

Biofeedback: The “Yoga of the West”

WOG Staff



It sounds so simple. Just hook yourself up to a machine and let it tell you what your body is “saying” while a biofeedback specialist teaches you how to respond to it.

You can learn how to use your mind to control blood pressure, muscle tension, even heart rate and skin temperature. Just think of all the ailments you can conquer, everything from asthma to incontinence! But does it work?

Yes. According to the Mayo Clinic, “Biofeedback is based on the idea, confirmed by scientific studies, that people have the innate potential to influence with

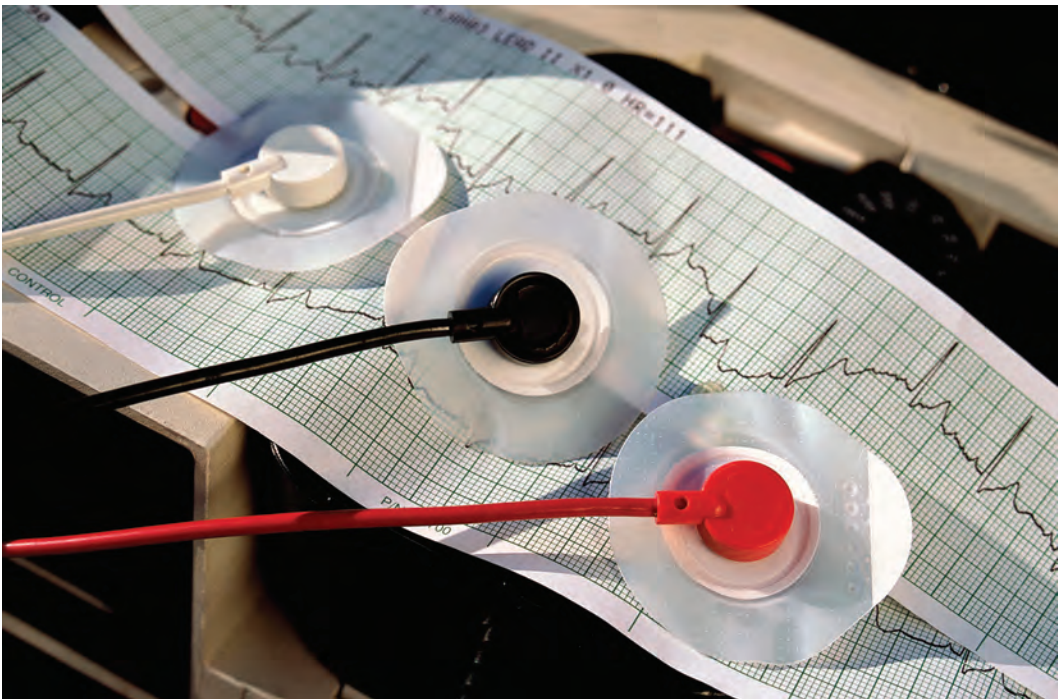
their minds many of the automatic, involuntary functions of their bodies.”

While biofeedback might be an interesting technology, it has also been permeated with New Age concepts since its inception.

The chief developers of biofeedback, Dr. Elmer Green and his wife, Alyce, of the Menninger Foundation, developed the process in the 1960’s.

In their book, *Beyond Biofeedback*, the Greens referred to it as “the yoga of the West” and claim that many who use it develop psychic abilities.

In the same book, the Greens are quoted





as saying: “There are other similarities between biofeedback training and yoga ... I guided myself through the development of these ideas [in the book] by the intentional use of hypnogogic imagery. Whenever I was ‘stuck’ I made my mind a blank and asked the unconscious to get the information I needed from wherever it was, from ...the collective mind, or from the ‘future’ ...”

This unabashed New Age connection is why the authors of the Pontifical document, *Jesus Christ, The Bearer of the Water of Life* describe biofeedback as New Age.

“Advertising connected with New Age covers a wide range of practices as acupuncture, biofeedback, chiropractics, kinesiology, homeopathy, iridology, massage and various kinds of ‘bodywork’ (such as orgonomy, Feldenkrais, reflexology, Rolfing, polarity massage, therapeutic touch, etc.) . . .” (Sec. 2.2.3)

The use of biofeedback without its New Age trappings may be possible in some hospital or healthcare settings, but even this must be approached with extreme caution.

For instance, the University of Maryland Medical Center website offers more scientific forms of biofeedback such as electromyography (EMG), thermal biofeedback which measures skin

temperature, and neurofeedback which measures brain wave activity.

“With the help of a biofeedback therapist, the patient learns to identify and control the mental activities that will bring about the desired physical changes,” the site claims.

The problem lies with the methods used to control these “mental activities,” which are too often eastern meditation techniques and other consciousness-altering exercises that can be extremely problematic for Christians. Even hospitals give far too much discretion to the therapist whose beliefs and practices may involve techniques such as transcendental meditation and yoga, or the use of a variety of visualization and/or guided imagery practices that can expose Christians to various occult influences.

New Agers are definitely heavily invested in biofeedback (and its expensive machinery). They consider it to be an important tool in the distinctly New Age field of “transpersonal biofeedback research” where many believe the widespread use of the biofeedback machine will help bring about an evolutionary leap of mankind as more of us learn to experience the ‘Awakened Mind’ that their machines can supposedly help us to achieve.