

Trauma and Recovery

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Consensus is building that all successful therapy relies on affect regulation and that most, if not all, serious disorders are, indeed, disorders of affect regulation. The core affect giving rise to all other painful, disorganizing affects, is **fear**, according to Boston neurofeedback therapist, Sebern Fisher. Although effective for the organization of brain function in many realms, neurofeedback is perhaps most singularly effective in quieting fear.

There are connections between fear and psychopathology in the emerging literature on attachment, brain development and affect regulation. This research is extremely important because presently because neurofeedback offers the most significant hope for personality disorders, conduct disorder, severe mood disorders, attachment disorder and sociopathy. Fear, of course, underwrites less severe conditions as well as all psychological disorders seen in the light of affect regulation. In neurofeedback terminology, affect regulation is usually broken down into overarousal, underarousal and instability of arousal.

When someone has lived in a state of fear and then fear suddenly recedes, there is inevitably a crisis in identity. When we can predict and manage this crisis, we make it a time of possibility rather than a time of more fear. The neurofeedback practitioner must be prepared for very rapid shifts in state and must be able to discern the meaning of these state shifts and also be able to teach the client to do so.

Neurofeedback presents us with a fundamental paradigm shift away from psyche or learned behavior toward the infrastructure of both the brain and nervous system. Once we begin neurofeedback, neurofeedback has to become our operating paradigm. This paradigm shift has profound implications for the way we view psychopathology and the way we approach its treatment.

Neurofeedback enhances psychotherapy but psychotherapy also enhances neurofeedback. They work most beautifully together. Those in psychotherapy tend to stay in neurofeedback and those doing neurofeedback tend to do much better in their therapy. The alliance with the therapist contains and sustains the patient through any periods of destabilization or lack of progress with training. With help from the therapist, neurofeedback teaches one of life's most important lessons – we are not our states. It allows a forum for the naming and practice of new emotional and behavioral capacities such as empathy and trust. It allows for the integration of rapid changes in state and identity, as well as the possibility for exploration of all that was lost in clients' inability to regulate affect. Finally, it allows for the consolidation of the new self that is born of affect regulation within an attuned relationship.

The integration of neurofeedback and psychotherapy is one of the richest experiences any therapist could hope to have. We have the exceptional privilege of being at the intersection where brain becomes mind.