

brain and this leads to it locking into patterns which often continue to repeat themselves and manifest in many different conditions”.

The good news is that we can discipline and retrain the brain.

I was intrigued after this conversation and soon found myself in a chair with electrodes connected to my head. The initial session involves measuring the brain waves’ frequencies using electro-encephalogram (EEG) technology. The patterns are recorded and analysed to provide a functional representation of the brain – this is called a brain map. Based on the individual report, a programme is devised using neuro-feedback to rebalance the frequencies for healthy brain function and improved performance.

My brain map confirmed much of what I was experiencing: feeling overwhelmed, forgetting small things, lack of motivation and not performing at my peak. While this may sound familiar to many, it was the detail in the brain map which convinced me of its value. There was no way a stranger would have been able to pinpoint how I function and respond to events or

Train your BRAIN

Does your brain often feel fried? Do you feel mentally depleted? Are you experiencing stress, sleepless nights or anxiety? Perhaps you need to consider a personal trainer – for your brain. **By Ingrid Wood**

on “personal development and internal happiness”. He initially studied neuro-feedback out of personal interest, but after seeing the results, decided to incorporate it

into his coaching. In 2007 he established Brain Trainer (which now operates through the Skin Renewal clinics in Johannesburg and Cape Town).

The brain is there for your survival and

is constantly looking for efficiency, explains Meyer, “but it still lacks the objectivity to function well in today’s environment and discern the differences between real and perceived stressors. Frequencies are ‘padded’ at certain sites throughout the

circumstances with as much detail and accuracy as Meyer could after reading my report.

While the report is very technical, it gets broken down into simple explanations: a high proportion of slow frequencies padded in the front of the brain will cause one to use a lot of energy to concentrate – these brain waves need to be at the back of the head for good sleep and processing. Certain patterns of beta reversals would indicate a depression marker. An overactive midline indicates that “one may be experiencing stress, headaches or mood swings. It may be a sign of forgetfulness and a lack of overall mental stimulation.” Infringement and abandonment traumas can be recorded, as well as sleep quotient and mind-body connection.

In a nutshell, I had major beta reversal. As Meyer put it: “There are [multiple parties]

going on at the back of your head. We need to take [them] and narrow them down to one party at a time.” The result would hopefully be a far more aware, clearer mind with less anxiety, improved sleep and overall better performance. Who wouldn’t want that?

I agreed to the standard 12-hour package to get my brain back on track. The packages range from 12-20 hours, with sessions of two to four hours at a time. If you opt for the two-hour sessions, they need to be close together for the best results. The tests encourage the brain to take on new patterns and test them against the old ones, so reaching the first eight hours as quickly as possible is important.

I didn’t feel as if anything was going on during the training – it’s not as if you’re quizzed or are working up a sweat – although I did feel rather drained after the first few sessions. The training consists of a series of protocols such as listening to sounds (which I later realised was my brain wave “music”) with eyes closed and then open, watching a movie, reading a passage and counting certain words in it. One of the protocols is Pac-Man – without hand controls. If your brain’s in range, it will get the right

frequency and Pac-Man will gobble the dots. If you’re out of frequency, he stops gobbling. It’s rather frustrating at times because there’s no guide to doing it – but I was reassured that my brain was figuring it out. And somehow it did: Pac-Man gobbled (most of the time!).

After a few sessions, the brain begins to adjust to improved ways of functioning. I didn’t suddenly notice a change, but realised I’d started feeling more rested on waking. I was also less anxious and more focused on tasks at hand.

“In the majority of clients, symptoms improve with neuro-feedback. However, we can’t really know to what degree symptoms will improve for any individual – everyone’s brain is unique,” explains Anika Bosch, a Brain Renewal Technician at the Fourways branch. “Over time, the rewarded activity becomes the new, normal, adopted brain pattern. Once established, these new patterns have a lasting effect, allowing the brain to work better, more efficiently and more easily.”

Maintenance sessions (or “tune-ups”) are encouraged, especially if life throws some unexpected challenges your way. “This can help calm the effects of stress and stabilise the brain,” says Bosch.

There are also mental strategies to maintain the “new normal” (see box). The combination of these mental strategies and neuro-feedback can be powerful. “It’s a potent mixture for peak performers, those who want more from themselves or anyone who simply wants to live a better life,” says Meyer. 🦋

CHALLENGE YOUR BRAIN

- Learn how to juggle.
- Listen to audio books when driving, rather than background noise on the radio.
- Read pertinent books.
- Do things with your non-dextrous hand, like opening doors and brushing your teeth.
- Eat healthy foods rich in oils (not fats), good-quality protein and cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, sprouts and cabbage.
- Get enough sleep.
- Learn a new language.
- Do mental puzzles to stimulate your brain.

Cost: R500 per hour.

Contact: www.brainrenewal.co.za

It’s likely that almost everyone reading this article has at some point felt mentally exhausted or overwhelmed. Whether it’s from ongoing pressure, consistent lack of sleep, trauma or simply information overload, our brains are continually under fire. And while it’s a very adaptable organ, over time the brain can start to repeat negative patterns such as stress, slowly reversing its patterns.

“The brain is there to keep us alive, not necessarily well,” says Andrew Meyer, a Jungian psychologist scholar and neuro-feedback/linguistic expert. However, like the rest of your body, the brain performs better if you exercise or “train” it, allowing for improved functioning in terms of memory, sleep, concentration and focus, with supporting treatment of depression and anxiety disorders.

When Meyer retired from the corporate world at the age of 28, it was to focus

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