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# BRAIN, *Heal Thyself*

## The Incomparable Powers of a **Balanced Brain**

by Susan Hart Hellman

In his new book, *Limitless You: The Infinite Possibilities of a Balanced Brain*, and in countless *brain conditioning* sessions with shell-shocked *veterans*, antisocial prison *inmates*, habitual *addicts* and other *dysfunctional* individuals, *Lee Gerdes*, the founder of Brain State Technologies, demonstrates that there are *no limits* to our *brain power*—and to our brain's ability to overcome a variety of *addictions* and *compulsions*, and to remain in a *recovered state* thereafter.

To achieve this goal, Lee Gerdes has developed Brain State Conditioning™ (BSC), a non-invasive process of *balancing* and *harmonizing* the brain. Building on many aspects of the science of biofeedback and neurofeedback—the key difference being that BSC is based on *Quantum Physics* instead of Newtonian Physics—the BSC process begins with an assessment during which brain function, manifested in *electromagnetic energy*, is detected from the outer scalp at specific points using Intellectrodes™. A series of personalized *brain exercises*, devised with the help of a computer program, *optimizes the brain* and brings it to *homeostasis* or *balance*—enabling the individual to deal with problems such as addictive dependencies, compulsive behaviors, eating disorders, anxiety, attention deficit disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders and other illnesses or symptoms. BSC has been tested with *thousands* of individuals ranging from *celebrities* like Naomi and Wynonna Judd—interviewed in this issue—to *inmates* in a correctional facility in Nevada and *veterans* from Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

## *born of necessity*

Lee Gerdes' concept for BSC and his company, Brain State Technologies, was unplanned. After obtaining advanced degrees in math and physics in the 1960s, Gerdes quickly realized that scientists were "a dime a dozen" and were driving cabs, so he became a computer geek. "I lived for the computer sciences," he says. But two degrees were not enough for this ambitious young man, so he earned a Master's Degree in Divinity before completing advanced studies in psychology—all while running a software company. Little did he know that someday he would be combining all these disciplines and his love of Quantum Physics to save his own life.

In the early 1990's, Gerdes was assaulted by several young men wielding baseball bats. Although it was a case of mistaken identity, there was no mistaking the results. Gerdes was left with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and its horrible symptoms: a hair-trigger temper, nightmares, night sweats, and depression. He couldn't wait in long store lines or extreme anxiety would set in, and the feeling that someone was behind him made him vulnerable. In restaurants he had to sit with his back to the wall and was mistrusting of everyone. He recalls being very concrete too. "Everything needed to be a certain way; there were only rights and wrongs, no leeway for myself or others, no

grey areas in between." Needless to say, there was little fun or laughter in his life. Lee Gerdes rarely smiled.

Realizing that he had become enslaved by his symptoms and wanting his old life back, Gerdes turned to a variety of remedies for his PTSD—psychotherapy, cognitive psychology, retreats, EMDR, biofeedback, neurofeedback, and even prayer. "Some of it helped to some degree," he says, "but nothing was thorough, and nothing lasted."

As if living with the PTSD was not enough, Gerdes was also dealing with a demanding career that required special skills. "My career at the time required that my brain constantly switch between two fundamentally different functions," he explained. "This meant switching back and forth between using the left side of my brain and the right." His frustration at having to do this, coupled with his persistent symptoms of PTSD, forced Gerdes into action. "The eclectic mix of my education and my personal need to experience more happiness and less stress while being highly functional led me to research what causes an individual brain state to be conditioned for health and happiness."

In 2000, Gerdes began developing his own methods to help with his symptoms. "When I started developing BSC, I wasn't a doctor or even a brain researcher," Gerdes says, "but being a computer software

designer educated in psychology and theology, I knew computers might help people like me return to their old lives.” Through his experiences with the sciences, particularly Quantum Physics, Gerdes had developed a belief in the limitless power of the brain. In formulating his new theory, he had only one key question in mind, “What possibilities exist in the brain?”

To develop and test his theories, Gerdes applied elements culled from the various techniques he had learned, especially neurofeedback—a technique that attempts to change behavior by teaching us to control our brain, encouraging it to run more efficiently. Neurofeedback had given Gerdes some short-term relief, but his symptoms remained. “Working the long hours that I had to work, and in an anxious state already, I was easily angered and somewhat distracted. To add countless hours of neurofeedback to my schedule was unmanageable. I needed to solve my problems without creating a new one by cramping my time even more.”

