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A Review of :“Brain-Building Nutrition: How Dietary Fats and Oils Affect Mental, Physical, and Emotional Intelligence. Michael A. Schmidt, PhD.”

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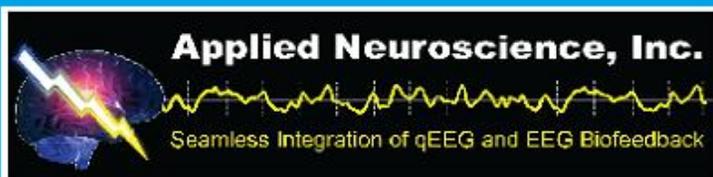
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BRAIN-BUILDING NUTRITION: HOW DIETARY FATS AND OILS AFFECT MENTAL, PHYSICAL, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE. Michael A. Schmidt, PhD. *Frog Books, Berkeley, California, 2007, Third Edition, 336 pages, ISBN: 978-1-58394-181-2.*

The human brain is nearly 60 percent fat. The fats and oils we put in our mouths shape the brain's fatty architecture from childhood to old age. This is, arguably, one of the most fascinating and provocative notions to come along in some time. . . . Indeed, fatty acids are among the most crucial dietary molecules that determine your brain's integrity and ability to perform. (pp. xv-xvi)

Schmidt then proceeds to detail more than 50 brain conditions that may be influenced by fatty acids.

Dr. Michael Schmidt was one of the presenters at 2010 ISNR Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado. He began his talk with several case studies that were both heartwarming and dramatic. The stories were of individuals who had run the full gamut of medical testing and treatments with no positive result and had a future filled with pain and suffering or perhaps even death. The sometimes accidental discovery of fatty acid imbalances was the key to recovery and healing for these individuals. Those of us involved in neurofeedback are also familiar with these kinds of "miracle" stories. We have all witnessed the seemingly "incurable" be cured.

What is common to both Dr. Schmidt's view of nutrition and neurofeedback is the understanding that the brain is intimately and integrally linked to the body. There is no separation between them. We both understand that small, seemingly insignificant interventions can have profound effects on every system in the living being.

What, perhaps, is not so common is the neurofeedback practitioner's appreciation of the crucial role of nutrition, in particular, fatty acids, on brain function. This book is essential reading if you are interested in remediating this lack of knowledge.

Brain-Building Nutrition can be used for a variety of purposes. The book begins with a general questionnaire that serves as an informal fatty acid profile, which you can use either for yourself or for clients. The questionnaire, although not statistically validated, can give a general sense of whether there is sufficient fatty acids for the brain's maximum health and function. In a clinical context, you could either administer the questionnaire or encourage your clients to purchase the book and complete it.

What follows is a book that is both scientifically deep and detailed and yet thoroughly readable and comprehensible for the average nonscientist. Indeed, one of the primary qualities of this book is Dr. Schmidt's ability to take extremely complex bio-chemical concepts and express them using analogies that are readily comprehended. An example is his use of "docking the ship" as an analogy for how neurotransmitters complete the communication process in nerve cells.

The book is conveniently divided into three parts. Readers can choose to read from cover to cover or jump around to those aspects that most interest them. The clinician will likely want to proceed from front to back in order to develop a more profound and complete understanding of the links between nutrition, fatty acids, and brain function. Those who are most interested in what they ought to do to improve function and diet can move from one part to another as desired. There are also several appendices that serve as a sort of FAQ section on specific topics. This makes finding essential information very easy and convenient.

I think most neurofeedback practitioners have had at least one opportunity to witness one of those little "miracles" of healing. I have found that the additional knowledge regarding nutrition, and especially the role of fatty acids, provided by Michael Schmidt in this book has enhanced my ability to foster those "miracles." I strongly encourage everyone to read it.

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