



President's Message

Patrick R. Steffen, Ph.D.



For the Winter 2014 edition of the ISMA newsletter our staff had the pleasure of interviewing different professionals who emphasize the impact of stress in their clinical practice. First, we interview Dr. Tom McCutchen, a pediatrician who became board certified in biofeedback and now exclusively focuses on stress management.

Second, we interviewed three marriage and family therapists who integrate stress physiology knowledge and stress reduction techniques directly into their marriage therapy. Their approaches are incredibly interesting.

One last important note: the AAPB conference is March 19-22 in Savannah, GA, with wonderful keynote speakers such as Drs. Stephen Porges and Ary Goldberger. I look forward to seeing all of you there. If you have any questions or comments, please email me at steffen@byu.edu.

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*ISMA-USA is a division of the Association for
Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback*

From the Editor's Desk: Marie Ricks, ISMA Newsletter Editor

We are excited to present you with the Winter 2014 newsletter! We had the opportunity to interview some amazing clinicians that provide unique perspectives on intergrating stress management in diverse settings.

We are also excited about the upcoming AAPB conference March 19-22 in Savannah, GA.

Please go to the AAPB.org website to learn more and to get registered for this great event.


As a student, I especially want to encourage all you students out there to attend, it is a great opportunity to meet new people and prepare for you future. See you in Savannah!



March 19-22, 2014
Savannah, Georgia
www.aapb.org

APPLIED PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY COMES OF AGE

Biofeedback and Neurofeedback Applications in Clinical Practice and Optimum Performance.



AAPB 45th ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING

Getting to Know You: Dr. Tom McCutchen



Dr. Tom McCutchen

Dr. Tom McCutchen, a now-retired pediatrician from Fayetteville, North Carolina, has been intensely interested in biofeedback for more than 23 years. He recently published a 42-day self-study booklet/CD course for the non-medical lay person entitled *Embracing Stress in Your Life*.

His undergraduate studies at Davidson College in Davidson, North Carolina and his medical degree from Vanderbilt Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee laid the foundation for his medical training. He did residencies in Nashville and Charlottesville, Virginia before serving for two years as a pediatrician in the U.S. Army Medical Corp. He practiced as a pediatrician for 32

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Embracing Stress in Your Life

by Dr. Tom McCutchen

Dr. McCutchen kindly answered several questions about *Embracing Stress in Your Life*:

What events in your own life caused you to be particularly interested in studying the effective reduction of stress for the general public?

There have been two categories of recurring experiences. First, as a pediatric physician seeing families on a daily basis, I was constantly reminded of the strong and pervasive influence of the personalities and coping skills that parents passed on to their children, usually with significant behavioral and quality of life issues.

Second, in my biofeedback practice I encountered many individuals with both physical and/or emotional symptoms secondary to the negative effects of stress. Some of these individuals could have readily helped themselves with a self-study course such as *Embracing Stress in Your Life*.

What is your background in stress reduction research?

I have no formal background in stress reduction research. My extensive experience has been clinical in nature and includes what I have learned from others' experience and wisdom.

Can you share a personal example where your method, as shared in Embracing Stress in Your Life, has changed a patient/client's life for the better?

Yes, I have had several prominent experiences. A very reactive and anxious housewife with four children became less reactive, and more proactive. She handles her anxiety better since using this program.

A medical office manager with anxiety and difficulty falling to sleep at night is learning to manage her anxiety and falls to sleep much more easily because of this program.

A military officer who has intermittent anxious and insecure thoughts and who received a recent review of not being adequately assertive and self-confident reports he is much improved since using this biofeedback technique.

Your methods include breathing exercises, muscle awareness and relaxation, meditation, and visualization. Can you share why you chose to put these methods in this particular order?

I am convinced that "healthy breathing", which is what I call slow, deeper abdominal breathing, is a foundational technique in mind/body self regulation. That is why I placed it first. Many techniques for teaching the mind to influence the emotions and physical body build on that foundation. Muscle awareness and relaxation also provide a more active experience and enhance self-awareness. In

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Dr. Tom McCutchen
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years in Fayetteville, North Carolina and then served as Director of Medical Informatics for Cape Fear Valley Health System in Fayetteville, North Carolina for eight years.

His interest in stress management led to a BCIAC certification in general feedback in 1993. He had a small practice in general biofeedback for many years before publishing *Embracing Stress in Your Life* in April, 2013.

Dr. McCutchen created *Embracing Stress in Your Life* from his medical and biofeedback knowledge and clinical experience. The booklet and CD were created for individuals needing insight in living better with the stresses common to the demands of daily living.

He formatted the course to be simple, compact, and easily portable. It is written in lay language and requires 42 days of active, daily participation by the individual. About ten minutes once a day is the preferred commitment, which focus facilitates incorporation of the techniques into an individual's habits and lifestyle.

