

The Story of Joey
Post 6 - Session 31-36

Session 31:

Joey is home from boarding school. He told me about his accident. He was taking his new bike over a jump and the handle bars caught him at the throat, under his chin. He told me, in that somewhat exaggerated way that little kids can use when repeating a parental warning-"No jumps with my NEW bike!" He had this accident with his new bike, one he wasn't yet used to. His vocal chords were bruised but have healed more quickly than anticipated and he was able to talk well with me today. A week before this happened, he had his Bar Mitzvah and he was able to stand in front of the group and remember his poems and responses. His parents were very proud of him.

He has two new friends at school, the first friends of his life. Everyone has always liked Joey, but he has never been able to make friends. He did not know how to socially cue and he has gotten better at this. There has not been much change in his academics. He cannot generalize math concepts. He can, for instance, solve the equation of ten dollars minus seven dollars, but he can't use it in a store to make change. He has two hours of tutoring every morning during the summer and is working at a zoo and a kennel. He loves animals and looks forward to his work.

The results of qEEG arrive. Joe has a number of problems, as we would have predicted. His dominant frequency is 7Hz. This is too low (normal alpha idling for his age is 10-11 Hz) and it predicts learning disability and the likelihood of long term training. Joey also has abnormal amounts of frontal delta at 3Hz and some coherence abnormalities. This is a hard brain to think in or, in a way, even to see out of.

His parents have consulted with a well respected "alternative" MD and Joey will have a month of hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) in August. Our job, in the meantime, is to see if we can budge this brain out of its slow wave slumber. I will down train delta today.

Protocol: FZ 1.5-4.5 DOWN, 2-7 inhibit, 12 minutes; AFZ 1.5-4.5 DOWN, 2-7 inhibit, 12 minutes.

Session 32:

Joey's brother Rob brings him to the session today and reports that Joe has been cooperative. It has become brutally hot here quite suddenly, after an unusually cool and rainy spring. When the weather turned, Joey went to the attic, brought down all the fans, washed them and set them up in different rooms. He did this on his own initiative and had never done anything like this before. He didn't seem to find it unusual but his brother did.

Joey reports that it's pretty quiet in his head but not as quiet as last time (!). I make the exclamation because last time was five days ago and he remembers his state then. He told me that he has two secretaries in his head, one man and one woman. I asked if they drank coffee and he said no - getting the gist of my question - everyone now drinks decaf. I think his speech is a little clearer and Joey agrees that this could be the case.

I got a copy of the actual Q today and it indicates that the diffuse frontal delta is mostly at 3 Hz. So I will shift my protocol to focus on this frequency.

Protocols: FZ, 12 minutes, AFZ 9 minutes; F7 9 minutes all at 1.5-4-5 Down training and 2-7 inhibit.

Session 33:

Rob reads a written report from his mother saying that Joey is "not himself". He seems a little sad to her and more easily frustrated. Joey reports that thoughts "pop in and then fly out" of his head. He cannot grab hold of his thoughts. He reports that it is quiet in his body but that they (the people in his body-probably the night watchmen) are "trying to find out what happened last night". I don't know what he is referring to but clearly he is experiencing some level of difficulty. Something is going on and I don't know exactly what. He also reports having a headache after he saw a movie in the theater. It is unusual for him to have headaches.

My best hunch is that we were bringing delta down too precipitously, that he was relying on this slow wave, or at least accustom to it, to stabilize his functioning. It is often recommended that "exercising the circuitry" may be the most effective thing we can do. The two ideas seem elegant next to each other. I can't resist the attempt to provide him with some delta, even as we are asking his brain to down train it and to "exercise the circuitry" at the same time. I will down train delta for three minutes and then up train delta for three minutes, then down train again for three minutes. I did this at two sites which I hope will allow him both more stability and more clarity. Neither is what actually occurs.

Session 34:

I saw him again recently during his spring break from school and there is much to report since session 33. This session report follows our attempt to "exercise the circuits" with up and down training of delta. His response, as you will read, was not good but I think it helps us learn something more about at least two operating assumptions about NF.

The first is that excess delta (theta, alpha) is "bad" and should be down trained. In this case, in an earlier session and in this, it looks like delta was not only an indicator of brain injury but simultaneously an important compensatory mechanism. It appears to have played an important role in his stability as well as his disability. The second theory is that what we are doing is "exercising the circuits" and since this is what we are doing it might be most efficient to train a frequency band up and then down (more efficient exercise). It appears to have been quite powerful in this boy's brain but not more efficient. This is one brain, at one moment in time, and I hesitate to draw any conclusions from this one experience, but it does raise some important issues.

Joey's mother called me several days after the last training to report that Joey is having a very difficult time. She describes him as depressed, sad, disorganized, unmotivated, frustrated, lonely and bored. She wants her old cheerful, happy, motivated Joey back.

Needless to say I was concerned for him and I saw him the next day. I had changed the down training to training down one period and up the second, down the third at two sites. He was edgy with down training alone, but with "exercising the circuits" he is all of the above.