Gerdes reengineered parts of the technique as a starting point for his BSC. “I took into account everything I had learned about neurofeedback, added my understanding of the capabilities of computers and my insights from psychology and theology, and applied an overarching approach to this information.”

## brain conditioning defined

“Brain State Conditioning is an individually-tailored process of balancing and harmonizing the brain,” says Lee Gerdes. The method he used for developing this conditioning



involved not a reductionist approach but rather an approach based on Quantum Physics.

“Quantum Physics teaches us that observation plays a role in what becomes actualized in our world,” he explains, “because there is interplay between the observer and the observed. Simply put, when something is observed, it changes because it is observed. This is the key to how brain training works.”

The uniqueness of BSC led Gerdes to develop unique equipment. He used amplifiers and later created his own electrodes—Intellectrode™—which are affixed to the scalp strategically to observe the brain’s actual brainwave frequencies in various locations. Then he created protocols—a combination of locations on the scalp where electrodes are placed to view an individual’s brainwave frequencies as needed for symptom relief via the computer software that drives the process.

To develop these protocols, Gerdes went to work on his first guinea pig—himself. “I started with simple electrodes, looking at different views of the brain, trying new protocols in every combination possible,” he says. After months of trials, finding that his technique

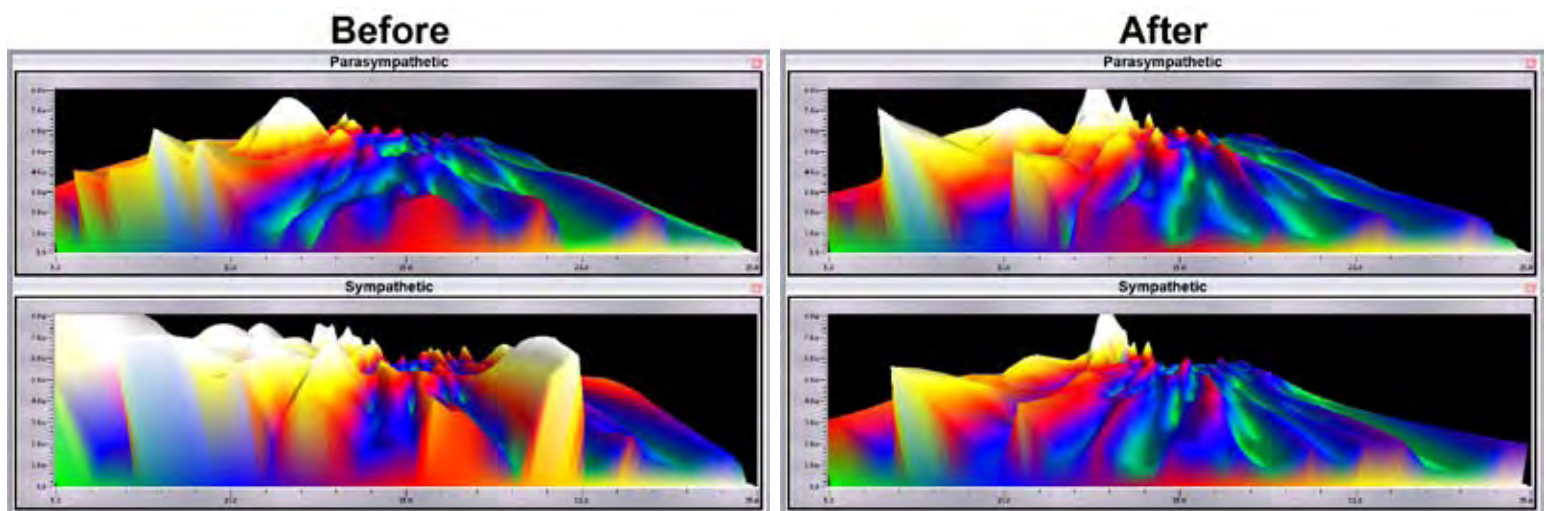
was viable, he went on to try it on a second guinea pig—his son, Peter, who was experiencing the problems many youth encounter, including dropping out of school. The results were dramatic. Soon after beginning brain conditioning, Peter noticed increased focus, sharpened memory and heightened awareness on various planes of consciousness. Peter transitioned from the “D” list to the Dean’s List then went on to earn a B.S. in Management Information Systems from Iowa State University. Now, he uses his experience on his job working with his father at BST.

