

# How mind can gain control of the body

BY SHERRY KAHAN

Dr. Barbara Brown is convinced that by use of the mind, we can control many of our bodily ills, particularly those resulting from stress. To a Livonia Town Hall audience she gave a rundown on how to do this

through bio-feedback, a word she invented. With the help of a machine specially developed for the purpose, she said an individual can get specific feedback on the biological dysfunction that is troubling him. With the help of this information he can then be taught to use his mind to control the problem.

"For a long time no one believed it is possible voluntarily to control bodily functions that are vital and automatic," said Dr. Brown, who until 1972 was chief of experimental physiology at Veterans Administration Hospital, Sepulveda, Calif. "Medical men said the mind could not exert control over reflexes."

Today, she pointed out, scientists working with bio-feedback techniques have found they can teach patients to control such medical happenings as headaches, both tension and migraine headaches, high blood pressure, rapid heart beat, gastric ulcers and digestive processes.

"THE REASON we didn't know we could control these vital functions was that we were never given information about how our bodies were behaving," Dr. Brown said.

She noted that the doctor takes a temperature and when asked what it is, he says, "Better you shouldn't know."

She maintained, "Rarely do we get feedback on what our bodily processes are doing. We have been deprived of medical information about our own bodies. The medicine man has a secret store of knowledge and we are not privy to it. We have no way of knowing what is going on inside."

She claimed that science always has put down the mind. "People are hesitant about working with their minds. They felt that only psychologists or psychiatrists could work with their minds. It is incredible that all this time we haven't known our minds have great possibilities beyond what we have been led to believe."

THE DIFFERENCE between bio-feedback and individual attempts to conquer illness is bio-feedback's reliance on new types of monitoring machines developed especially to let the patient know what is happening under his skin.

One of these instruments fitted to the temple can detect the diameter of one of the major blood vessels into the head. If this vessel is dilated, growing wider, it will cause a migraine headache.

"Information fed through the machine will tell the patient the vessel is now 30 millimeters or 25 or 40," said Dr. Brown. "The patient can then learn how to work with the diameter of the blood vessel, to make it either dilate or contract at will."

This kind of bio-feedback is having phenomenal success in migraine

cases when the patient sticks to the training program.

LET DR. BROWN also walk you through the steps of turning an irregular heart beat into a regular one. "Before bio-feedback, the patient would take an EKG and the doctor, noting the irregular heartbeat would say, 'Hummum, hummum. I think we'd better give you something to take at bedtime,'" she began. "He would give you no information."

In bio-feedback, for this kind of irregular heart beat we do pretty much the same. We hook you to a machine like an EKG which has a meter. The needle on the meter will go to the left when your beat is fast and to the right if slow. We allow you to sit there and watch what the meter is doing. You can see your rate is irregular.

"Being able to perceive something wrong inside allows you to experience something you have not been able to experience before. Your mind and your body knows that an irregular heart beat is not all that good."

"So you suggest to yourself you are going to make it regular. You imagine your heart is beating in a regular fashion. You conjure up a picture of it doing this."

"The first thing you know, the needle begins to stay where you want it to be—beating nice and regularly."

THIS KIND of monitoring device is essential to bio-feedback and it comes in many forms. For example, it could

be a light that gets bright when the heart is fast and dims when it slows down.

"We encourage you as you begin, to do what you want to do," she said. "Yes, yes, you can do it. Yes, you are doing it."

Dr. Brown puts the finger on stress when considering the reason behind many of our bodily ills.

"Most of the problems in our minds and bodies are because of the social environment. Under stress people and animals react by trying to defend themselves."

"If you meet a bear and a rattlesnake while taking a walk, your muscles would tense to be prepared for action. The cardiovascular system and lungs would react to insure a blood supply to the mind. The heart would beat faster."

"Secretions stop the mouth gets dry. Intestinal activity stops. A similar condition occurs under stress but on a smaller scale. The same reaction by the muscles can eventually cause a tension headache. Our bodies are in a state of constant preparedness to defend us."

SHE CLAIMED that the number of diseases attributed to stress fills books and there is more stress that we realize.

"Now we can treat almost all stress by bio-feedback. People don't realize how stress is making their bodies react. The reason bio-feedback is so effective is that it tells you your body is not functioning in its best interests."

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