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A review of “Human Potential: Exploring Techniques to Enhance Human Performance, David Vernon”

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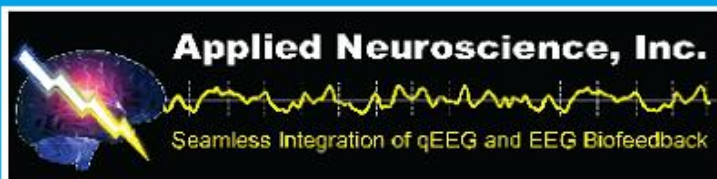
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networked and switch between them then the database will need to be moved each time. If there are multiple clinicians, each clinician can have their own database file, though empty files cannot be created unless they are created from a Results program empty of clients. Fortunately, making these backups is easy as the options are buttons under Database Utilities on the main screen. As well, if more than one site wants to combine treatment information for research, then they would need to export all the data into Microsoft Excel and import it into another stats program.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

The Results program uses an included Microsoft runtime to run most of its functions; however, those who wish to use this to make reports for research purposes, or write notes, will need to install Microsoft Excel/Word (2000, 2003, XP, 2007). It has been tested on Windows XP, Vista, and Win7 at minimum resolution 1024 × 768. In my own tests, the memory requirements are mild but may cause a slowing down of either Results or neurofeedback software if running together. Results may be usable concurrently with neurofeedback software, though a separate computer would be best. It also does not utilize multicore processor threads for more efficient usage.

PURCHASING

The Results program can be purchased from <http://www.neurotherapyresults.com> for \$199.00 and includes free upgrades and an in-program updater that checks automatically whenever you start the program. In addition, it can be installed upon additional computers, if needed, for free; it's a one-time payment. If you would like to test it out first, the program can be downloaded and run in trial mode, which allows you to add four clients and data, but you are able to test functionality with six "sample" clients.

SUMMARY

In reviewing this software, I think it has a good present and future potential if simple record, progress tracking, and research are what you are looking for. As it is fairly new and still growing, actively being updated as feedback is given, I have seen it go through several positive changes, and I believe they will continue. The limitations mentioned here may cause problems for some people. This is probably most apparent with the inability to merge databases, or import data if exported from another Results program, if networking capabilities are not available. As this is a private practitioner's project, Dr. Fleischman has informed me that this limitation, and others mentioned, will be looked into once financing is secured for it. From this and Dr. Fleischman's desire for Results to be used widely by the neurofeedback community, I hope that as this product is sold, revenue is made, and feedback given, updates will continue and Results will grow and be a positive addition to any neurofeedback practitioner whether an individual, researcher, or institution.

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HUMAN POTENTIAL: EXPLORING TECHNIQUES TO ENHANCE HUMAN PERFORMANCE. David Vernon. *Routledge, New York, 2009, 267 pages, ISBN: 978-0-415-45769-9.*

David Vernon's book *Human Potential* is an excellent summary of human-performance-enhancing techniques. One of the most appealing features of the book is the successfully nonbiased critique of each method for its overall effectiveness. The book explores the ways in which people have tried to enhance their performance by both passive techniques, such as receiving a repeated message, and techniques that require a more

active presence, such as mental imagery and speed reading.

Tied to the notion of human performance is the concept of self-actualization, a notion made popular in psychology by Abraham Maslow and humanistic psychology, which states that individuals are constantly striving to achieve their full potential. Maslow believed that to accurately depict the human condition one must consider not only the depths of problems but the heights that each person is capable of attaining. The methods explored in the text are in many ways designed to achieve goals through motivation, learning, and the ability to produce inner calm while decreasing the effects of stress and other negative experiences.

Part 1 of the book introduces passive techniques for increasing human potential and performance. The introductory chapter is a glimpse into the origins of performance enhancement, including humanistic psychology and positive psychology and ending with explaining criteria used to critique the explored range of techniques.

The second chapter addresses hypnosis, defining it, discussing the procedure and theoretical perspectives, and concluding with a very thorough literature review addressing various areas where performance enhancing hypnosis has been used and its effectiveness. These areas include motor performance, sports, and academic performance.

Chapters 3 through 5 explore the techniques of sleep learning, subliminal training, and audio visual entrainment respectively. In all three categories a notable conclusion is that the existing research may be lacking in its ability to convince an audience of efficacy based on methodological problems. In addition, existing research in these areas like many others find both convincing and not-so-positive results, leaving the reader not much better off than before in terms of evaluating techniques.

Chapter 6 begins the section of active techniques that require the participant to undergo training in order to enhance performance. The topic of meditation is explored in this chapter. Meditation is described as a process whereby the practitioner brings his mental processes under

voluntary control. Although, as the author points out, there are several techniques to meditation, all share two goals: mindfulness and concentration. The review finds meditation can change actual brain structure, blood flow, and electrocortical activity, resulting in enhanced attentional, cognitive, and academic performance. This is thought to happen through increased attention to the task at hand as well as decreased attention to extraneous variables. Finally, in this chapter, concerns around meditation are introduced, such as the possibility that meditation can induce epileptic-like signs.

Chapters 7 and 8 address mnemonics and speed reading, respectively. Biofeedback and neurofeedback are given separate chapters. The take-home message from the neurofeedback section is that long-term changes should be studied as initial improvement in performance may not necessarily last. The author also concludes that neurofeedback training to enhance performance is "encouraging but inconclusive." Areas of possibility for neurofeedback and performance include cognitive areas such as attention, memory, and mental rotation. Artistic performance including dance, music, and singing are explored in this chapter, as is sport performance.

The section about active techniques concludes with a chapter on mental imagery that posits improvement in performance when using imagery, but combining mental imagery with other techniques leads to improved outcome.

The third and final section of the book is dedicated to peak performance and leaves some clear directions for future research as well as an introduction to the reader to begin to think about ethical and social implications of using performance enhancing techniques. It seems that overall the text leaves no stone unturned with regard to enhancing human performance.

This book does a wonderful job of explaining various performance enhancing techniques. It gives a well-balanced review and generally confirms the notion that stricter research methodology is required to draw any concrete conclusions about efficacy of any of the techniques. Upon conclusion of

this text, the reader should have a very good understanding of performance-enhancing techniques and the research surrounding each. This text is an excellent introduction that provides familiarity as well as critical evaluation of each of the tools explored.

The author has obviously done his homework.

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