It was after the successful brain conditioning on himself, his son and others that Lee Gerdes founded BST, the company that would provide thousands of people worldwide with the healing powers of his brainchild.

## how it works

To describe BST, Gerdes likes to begin with what BST *isn't* and what BST *doesn't* do. “Brain State Technologies™ does not treat, heal, cure, or otherwise provide any medical or psychological service,” Gerdes says. “This is not brain surgery! It’s just a process of balancing and harmonizing the brain.”

What he means by “balance” is how the brain’s activity is balanced from one side of the brain to the other and how the different regions of the brain balance with each other between the front and the back of the same side of the brain. He compares this to balancing the load on a ship so it will remain steady in the ocean. “Harmony refers to how energy patterns that vary from low to high exist together in the same region of the brain,” Gerdes explains. “When a person’s brain is being trained, all that the training is really doing is holding up



An unbalanced Autonomic Nervous System (ANS).

When the ANS is balanced, then many functional aspects of the brain are also balanced.

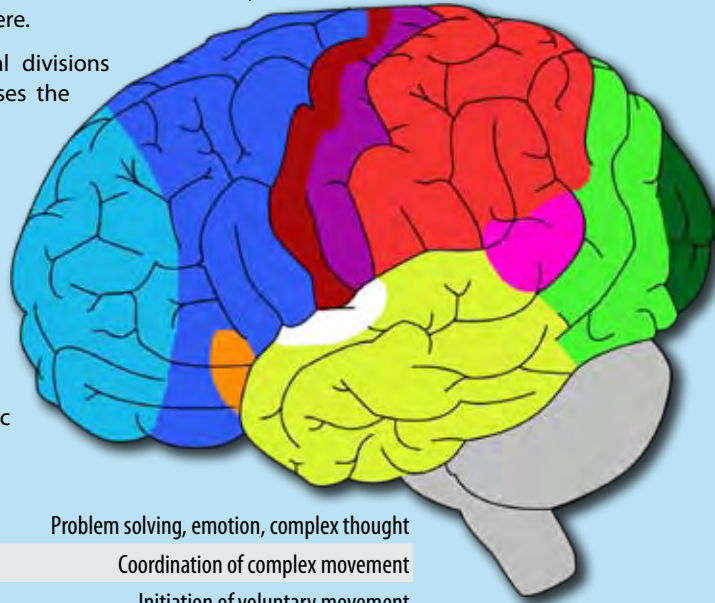
# Functional Divisions of the Cerebral Cortex

The cerebral cortex is responsible for many “higher-order” functions like language and information processing. Language centers are usually found only in the left cerebral hemisphere. However, in approximately 20% of left-handed individuals, the language center will be in the right hemisphere.

The diagram below represents the anatomical divisions of the cerebral cortex. The chart below discusses the function of each cortical area.

## Points of Interest

- Each cerebral hemisphere receives sensory information and generates motor commands affecting the opposite side of the body.
- The two hemispheres are functionally different even though anatomically they appear similar.
- Assignment of a specific function to a specific region of the cerebral cortex is imprecise.



<span style="color: blue;">■</span> <b>Prefrontal Cortex</b>	Problem solving, emotion, complex thought
<span style="color: purple;">■</span> <b>Motor Association Cortex</b>	Coordination of complex movement
<span style="color: red;">■</span> <b>Primary Motor Cortex</b>	Initiation of voluntary movement
<span style="color: purple;">■</span> <b>Primary Somatosensory Cortex</b>	Receives tactile information from the body
<span style="color: red;">■</span> <b>Sensory Association Cortex</b>	Processing of multisensory information
<span style="color: green;">■</span> <b>Visual Association Area</b>	Complex processing of visual information
<span style="color: green;">■</span> <b>Visual Cortex</b>	Detection of simple visual stimuli
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> <b>Speech Center (Broca's Area)</b>	Speech production and articulation
<span style="color: white;">■</span> <b>Auditory Cortex</b>	Detection of sound quality (loudness, tone)
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> <b>Auditory Association Center</b>	Complex processing of auditory information
<span style="color: pink;">■</span> <b>Wernicke's Area</b>	Language comprehension

a ‘mirror’ to reflect how an untrained brain appears at a particular moment in contrast to how a balanced brain might look. This mirror is created by listening to the brain’s electromagnetic energy detected on the scalp at specific protocol points on the head with the Intellectrodes™.” In other words, BST allows the brain to observe itself, the phenomenon of Quantum Physics, in an optimized state, captured and observed as brain waves with EEG amplifiers and computers.

