

The Story of Joey
Post 3 - Session 13-18

Session 13 & 14:

I made protocol changes at our last meeting together. I could not see any positive (or clearly negative) contribution of T3-T4 so I am trying T3-F3 in its place, to address speech and general frontal activation. I am also beginning to go up on the right side. So my protocol now is T3-F3 at 12-15 HZ for 6 minutes and T4-P4 at 3-6 HZ for 21 minutes, 3.5-6.5 for 3 minutes at the end.

There is little of note after the last session except that both Joey and his mother report that he is feeling good. Mom says he is 'peaceful' and 'easy to be with'. Sleep is good. Appetite is fine. All objective markers are good, not dramatic at all, but good. During the training today, Joey reports that he likes both sites and that his "head feels calm and quiet" with right side training. But at the end he does offer that he is feeling tired so we raise the frequency to 3.5-6.5 and he reports liking this frequency better.

The next day, session 14, father reports that Joey was in great spirits. Joey agrees and is animated in describing that the internal world is busy but quieter than normal because "people are still away on vacation and they are expected back in nine days." Phones are not ringing much, but he expects that to change when they return. Last night, "nine people finished training", which now means neurofeedback training, at least as part of the mix, and are ready to start training others as soon as they get the computers. He also reports that more people want to "come in and train on the neurofeedback system". About half way through the session, Joey discovers that, in fact, the computers arrived at midnight.

I wonder about the significance of the number 9 to this boy. It comes up repeatedly. And then, there is midnight, the almost mystical time of transformation from night into day. It is a time of great darkness and there is still a long wait for dawn, but midnight is a hallowed and often scary time in almost all systems of mystery.

One gets the sense that Joey is looking forward to the return of the post-holiday crowds and all the activity. Again, in the language of defenses, you might wonder if he is frightened by how quiet and perhaps lonely it is, that he is bringing these people back to keep him company and to keep feelings at bay. Inside his head, Joe might be thought of as a 'workaholic', keeping himself distracted from sadness by faxes and reports and phone calls. He is also called upon to be the manager of vast internal systems. And, of course, we all are. For most of us the narrative of our states begins outside the brain; for Joey it starts within as he tries to communicate and make sense of what might otherwise be chaos. He is attempting a self-regulating, self-organizing narrative.

Session 15:

Joey was singing yesterday, singing while on his way to go skiing. His brother reports that after listening to his new CDs, Joe was remembering, repeating and singing the choruses. Singing is new behavior which suggests a few intriguing possibilities. Singing may well signal that he is developing new timing capacities, particularly in the right hemisphere. It could mean that he is feeling less self-conscious and willing to try to sing, a behavior that many of us are, reasonably, cautious about. And he is remembering lyrics. This is also a new capacity. Remembering lyrics may suggest that he is beginning to positively affect left hemisphere function.

Joey's presenting problems include seriously impaired short-term and working memory, as well as auditory processing problems. It is, of course, difficult to imagine how one could have a good memory with major auditory processing problems which manifest clearly by age 2. Mom, who is an attentive Occupational Therapist reports that he has good bilateral action in his legs while skiing but that his arms still do not move bi-laterally and in rhythm with his gait. There is no change in the clarity of his speech.

Joe himself has no complaints. Things in his head are "medium quiet". He makes the hand motion for metza-metz. There are phones, copiers, printers all going and there are people walking around. It has the feel of the offices of the New York Times. "Only three people on Coke (cola) and only one person on coffee." In response to my question, he says that it might be easier for him to think. He has been snow-shoeing - a good activity in the two feet of snow we have here, as well as skiing. The rest of the time he is surfing the web looking for stories about animals and animal care.

He sits down to train and does so with admirable attention and earnestness. It is inspiring to watch him, actually. I, of course, forget the dolphin and he is pleased to remind me, politely, that he would like to have it. He holds it to his chest. He does report times that he is talking to those inside, settling a dispute, checking on someone new who has arrived, or giving instructions, some of them about neurofeedback. In fact, this dialogue with the internal (as distinct from internal dialogue), may be going on constantly and in preference to communication with those outside of him. This feels neither psychotic nor anti-social. I would be concerned, however, that left unaddressed, his disorder could develop psychotic dimensions of dysregulation. For now, I imagine his speech is fluid and easy inside his head. And, of course, there, he is in charge, even if a little overworked.

I decide to target speech areas specifically, and individually to see if we can discern a difference. Articulation is such a large part of his problem and I would like to see some clear impact on it, if possible, before he returns to school. So, I make another shift in protocol. At the end of the training, he is smiling and yawning.

Protocols: F7-A1 at 12.5-15.5 for 3 minutes. He starts to blink his eyes repeatedly, so we go down 12-15 HZ. His blinking stops immediately. Then T3-A1 at 12-15 HZ for 6 minutes. So 12 minutes left side training and then T4-P4 at 3.5-6.5 for 18 minutes. All with 2-7 inhibit.