When he came in I asked him how he was doing and for the first time ever he said, "Not great". He has always said "Good." I asked him how his week had been and he tried to tell me but looked as if he was drawing a blank. I withdrew the question and he began an astonishing description of the problems he experienced in thinking. He put his hand at the back of his head, over the occipital area and he said, "If thoughts move fast enough, they make it into the front of my head". He showed me the pathway, back to front, bringing his palm over the top of his head to his forehead. "But if they don't, they only make it as far as here (he points to CZ) and then they slip backwards again. Sometimes they only start up and don't even get as far as here (the parietal area) and they slip back." If they get to the front of his head he can say them. "Sometimes, they are just stuck, they don't move at

all." I could feel his frustration viscerally. When he is "thinking just right", the memory/thought goes around the right side of his head and stops at FP2 (he showed this to me). When he "thinks too hard" they spin around his head and land at FP1. He experiences that as having gone too far. He said, "I could catch the thought if I could slow it down."

It is important to recognize, I think, that Joey is describing his thought process and he is doing so with a lot of clarity. He is describing his brain as his brain. He's not describing it through the internal world of fax machines and phones and international training teams but how he feels this process in his brain; these are the currents of his thinking and his memory. He hasn't done this before, not like this. When I asked him about his internal world he said it was spinning around and noisy. The people there were trying to slow it down. When I asked him if he wanted the training to slow his brain down he said, 'Yes', and said so with a lot of confidence.

Interestingly, even with this negative or seemingly negative response, Joey wanted to come today. I have the sense that when we down trained delta it sped him up to fast, too soon. He wasn't used to this processing speed and didn't know how to handle it. So he shut down. His brother was describing this and said, "I'd ask him something and he just wouldn't answer". Joey said, "Rob, that's because everything was going too fast." His brother smiled at him and said that now he understood. He thought it was amazing that his little brother could point to the correct areas of the brain associated with memory and initiation of thought. "It's not like he looked it up in a textbook or anything." I think it is amazing too.

As we trained at C4-P4, he began to talk again of the filing cabinets. He said that the new one hadn't been delivered yet and that the ones he has are stuck. They are stuck because they are heated up, which makes it hard to open the drawers. They get hot when he thinks too hard and he has to cool them down so that the drawers will open. I asked him if he remembered an acronym using FORD, that one his boss had told him. He told me 'Fix Or Repair Daily', which was a joke he heard three weeks ago. I had added one of my own and he repeated it almost right: 'Ford On the Roadside, Dead'. It goes 'Found on the Roadside Dead' and he corrected it as I began to tell him. I asked him how he remembered these things. He said, "I have a special filing cabinet for car jokes. It's not in the back". He swept his finger over his forehead to indicate that they were there somewhere, in the front, and "easier for me to find." I asked him if he remembered the Gettysburg Address and he shook his head. "Do you remember any of it?", and he said, "Four score and twenty years." and I laughed and said, "That's exactly how much I remember of it". He went on to elaborate: "That is in a file cabinet in the back and it stays there until I need it. I don't need it now." This is, of course, the economy of memory and memory retrieval. He felt that if he needed it, he could practice it and he would remember it. This demonstrates a new confidence in his memory as well as good insight into the working of his own brain.

Given his request to slow his brain down and his clear distress, as well as that of his family (and me), we returned to his default protocol. By the end of the session, he is talking more and he looks better.

Today's protocol C4-P4: 5-8 Hz reward; 2-7 inhibit

Session 35:

At the last session we returned to what I considered to be Joey's default protocol, C4-P4 after trying to apply the "exercise model" in the delta band. As you will remember, he asked for his brain to be slowed down. His mother called two days later and she reported that Joey is "back to who he is". She is relieved but also quite fascinated to hear what Joey had described to me about his own mental processes. (As usual, I had Joey's permission to share this with his mother). She

also told me that he remembered his math tables for the first time. The parents were amazed and, interestingly, attributed this accomplishment to down training. Apparently his older brother had described Joey as looking and being more himself as soon as they left the session.

When I see Joe, a week later, his language is off. It is difficult for him to retrieve words and he was having a great deal of difficulty retrieving or processing numbers. His mood, however, is greatly improved, although mother reports that he might be a little on the downside. He is not agitated at the dinner table but he is also not motivated to go to the gym.

Joey reports that there is "too much in the front filing cabinets, that's not going to the back, so stuff is piling up in the front". "Some filing cabinets are locked or stuck". He can't get "the math cabinet" to open at all, so he "just has to look". This is almost an exact reversal of the process he described with the delta up/down training. Whatever the direction, he may be describing an anterior-posterior disconnect. He is now often tired and has to be woken up. He used to be an early riser. The people in his head are back from vacation and it's busier inside, even loud, but he expects that it will quiet soon.

Protocol: C4-P4 5-8 Hz for 21 minutes, 2-7 inhibit

Session 36:

It is five days later and Joey reports that he is feeling "Good". He went bowling last night and he used the big bowling ball and threw it side arm for the first time. He scored higher than he has ever scored and he made a strike. He said to me, referring of course to his brain, "These filing cabinets are 14 years old. I need some new ones". Agreed. Now, how to provide them.

Protocol: C4-P4: 5-8 Hz for 22 minutes; 5.5-8.5 Hz for 6 minutes. I shifted up because it was making him tired.