Explaining the neurobiology of this mirroring procedure, Gerdes says, “This electromagnetic energy is based on the activities of our brain’s more than 100 billion neurons as they interact and connect with each other across even billions more synapses to form trillions of neural-networks, which in turn are activated by internal or external stimuli of various forms.” BST’s methods then involve collecting these brain waves via computers which then process the brainwave information and translate it into an optimized pattern in the form of sound through stereo headphones.

## *what it can do*

“The sole objective of brain training is to increase the brain’s balance and harmony,” Gerdes says. “Its focus is on the degree of balance and harmony of the brain and the brain’s flexibility as it transitions from a state of rest to being active.” By encouraging some brainwaves and discouraging others, the conditioning harmonizes the brainwaves to begin to function in a balanced way.

The “out of balance” states with which BSC has proven effective include Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), anger and anxiety, panic attacks, autism, brain injury, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, dementia and depression. Other imbalanced states for which BSC has worked include epilepsy, immune system problems, learning disorders, memory deficits, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and pain. Recently, BST has done much work on PTSD with veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars as well as with inmates of the Nevada Department of Corrections.

One client who has realized the benefit of BSC for pain management is Cindi Wilber of Burbank, California. Wilber began experiencing pain after multiple surgeries related to a pituitary tumor. She developed migraines which became so intense that medications did not work. In addition, Wilber had life traumas to overcome: an abusive childhood, being molested, exposure to toxic chemicals, four previous surgeries, and depression.

Cindi’s initial reaction was to cure herself. Toward that end, she became a master practitioner in neurolinguistic programming, studied hypnosis, learned massage therapy and acupuncture and delved into a variety of other curative techniques. But although they helped, nothing worked for long, and one day, Wilber could no longer take the pain. “I prayed,” she says, “God, I can’t live like this. I’m done.” That prayer was answered within three days when she serendipitously met Nancy Lee, a BST practitioner. After her first evaluation, Wilber was surprised at the imbalance she saw in her brain. “I thought I was in pretty good shape from all the work I’d done,” she says. “But when I started BSC, I saw that three-fourths

of my brain was in bad shape. After just a few sessions, that began to change. I woke up so happy that I even danced with the dog!”

Another client who experienced the quick alleviation of symptoms after beginning BSC is attorney Sherrie Lawrence, also of Burbank, who had a sleep disorder which began during her pregnancy with her son. “It took me three to four hours to fall asleep,” she says, “then I would wake up during the night and early in the morning too.” Like Wilber, Lawrence tried everything, including intense exercise sessions, herbal remedies, acupuncture, hypnotherapy, meditation, warm milk and warm baths. She gave up caffeine, did a sleep study to determine any physiological reason for her disorder, saw a neurologist, an endocrinologist, and paid “a fortune” to an Oriental doctor. Then she turned to medications. “I developed a tolerance to the medications and could not sleep even when using them.” She also developed temporary medication-related amnesia. “I just grew accustomed to not getting enough sleep,” Lawrence says. “It was frustrating; no one could explain it to me.”

Lawrence got her explanation during her first session, also with BST affiliate Nancy Lee. “Nancy told me my brain was over-stimulated,” Lawrence says. “My parietal lobe needed to be calmed down. My brain had to learn to let in less stimuli.” It only took one session for Lawrence to feel more relaxed. “I felt light and euphoric,” she recalls, “and after just five sessions, I was becoming sleepy at night and stayed asleep longer and longer.”

## *addiction & recovery*

It may seem unusual that one type of technology could bring about such a positive outcome for chronic pain, sleep disturbances, and so many other types of imbalances. Not to Lee Gerdes. “If you have ever driven an automobile which had one or more tires greatly out of balance,” he explains, “you know the shimmy and shake that the out-of-balance condition can produce. It is no different in life when the brain has one or more of its areas out of balance.”

