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Dr. Orli Peter's Tunes Relax and Inspire

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Dr. Orli Peter, director and founder of the
Center for Accelerated Psychology

Photo Credit: John Saade

Brain Music Therapy, a non-pharmacological treatment for insomnia and other stress-related disorders, becomes available on the West Coast for the first time, reports

KATIE GRIM



Medicinal Melodies

Music's ability to sway emotions is undeniable. A jazz song lulling sweetly over the speakers at a neighborhood café can be so calming, a hip-hop beat so energizing, a blues tune so touching.

In the early '90s, Dr. Iakov I. Levine, a professor at the Moscow Medical Academy in Russia, harnessed this power to develop a non-pharmacological therapy for insomnia called Brain Music Therapy. Today, the treatment is available in a handful of cities around the globe and is now being offered on the West Coast at the Center for Accelerated Psychology in Beverly Hills.

The first step in the treatment is to record an individual's brain waves using EEG equipment in a 5-minute, non-invasive procedure that takes a reading of both a patient's relaxed and activated brain waves. Using a computerized mathematical algorithm, these waves are then converted into musical sounds and placed on a CD as two customized tracks (relaxing and activating) that, when listened to, promote those states in the patient's brain.

"Every time you listen to your own brain's music," explains Dr. Orli Peter, director and founder of the Center for Accelerated Psychology, "you help create new neural pathways or strengthen existing ones. When you listen to the music based on your own relaxing brain waves, your brain learns how to relax. You can listen to the music before you enter a stressful situation, like an important



meeting, or simply listen to it before you go to sleep. Some people also listen to the activating brain music instead of using caffeine to help them focus when they feel themselves getting mentally tired."

Though treatment programs are tailored to the needs of each individual, it is generally recommended that patients listen to the relaxing music before going to bed and the activating music when they wake up. According to Peter, this practice provides cues to the brain that help to reduce imbalanced brain activity.

Since Brain Music Therapy actually changes the neuronal circuitry of the brain, causing brain waves to shift, after three months of treatment a second set of brain readings are taken and new music is created.

But Brain Music Therapy is not a hokey alternative therapy. In 2002, a double-blind study conducted by the Sleep Research Laboratory at the University of Toronto, Canada, showed that Brain Music Therapy is an effective treatment for insomnia, with an 82 to 85 percent success rate in clinical tests. After undergoing Brain Music Therapy for four weeks, research subjects experienced reduced symptoms of anxiety and insomnia, as evidenced by both subjective and objective measures.

In clinical trials, patients have also experienced a decreased need for medication and are often able to reduce their dosages or get off of them completely, that they are able to get into deeper meditative states and that creativity is spurred. The therapy has no reported side effects.

Brain Music Therapy was originally studied for the treatment of insomnia, but is now being used to treat

anxiety, mood disorders, ADD and other stress-related conditions. It has also been used effectively to enhance creativity, focus and performance.

Though alternative treatments such as Brain Music Therapy are increasing in popularity, they often face obstacles when it comes to attaining research dollars. A significant portion of medical research is funded by drug companies that have a vested interest in keeping non-pharmacological therapies from hitting the mainstream and competing with their products.

Dr. Peter first became interested in Brain Music Therapy because she suffered from insomnia herself. After 15 years of irregular sleep patterns, she tried Brain Music Therapy and saw results within the first week, sleeping for as much as thirteen hours straight and waking up feeling refreshed for the first time in years.

At the end of last year, Peter traveled to Israel to introduce Brain Music Therapy to the doctors at the trauma center of Herzog Hospital in Jerusalem. Doctors have found that brain music helps to stabilize trauma survivors so that they become receptive to conventional trauma treatments.

"We're going to start seeing forms of neurofeedback such as Brain Music Therapy in the news now more than ever," explains Peter. "Our troops are returning home from Iraq with severe brain injuries, and these therapies offer a viable and effective alternative to conventional pharmacological treatments."

For more information on Dr. Orli Peter and the Center for Accelerated Psychology, please visit www.drorlipeter.com