

## For Children Who are in Training

"The following handout can be given to the parents/guardians of children who are commencing neurofeedback training. It is a reminder to parents that successful neurotherapy requires the cooperation of the entire family. The suggestions contained in this handout cover such topics as diet, sleep, exercise, homework, and discipline. Most parents need more than just a handout to make family life style changes."

1. Sleep is critical, sleep deprivation will limit the effectiveness of training.
2. Diet may effect the training process. Limit or avoid sugary drinks, caffeinated drinks, candy and junk food, simple carbohydrate snacks, etc. Many children train poorly if their diet consists of soda, pizza, potato chips and other fast foods.
3. Amen (2001) recommended a higher protein diet. A well balanced diet with protein, vegetables, fruits and complex carbohydrates may help to reduce the symptoms of ADD.
4. Hungry children train poorly. If there is not enough time for a meal a high protein snack (sugar free) may improve the quality of training.
5. Some authorities claim that children with ADHD are prone to food allergy or intolerance. Wheat and milk have been sighted as common offenders. A naturopathic doctor (ND) may be able to isolate the problem.
6. How is food intolerance different than a food allergy? A child who is allergic to a food will likely have a same day reaction whereas a child who is intolerant to a food will likely have a delayed reaction. Symptoms of food intolerance may not manifest themselves until the problem food is ingested each day for 2 or more days. In some cases a rotation diet may be the solution. Rather than eliminate certain foods it may be beneficial to add them to your diet every third or fourth day.
7. Amen recommended certain supplements (2001, p. 274).
8. Children with ADHD do well with short term and immediate

rewards or consequences. That principle holds true at home and during training.

9. Motivation is essential. Children, who do not want to train, usually will not train. Teenagers cannot be forced to train. Some children will train if there is a reward system. Other children will not train—regardless of the reward.
10. The chicken and egg problem. Training may help hyperactive children to sit still more often. But how can they sit still to train if they are hyperactive? In some cases a small dose of Ritalin may help them to sit. In other cases vigorous exercise before training may help.
11. In general children with ADHD require more structure than those without ADHD. Family structure may include various rules such as homework first, fun second. TV programs are selected for content. Hours of consecutive unmonitored TV viewing and video game playing may undo training benefits and should be avoided. School sports cannot be played unless grades are maintained. Exercise is critical, aerobic exercise can be very calming—sometimes exercise comes before homework. Amen (2001) recommended a vigorous exercise program.
12. In some cases family therapy may be in order. A qualified therapist may be able to offer practical suggestions that go far beyond the scope of the above statements.
13. Training at the very minimum ought to be weekly, often children will train 2–3 times per week for the first few months, if possible.
14. Biofeedback is a self-regulation skill, unlike medications, it is not fast acting. After your child has consistently trained for 10–15 sessions it is essential to monitor progress. Daily charting of your child's behavior will help guide training protocols. The days immediately following the training will reflect the immediate benefits of the training. Teachers may also be especially helpful in assessing your child's progress.

## Relaxation Script for Younger Children

### **Hands & Arms**

Pretend you are squeezing a whole lemon in your left hand. Squeeze it hard. Try to squeeze all the juice out. Feel the tightness in your hand and arm as you squeeze. Now drop the lemon and relax. See how much better your hand and arm feel when they are relaxed. Repeat with other hand.

### **Arms and Shoulders**

Pretend you are a furry, lazy cat. You want to stretch. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Raise them up high over your head. Way back. Feel the pull in your shoulders. Stretch higher. Now just let your arms drop back to your side. Okay kitten, stretch again. Repeat.

### **Shoulder and Neck**

Now pretend you are a turtle. You're sitting out on a rock by a nice, peaceful pond, just relaxing in the warm sun. It feels nice and warm and safe here. Oh-Oh! You sense danger. Pull your head into your house. Try to pull your shoulders up to your ears and push your head down into your shoulders. Hold it tight. It isn't easy to be a turtle in a shell. The danger is past now. You can come out into the warm sunshine and once again you can relax and feel the warm sunshine. Watch out now. More danger. Hurry pull your head back into your house and hold it tight. Repeat.

### **Jaw**

You have a giant jawbreaker bubble gum in your mouth. It's very hard to chew. Bite down on it. Hard! Let your neck muscles help you. Now relax. Just let your jaw hang loose. Notice how good it feels just to let your jaw drop. Okay, let's tackle that jawbreaker again now. Repeat.

### **Face and Nose**

Here comes a pesky old fly. He has landed on your nose. Try to get him off without using your hands. That's right, wrinkle up your nose. Make as many wrinkles in your nose as you can. Scrunch your nose up real hard. Good. You've chased him away. Now you can relax your nose. Oops here he comes back again. Repeat.

### **Stomach**

Hey! Here comes a cute baby elephant. But he's not watching where he's going. He doesn't see you lying there in the grass, and he's about to step on your stomach. Don't move. You don't have time to get out of the way. Just get ready for him. Make your stomach very hard. Tighten up your stomach muscles real tight. Hold it. It looks like he is going the other way. You can relax now. Let your stomach go soft. Let it be as relaxed as you can. That feels so much better. Oops, he's coming this way again. Get ready. Repeat.

### **Legs and Feet**

Now pretend that you are standing barefoot in a big, fat mud puddle. Squish your toes down deep in to the mud. Try to get your feet down to the bottom of the mud puddle. Push down, spread your toes apart, and feel the mud squish up between your toes. Now step out of the mud puddle. Relax your feet. Let your toes go loose and feel how nice that is. It feels good to be relaxed. Repeat...

References: Carkhuff, R.R. Helping and human relations, Vol. 1, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969.