Being out of balance is also an issue for people with one of the most common problems in every society today, addictive dependencies on alcohol, prescribed or illicit drugs, tobacco products, sexual behaviors, video games, food, or an endless array of substances or behaviors. “People with addictions can’t find balance with a chemical. That won’t bring the balance back,” says Gerdes who believes that the cause of addiction is in the brain, not in the substance itself or in a person’s social circumstances. “Studying brain assessments reveals

that about 80 percent of those clients with addictions training their brains have internal or situational anxiety, 12 percent seem to have a genetic propensity to addiction, and about 8 percent appear to have developed a habit as a result of their life situation.”

Jonathan Hall from Scottsdale, Arizona, a Mount Ida College junior, has had problems with stress and motivation during his entire life. To solve this problem, he self-medicated with a stimulant, Adderall, which made him more focused at first, then diminished his capabilities. “After a while the problem got out of hand and I had to take time away from school.” Hall also lost his ability to do his job.

A horse trainer and an ex-jockey, Brent Kelley turned to speed to keep his weight down. “I weigh 140 pounds naturally,” Kelley explains, “but I had to keep my weight down to 111 to be competitive as a jockey.” In addition to speed, Kelley had another problem—alcoholism. Coming from a family with two alcoholic parents, he consumed his first drink at age 16, and used alcohol to balance out the drugs. “The speed I was using to keep my weight down kept me awake at night. So what do you do at night to sleep? You drink.” The anxiety caused by the competitiveness of horse racing didn’t help. “I spent my final two years as a jockey living on whiskey and crack cocaine.”

Gerdes says that addictions can be helped because they are not the disease they are generally believed to be. “Addiction is not contagious, yet it is eating away at the addict, causing on-going distress. Addiction is an urge to find a balance to some type of imbalance in the brain. Addicts are driven to self-medicate to balance the brain. The self-medication creates more anxiety, so they use more substance to stop that discomfort and anxiety.” Some of the traditional treatments can initially create a basis for support and seem to help with anxiety, but programs which have high expectations can actually cause the internal anxiety to increase. “In addition,” Gerdes says, “because most treatment programs may have no exit strategy, most people leave these programs still addicted and wind up back in treatment, often with treatment bills totaling over \$100,000.”

By way of comparison, the prices for Brain State Conditioning™ training are more affordable than most therapies. While the prices vary according to location and the services that are provided by each affiliate, Brain State Technologies recommends that anyone wishing to do sessions begin with an inten-

sive, consisting of one assessment session and ten two-hour sessions. The initial assessment runs from \$300 to \$600, and each two-hour session may cost anywhere from \$80 to \$300, depending on the package of services rendered by each affiliate. All told, most BSC training ends up costing between \$3,000 and \$9,000, a far cry from the treatment centers that cost upward of \$1,000 a day for 28 or 30 days, and often much more.

One reason BSC works so quickly, Gerdes says, is the elimination of the willpower factor, a necessary component with many other recovery programs. “The outstanding thing about brain training is that it doesn’t require willpower. Instead, it uses brainpower. What a distinction! Willpower requires serious effort and sometimes even struggle, and it isn’t exempt from possible failure. Brainpower is all about a deep calm coupled with spontaneous self-mastery. It is literally teaching an old brain new tricks.”

Adds Gerdes, “The answer for people who suffer from anxiety—especially those who alleviate their suffering with alcohol, tobacco or other drugs—is to balance their brain so the need for sedation disappears. So what we give them is hope.” Gerdes provides something else as well. “When I think about balanced living, I think about freedom,” he says. “In the New Testament, there is a passage that talks about doing the things I don’t want to do. Some people just do that again and again. They are stuck. I think we at BST are freedom fighters for our clients. It doesn’t make any difference whether you’re a CEO, a Vietnam vet or someone who’s been out on the streets for 40 years, achieving brain balance and harmony is the first step to a state of wellness, optimum performance, and freedom.”

## *war & peace*

A project dear to Lee Gerdes’ heart is to give the comfort of balanced living to the men and women who fought in the armed forces of the United States. Hundreds of thousands of men and women will return from combat with PTSD. “The VA has seen a tenfold increase in PTSD cases in the last year,” Gerdes says. “More than 37,000 vets of Iraq and Afghanistan are suffering from mental health disorders, and more than 16,000 have already been diagnosed with PTSD.”