The program can also be a resource for "resiliency" training for individuals who careers potentially expose them to recurrent, even harmful stressors. These high-risk individuals might include first responder, law enforcement officers and members of the military.

If you are interested in learning more about Dr. McCutchen's program he would love to hear from you at mccutt50@gmail.com.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES



AAPB

The 45th annual meeting of the Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback (AAPB) will be held March 19-22, 2014, in Savannah, Georgia. For more details, go to:

<http://www.aapb.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageID=3657>



American Psychosomatic Society

The 72nd annual meeting of the American Psychosomatic Society will be held March 12-15, 2014, in San Francisco, CA. For more details, go to:

<http://psychosomatic.org/AnMeeting/future.cfm>

Embracing Stress in Your Life

by Dr. Tom McCutchen

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In addition, meditation and visualization are helped by appropriate slow abdominal breathing exercises.

What future research are you particularly interested in with regards to stress management?

I think most medical professionals need help and guidance in helping their patients deal with the stress in their lives. There are so many resources to assist the lay person and because we are all so unique, one resource does not work equally well for everyone. The lay person, out of naivety and lack of experience, may choose only one or two resources without being aware there are many others available, some of which may work better than the chosen ones.

Getting the word out to the general public that they can help themselves manage their stress better can be helpful. Maybe research can discover the “magic” secret to personal motivation! While I am not aware of any negative responses to *Embracing Stress in Your Life*, I do encounter individuals who complain loudly and frequently about the stress in their lives. Yet, after expressing an interest in the course, they do not commit to the time and discipline necessary to achieve positive results.

What long-term benefits have you seen come from completing the six-week training?

Embracing Stress in Your Life was just released several months ago and our low-key marketing campaign has brought more book/CDs out in the general public. Results so far include: “I can relax more easily,” “I don’t worry as much as I use to,” “I have more self-confidence in dealing with difficult problems” and “My spiritual life is more meaningful to me now that I have learned how to settle myself down more.”

Do you have any further advice for practitioners wishing to integrate this process in their therapy?

I think *Embracing Stress in Your Life* can be a helpful resource for medical patients whose mental, emotional and physical sense of well-being can be helped by daily mind/body self-regulation. Improved self-regulation of excessive mind/emotion/body tension secondary to physical illness can promote healing and a positive attitude. (As noted in the course, there are many pathways to this goal.) I think the course can promote healthy coping skills in anyone undergoing neurotherapy for disorders related to poor coping skills.

Marital Therapy, Stress, and Health

Interviews with Angela Bradford, PhD, Lee Johnson, PhD, and Jonathan Sandberg, PhD
By Patrick Steffen, PhD

I had the privilege of interviewing three marriage and family professors about their views on marriage, stress, and health, and how they address stress in their therapy. Here are their thoughts:

Angela Bradford, PhD

Marriage is closely linked to health, which can lead to very positive or very negative health outcomes depending upon the quality of the relationship. Marriage and family therapy helps people to self regulate by helping them to work through aroused physiology. Intervening at the marital level we are more likely to see significant change, particularly given that a couples' physiology will mirror each other; we are impacted by each other's physiology. Interestingly, the therapist's physiology also impacts their clients' physiology. My current research focuses on how therapist and client physiology is related during the therapy session.



Lee Johnson, PhD

Before beginning couples therapy, I have couples first focus on three areas: 1) reducing stress, 2) improving sleep, and 3) increasing exercise. I have found that improvement in these three areas reduces about 85% of mood problems and prepares the couple to focus more on their relationship. Most people believe that marital problems are communication problems but they are really problems of emotion regulation. By improving stress physiology and healthy physiological functioning (sleep, exercise), we improve a persons' ability to more effectively regulate their emotions.



Jonathan Sandberg, PhD

The role of a marriage and family therapist is to create a secure attachment environment where bonding moments can help regulate physiological and emotional stress in the lives of couples. MRI studies have shown that strong marital relationships reduce the stress response by reducing fear activation in the brain. Therefore, marriage and family therapy can also be seen as stress management. My work is strongly influenced by Sue Johnson's Emotionally Focused Couples therapy, working to help couples build secure attachments and healthy emotion regulation.



Useful Links on Stress Management

by Tyler Orton



<http://www.stress.org/>



http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm



<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-management/MY00435>



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

<http://www.apa.org/topics/stress/>

Psychology Today

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/stress>



<http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/stress.htm>

Other Items of Interest

To become a member of the International Stress Management Association-United States Division, go to aapb.org. Annual memberships dues are \$25.00.

If you wish to see someone highlighted in this newsletter or have a contribution to make to it, please contact Patrick Steffen at steffen@byu.edu.