University Initiative offers a partnership with experienced educators such as these and new instructors to help develop didactic and mentorship programs based on the BCIA blueprints, so that their students will be “More than qualified—BCIA certified!”

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