On the neurobiology of PTSD, Gerdes explains, “The National Institute of Health

videotaped the reaction of a mouse's brain when that brain was subjected to various forms of trauma. The video shows the brain actually moving as it responds to the trauma by becoming imbalanced. This is how the mouse survives that trauma—but even when the traumatic situation has subsided, the brain holds on to that imbalanced state, the pattern that had kept it alive.”

How does this apply to a soldier in Iraq? “During his tour of duty in Iraq, the soldier was on mobile patrol much of the time, watching for vehicles that could potentially contain a bomb, especially lone cars parked along the road. Repeatedly, he did see these cars exploding, several times taking the life of his fellow troops, his friends. Now he's back home,” Gerdes continues. “If the soldier spots a lone car parked on the roadside, especially an older car, his reactions are likely to be erratic, including swerving across several traffic lanes because his neural network is telling him the car might blow up. We can remind such a soldier that he is back in his home country, but logically he already knows that. Logically, he knows he's now in America and the car sitting on the roadside won't blow up. Logically, he is aware that veering across the traffic lanes to avoid a parked car is senseless and also dangerous. But he is traumatized. These actions, which are illogical now that he is home, were perfectly logical in Iraq. Now, his brain acts not from a position of logic, but from one of imbalance.”

PTSD is one of the most resistant of human conditions, Gerdes believes. He cites the example of Mic Patrick DeBriwere, a US Marine Corps Forward Observer and Mortar Squad Leader with the 7th Marines in Vietnam who spent years in an area known for its heavy casualties. “DeBriwere underwent years of suffering in what he described as ‘twenty-eight years of psychic numbing,’ before finally being diagnosed in 1997 with chronic PTSD, complications resulting from multiple head injuries, and medical problems related to Agent Orange exposure.”

DeBriwere tried numerous other treatments before discovering BSC. “His journey in search of healing led him to Transactional Analysis, Rolfing, EST, Co-counseling, EMDR, Hypnosis, Transcendental Meditation, and countless spiritual retreats,” Gerdes says. “But none of these approaches led to real healing. Mic had pretty much given up hope of ever being free of his PTSD—until he learned of brain training.”

DeBriwere's training was so effective that he now counsels other veterans. “Post-BSC treatment,” Gerdes says, “DeBriwere spends much of his time mentoring young combat veterans and conducting workshops for post-traumatic stress disorder. He is instrumental in seeing that these Veterans receive help with the limits their PTSD and other disorders are placing on them.”

Gerdes and his team have also done extensive work with the Southern Nevada Correctional Center. For a period of three weeks, in August and September of 2007, they performed brain conditioning with six inmates. All were male and represented African-American, Latino, Native American and Caucasian ethnic groups, all were under 25 years of age, and all had committed crimes ranging from burglary to assault with a deadly weapon and manslaughter. The goals set for each inmate were different, but they achieved a combined 42 percent improvement in anger management, increased attention, overcoming depression, better sleep, social interaction and general well-being. Warden Lenard Varé wrote: “After the Brain State training, I noticed that all the inmate participants appeared to be happier. . . They appeared to be calm and relaxed.”

Warden Varé himself volunteered to participate in the program. His history included being abducted and stabled by inmates and he had high blood pressure. “I have noticed that I am calmer and not rushed in making decisions. I have only gone through a handful of sessions and could already see the effects. I also noted that my blood pressure dropped 20 points after the sessions.”

## *a new history*

For those who have undergone BSC, there are no limits. “When the imbalance in the brain goes away, you see the light,” Gerdes says. “Brain training is a revolutionary way to rewrite our own history.”

Jonathan Hall's new history includes improvements in his education and his work. “After starting BSC, I was able to focus in class. I was able to go back to work and hold a job. I was able to do well pill-free.”

Cindi Wilber gained so much from her Brain State training that she is now planning to become a BSC practitioner herself.

Brent Kelley says his improvements were so great that he will soon begin Steward School to become a racing judge.

Sherrie Lawrence says, “I wasn't myself because I was sleep deprived. I was impatient

and irritable.” Now, after each BSC session, she leaves feeling good. Even though she sleeps well now, she will continue the sessions. “Always,” she says, ever the BST advocate.

Mic DeBriwere, the former Vietnam veteran, says that BSC has done so much for him that he wants to “bottle it” and deliver its benefits to a growing number of countries in the world.