Session 16:

Joey's speech may be a little clearer. Mom had reported when Joey's speech had gotten worse after F7-F8, tried first at 2-5, then at 2.5-5.5, He lost the 'lifters', which, of course, had taken him years of speech therapy to develop. This is the kind of result that would have really frightened me when I was new to neurofeedback. Primarily, now, it lets me know that this brain is responsive to the training, but it still cautions me. He was a little clearer in making the distinction between the sound in 'sink' and in 'think'. To test this, his mother asked him where he washed his hands and he momentarily got jumbled and answered, 'think'. He knew immediately that it was the wrong word, perhaps from the way it felt in his mouth, perhaps from his mother's face, and he corrected it himself and said 'sink'. No more detailed report from his father except for, "He is a wonderful kid. Isn't

that right, Joey?". Joey nods and looks self-conscious to me, like anyone else who doesn't quite know what to say to a compliment, particularly to his father's compliment. Joey hears this regularly from both his parents. They love their son and at the same time you can't help but hear their anxiety, their deep wish to compensate for the wrong done to his brain. It is full-hearted and it is pained and at moments, it is just acceptance. Acceptance without giving up. I wonder if Joey senses all this too.

He tells me with some delighted anticipation, that "everyone is coming back - it almost sounds like 'coming home'-for New Years". "Flying in from all around the world." Everyone will be here by midnight and they will stay (sigh) to work on his body." There are 24 in all (one for every hour?). And I thought we had gotten down to the skeleton crew, the maintenance team who thought they'd be done and out for quite awhile. Perhaps he thought this too. I find myself worried that he has had his own private experience of hope and loss of hope, so I look for this in him. I see no sign. No journey is linear. Joe's won't be either.

Protocols: T3-A1 at 12-15 HZ for 6 minutes; F7 at 12-15 Hz for 6 minutes and T4-P4 at 3.5-6.5 for 12 minutes and 4-7 for 6 minutes. I made the change because he started to rub his eyes. He corrects for this state by sitting up. (We do this intuitively. The more we recline, the more slow wave activity we make.) I correct for it by raising the frequency. He doesn't, somewhat uncharacteristically, feel the difference.

Session 17:

It is the New Year, ten days before Joey returns to school and I won't be able to see him often. I feel as if I am still searching for the right protocol, but perhaps I am really looking more for the dramatic break through. Joey's brain requires patience of him and it will ask the same of me.

As is his custom, Joey does not report any feelings or internal states, at least those that are not represented by the United Nations within. He reports that everyone has gathered and that he has no physical or emotional distress. Today, in fact, he doesn't tell me too much about the internal activity, but his mother reports an unusual moment. They were visiting family on New Year's Day and Joey emerged from the group of children downstairs, looking sad. To himself, in himself, Joey doesn't have this emotion. He has no reference point for it. Whatever has injured his brain has greatly impacted his emotional range and further impaired any ability to talk about what may arise, unbidden and unknown, somewhere as feeling. (Sadness, it seems, may be missing from the emotional repertoire of the whole family.) So when his mother asked him that day if he was feeling sad, he predictably said "No" and less predictably, gave her a forced smile.

It leads me to wonder what concrete representation there could be of sadness. How could he tell and how could he tell us, if he knew? His mother still felt he had looked sad, even if he didn't recognize it. As she was telling me about this, I looked at Joey for his response. From what I could discern, he wasn't tracking the emotional content of her report. She went on to say that he bounced back quickly and was his usual happy self the rest of the time.

Were Joey to experience sadness, I would see this as good news. I don't, in fact, imagine that he would be able to reorganize his brain function without at some point coming up against the reality of how badly

disorganized it has been. In short, I think his gains will require his experiencing his terrible losses. And when he does, he will feel sad. Was that what was happening that day, for that moment? I never see sadness in anyone as a negative training indicator and I never try to train anyone out of it. These are feelings inherent in living in touch with ourselves and with the world we live in and they flow through us. It may well be the case, since no one in the family reports feeling sad, that when Joey does, they will need help letting it happen and letting themselves feel it too, for him and for themselves.

During the training, Joey tells me that three people are still missing and then later on, that he has "Just found out that they got in at midnight, just in time for the New Year." It is a new year. What will it hold for this boy?

Protocols: T3-A1, 6 minutes, 13-16 HZ; F7, 6 minutes, 11-14 HZ; T4-P4, 18 minutes, 4-7 HZ. 2-7 inhibit at all sites.

Session 18:

Joey is preparing to return to school and he has in the past represented anxiety about transitions as increased activity in the internal realm. It is as if he is bringing in the reserves to make the move back into boarding school. (Generally speaking, transitions can often be experienced as episodes of acute loss). Given this reality, it is a little difficult to discern the meaning of the report that he is more agitated. But I use my rule of thumb: once you begin neurofeedback, everything is related to neurofeedback unless you can rule it out. So the report that he is rushing when eating and that he is going to bed later and that his older brother feels he is more agitated are data about the training, more than about anxiety, per se, about returning to school. Joey reports that his mood is good and that he is looking forward to going back, but that not everyone inside knows that he is returning soon.(??) During the training, he reports that his internal world is getting quiet but that there are meetings going on. He isn't sure what the meetings are about.

Again looking for the optimal protocol for Joe, I decide to try training at C3-C4 instead of T3-T4 and to return to the association cortices with P3-P4. Today's protocol: P3-P4 at 10-13 HZ for 12 minutes; C3 at 13.5-16.5 HZ for 6 minutes; and C4-P4 for 12 minutes at 6-9 HZ. I am hoping that his brain will give me a clear sign of the path to follow. I think it will if I can be aware enough to discern it.