What is Biofeedback?

Biofeedback is a process that allows individuals to learn how to change their physiological activity for the purpose of improving their wellbeing and performance. Instruments are used to amplify heart activity, muscle tension, sweat, breathing patterns and skin temperature. These "instruments" accurately feed back information to the user.

Biofeedback is regularly used to help people train new behaviours and responses. There is evidence to support biofeedback training for tension, anxiety, stress reduction, pain and general relaxation.

What is a Biofeedback Stress Profile?

The Biofeedback Stress Profile (BSP) is a research supported procedure used to evaluate an individuals' levels and responses to mild stressors and helps to identify and non-productive habits which may have formed over years of exposure to everyday stressors. The BSP is a non-invasive assessment of performance, recovery and self-regulation. The client is connected to sophisticated computerized physiological measurement devices which can record up to six different variables including heart rate, peripheral blood flow, respiration, temperature, muscle tension, and breathing. Sometimes brain activity is monitored but only for specific purposes.

The client does not feel anything from the sensors. Data is collected continuously during several phases of the session. A baseline measure is collected which provides data on an individual's resting state. This is followed by interspersed periods of mental activity used to evaluate the reactivity of the client's autonomic nervous system. The second phase, lasting 20 minutes, requires the client to sit in a relaxed position and simply listen to a relaxation audio. The purpose of this activity is to evaluate the client's ability to relax under ideal conditions when given the opportunity. Even though this is an assessment procedure many clients report feeling more relaxed by the end of the session.

The data from the BSP is often combined with the results from an intake interview and some degree of psychometric testing. Results and implications are discussed as is a treatment plan.