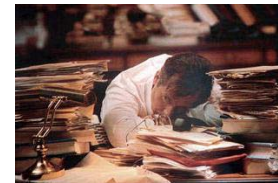
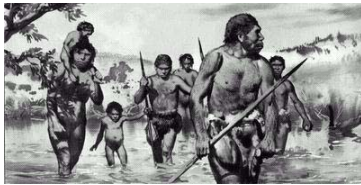


What is Pulse Variability Biofeedback?

Put simply, this program (also known as HeartMath) is a way to identify whether your nervous system is out of balance. The nervous system contains many parts – sensation, emotions, thinking, memory, etc. Two parts of the nervous system are in dynamic balance; the stress (sympathetic) and relaxation (parasympathetic) systems. When these systems get out of balance, health problems can result. Fibro patients have a particularly severe imbalance, with the stress system far more active than the relaxation system.



When we were still living in caves, the stress system served a very important function. When primitive people were stressed, it usually meant that they were going to have to do strenuous physical activity (like defend themselves from a saber-toothed tiger). The sympathetic nervous system prepared them for this activity by raising their pulse, blood pressure, and breathing rate, increasing their muscle activity, and turning off their brain to allow that all their mental energies could be dedicated to quickly responding to the threat. (Ever notice how, when you're really upset with someone, you can't seem to think straight?) The problem is that modern people rarely need to do physical activity when they're stressed. Having a demanding boss or kids that won't behave doesn't usually require much exercise. As a result, these stress responses tend to hurt rather than help us, causing stress-related physical and emotional problems.



Studies have shown that fibromyalgia patients have a highly disordered stress system. It seems that in most fibro patients, their sympathetic systems are operating at maximum all the time, and there is little reserve left for when they need it. While it is uncertain yet whether this stress is the cause or result of fibromyalgia (I believe it's both), fibromyalgia patients are highly out of balance, and many of their symptoms can be related to this overactivity of the sympathetic nervous system. Sleep disorders, irritable bowel, bladder spasms, chronic fatigue, concentration problems, lightheadedness when standing, emotional problems, and even pain can be related to this hyper-sympathetic state. HeartMath is a way to bring these systems back into balance.



Technically, the HeartMath system monitors the beat-to-beat variability in your heart rate. People who are very relaxed have very regular heartbeats. Highly stressed people have heartbeats that are quite irregular. By monitoring the level of regularity, HeartMath can identify whether the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems are in balance and can show this on a computer screen. By changing the image on your screen, you can bring those systems back into balance. Though it may sound difficult, it's a skill that can be learned relatively easily. More accurately, it's a state of mind that you can learn to put yourself into at will. In doing so, you can improve your fibromyalgia symptoms, your overall health, and your general attitude.



We at the Paragon Clinic are very excited about HeartMath and our HeartMath practitioner and licensed provider, Michael Logan, MS. Please call us if you're interested in exploring this exciting new technology for yourself.