Book Review


It is a rare achievement when an author produces a text serving as the unrivaled, authoritative text for an entire professional field. Mark Schwartz has now earned that honor in the field of biofeedback for the third time with the release of the third edition of his classic text, Biofeedback: A Practitioner’s Guide.

Mark Schwartz is the past president of the Biofeedback Society of America (now the Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback, AAPB), a past Chair of the Biofeedback Certification Institute of America, and has been on staff at the Mayo Clinic for 35 years, now at the Jacksonville, Florida site. He is joined in the editorship this time by Frank Andrasik, the Editor-in-Chief of the journal Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback, past Editor of Behavior Therapy, and also a past President of AAPB. Dr. Andrasik is Senior Research Scientist at the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition and Professor of Psychology at the University of West Florida, Pensacola. Both editors are widely published in the fields of biofeedback, clinical psychophysiology, and behavioral medicine, and together are uniquely qualified to edit this comprehensive guide to biofeedback practice.

Like the second edition (Schwartz & Associates, 1995), this new edition has an encyclopedic scope, providing comprehensive reviews of available research in each topical area, glossaries of technical terms for most chapters, and authoritative bibliographies on each topic. The clinical practice of biofeedback is detailed from the onset of the practitioner’s training and certification, through the assessment and preparation of the patient for biofeedback, through the selection of treatment modalities, to a detailed description of treatment protocols and outcomes research for a wide range of disorders. The book contains 39 chapters, organized into 12 broad sections:

1. History, Entry Into the Field, and Definitions
2. Instrumentation
3. Office Assessment and Compliance
4. Cultivating Lower Arousal
5. Disorders Needing Lower Tension and Arousal
6. Electroencephalographic Biofeedback Applications
7. Neuromuscular Applications
8. Elimination Disorders
9. Pediatric Applications
10. Other Applications
11. Professional Issues
12. The Frontier of Biofeedback

This third edition corrects the shortcomings of the second edition, consisting primarily of relatively scant attention to the fields of EEG neurofeedback and heart rate variability (HRV) biofeedback. This edition includes five chapters on neurofeedback, including a comprehensive overview of neurofeedback applications by Vince Monastra, and chapters on attention deficit disorders (Joel Lubar), epilepsy (Ute Strehl), and the use of slow cortical potentials to run a communications device for paralyzed patients (Andrea Kübler, Susanne Winter, and Niels Birbaumer). Monastra’s overview chapter includes discussion of the neurofeedback treatment of anxiety disorders, seizures, ADHD, substance abuse, mood disorders, schizophrenia, and traumatic brain injury, with systematic assessment of the efficacy of each application area, based on current outcomes research. A fifth chapter provides a primer for EEG instrumentation, for those lacking this background.

There is one all too brief chapter on HRV biofeedback. This edition also adds new chapters on pediatric headaches, general pediatric applications, and applications to sports and the performing arts. The book is massive in size, and manages to live up to its reputation as the single authoritative guide to current practice in biofeedback.

The pediatric headache chapter, by Frank Andrasik and Mark Schwartz, reviews the high incidence of headache in children and the process of diagnosis. The chapter advocates a stepped-care approach, which (1) commences with brief educational interventions modifying diet, lifestyle, sleep, and activity-overload, (2) moves on to identify and eliminate specific triggers for headaches, (3) utilizes group interventions where practical, and (4) proceeds with individualized therapies based on severity and chronicity. The authors caution that practitioners must investigate the home situation of children before relying on lower-level interventions. Formal treatments for child headache include behavioral strategies, relaxation training, biofeedback, cognitive therapy, and group modalities. The chapter includes practical guidelines for involving the family in treatment, making treatment more kid-friendly, and adapting treatment to the developmental level of the child.

The general pediatrics chapter, by Timothy Culbert and Gerard Banez, highlights the increasing presentation of psychophysiological disorders and psychosocially mediated illnesses in pediatric clinics, and the effectiveness of a variety of self-regulation skills for children. The authors categorize pediatric biofeedback as a complementary and alternative therapy, because it offers a nonpharmacological alternative for many disorders of childhood. The authors emphasize the combination of hypnotic techniques with biofeedback in children. They discuss child-friendly biofeedback instrumentation and software, and applications to a wide range of pediatric disorders, including: encopresis, enuresis, pain, repetitive behavior patterns, anxiety, sleep disorders, neuromuscular rehabilitation, chronic illness, learning disorders, and other conditions.

Marcie and Mark Zinn contribute a unique chapter on the use of applied psychophysiological interventions for performing artists and define a new practical field for clinical psychophysiology. They highlight the high incidence of a wide range of disorders in performing artists, including high incidence of musculoskeletal problems, sleep disorders, depression, music performance anxiety, and other anxiety disorders. Their chapter introduces a practical approach for using biofeedback to assess and treat these problems, and