



Whole is Well - Monaco

An Introduction to Biofeedback Stress Management

Stress, or rather a stress *response*, isn't a bad thing. Our physiological response to stress is what has allowed humans to evolve, grow and survive over the centuries. Many people know this as a 'fight or flight' response. **The challenge is that the types and frequency of the stress we put ourselves under is having an accumulative effect on us.** Without adequate time to regenerate, recover, and relax our sympathetic nervous system is nearly continuously activated. This, over time leads to serious health problems.

Although we know it originates in our mind as mental or emotional, it has a real and significant negative impact on our physiological health. The mind and body are often described as separate "systems" but in reality, they are linked and one always affects the other. Biofeedback techniques for stress brings this connection much more into our conscious awareness.

Chronic stress often results in a broad range of symptoms including; *high blood pressure, tension headaches and migraine, panic attacks, problems with concentration, hypertension, sleep problems, chronic fatigue, burn out and depression.* All of our key body systems can be affected by stress and it's easy to neglect the things we can't see for the things we can! We need to make sure we address the emotional r as well as the physical symptoms. This is where Biofeedback helps by connecting both the *physiological and psychological* components of health.

Can we measure stress?

No. And, yes!

As stress originates in the mind we can't really measure it directly. However, we can measure it indirectly through the body's physiological responses.

We know that (as with many systems and process in the body) our physiological processes start with a baseline, become 'activated' by a stress trigger, and then regenerate or relax back to our baseline. We also know that we can measure these

processes using effective biofeedback sensors. In this way we are able to ‘witness’ the effect stress has on our body.

How we use Biofeedback in Stress Management?

HeartMath research has demonstrated that different patterns of heart activity (which accompany different emotional states) have distinct effects on cognitive and emotional function. During stress and negative emotions, when the heart rhythm pattern is erratic and disordered, the corresponding pattern of neural signals traveling from the heart to the brain inhibits higher cognitive functions. This limits our ability to think clearly, remember, learn, reason, and make effective decisions. (This helps explain why we may often act impulsively and unwisely when we’re under stress.) The heart’s input to the brain during stressful or negative emotions also has a profound effect on the brain’s emotional processes—actually serving to reinforce the emotional experience of stress.

In contrast, the more ordered and stable pattern of the heart’s input to the brain during positive emotional states has the opposite effect – it facilitates cognitive function and reinforces positive feelings and emotional stability. This means that learning to generate increased heart rhythm coherence, by sustaining positive emotions, not only benefits the entire body, but also profoundly affects how we perceive, think, feel, and perform.

Why use the Heartmath Systems in Stress Management?

In short, the Heartmath system is easy to use, very good value, records reliable signals, and offers the best client experience.