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Press release : 2008 : 09 : 23 : Counseling Center Offers Biofeedback Program

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Counseling Center Offers Biofeedback Program



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The biofeedback computer program available at the Center for Counseling, Health and Wellness offers a simple, self-directed way of learning relaxation techniques. The exercises help a person uncover the natural ability to counter the effects of stress and relieve anxiety.

The program is designed to improve mood, energy level and help a person tune into the body and its rhythms as a way of increasing health and well-being. It is a free service available for use by registered students and USF St. Petersburg employees.

The hardware includes three finger sensors connected to a computer that allow a person to interact with the software. The sensors measure skin conductance level and heart rate variability while the program offers audio and visual exercises to help calm the mind and practice breathing exercises.

For example, in the first exercise, the program asks the user to breathe in and out following the rhythm of an expanding and contracting tree on the screen. As the sensors measure physiological changes, a staircase appears on the screen indicating that the person using the program is following the exercise correctly. There are a variety of breathing exercises in the 15 steps of the program and they are meant to help relax the mind, release physical tension and create a sense of calm. With regular practice of the techniques in the program, a person may feel less susceptible to stress, fatigue and illness.

Susan Cochran Phillips, PhD, director of the Center for Counseling, Health and Wellness, said, "You have to take the time to learn. Once you've taken the time to learn, you replenish your body. It's really something you can take through the rest of your life."

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