Many if not most BST clients want to continue with their training “always,” even after the resolution of the issues that led to their initial sessions. “Not only is brain training a superb tool for addressing dysfunction, it's also a powerful means of improving performance in every area of life,” says Gerdes. “A balanced brain generates thoughts, ideas, imagination and feelings that are tailored to our unique individuality, hence it empowers us to accomplish goals we previously thought impossible.”

## *limitless you*

What Lee Gerdes considers to be the crowning achievement of his own brain conditioning is that he's been able to forgive the four youth who assaulted him years ago. “I feel sorry for those guys,” he says. “They'll be tormented all their lives.” He adds that he can now embrace the attack. “I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for that assault. I've observed it, and by observing it I came to understand it. Quantum mechanics—such observation gives one insight into one's own experience.”

Asked what his next career move might be, Gerdes says, “This is my life. When you're balanced, you can see what your purpose is, and now I use my skill to work for the greater good. We need a way to touch people, to allow them to dance, to express their physicality, their mental joy, the fascinating creations that they are. The possibilities are limitless.”

Nowadays, after his many years of mental and physical turmoil, Lee Gerdes is joyful. He smiles and laughs a lot—so much so that people who don't know him ask him if he's “using.” “Yes, I am,” he answers them. “I'm using BSC!” ■





## My name is Wynonna Judd and I'm a recovering entertainer

The Recovery Living Interview

**W**hen Wynonna Judd walked in the conference room at Brain State Technologies, her smile lit up the room. Although she has more gold and platinum records than she can count and an impressive list of awards, Wynonna doesn't come across as a big music star but rather as a lovely and friendly woman willing to share her experience in order to help others.

Born Christina Claire Ciminella in Ashland Kentucky, she renamed herself Wynonna Judd—taking her last name from her mother's maiden name and her first name from the line “Don't forget Winona” in the pop song “Route 66”—



and gained immediate success as part of the duo, the Judds, with her mother Naomi in the early eighties. Eight years later, Naomi was diagnosed with Hepatitis C and had to leave the tour. The Judds embarked on their last tour dubbed “The Farewell Tour” and won an unprecedented eighth consecutive win for Country Duo at the CMA Awards.

In November 2003, Wynonna was arrested for a DUI and her mug shot was displayed on televisions and on the front pages all over the country. But Wynonna’s addiction was not alcohol. Her addictive issues were codependent family bonds, a difficult relationship with money, and what she called a “dependency on food.”

During their eight years on the road, mother and daughter lived in the confines of a Silver Eagle bus and had a rough time at it. In time, and with the help of much family therapy, the Judd women would learn to forge their separate identities and live peacefully on their adjoining farms in Tennessee.

In December of 2003, Wynonna’s staff informed her that, in spite of her large income from records and concerts, she was spending more than she was earning, and she was on the verge of losing her beloved 525-acre farm unless she made drastic changes in her lifestyle and spending habits. To emphasize the urgency of the intervention, they gave Wynonna a business card with a name and phone number.

The name on the card was Ted Klontz, and he ran Onsite, a healing center in Cumberland Furnace, Tennessee. In January of 2004, Wynonna attended her first Onsite workshop. Holed up in a cabin for six days, she did her genealogy, put her entire life on a whiteboard and looked at the patterns of her behavior in the mirror of her life.

In short order, Ted Klontz would become the family coach—a family that included her mother, Naomi, her sister Ashley, her children, Grace and Elijah, and the man she had considered to be her dad, Michael Ciminella, from whom she had been estranged for almost a decade.

In early 2006, Wynonna spent 42 days at the Shades of Hope rehab facility in Buffalo Gap, Texas, for an eating disorder. She had just published her memoir, *Coming Home to Myself*, in September 2005, had finished the book tour, and she was tired of struggling with her weight. “I’ve given my music career over to God. I’ve given my family over to God.” It was time for a change.

The last leg of Wynonna’s long journey of survival and redemption was Brain State Technologies in Scottsdale, Arizona. Ted Klontz found out about Lee Gerdes’ brain conditioning process and mentioned it to Wynonna and Naomi in the spring of 2008. In no time, mother and daughter were on a plane to Arizona for the first series of ten sessions of brain harmonizing.

This interview was conducted on September 10, 2008 while Wynonna was in Arizona for a weeklong ten-session refresher course of Brain State Conditioning.



**WYNONNA JUDD:** Hi, my name's Wynonna and I'm a recovering entertainer.

**RECOVERY LIVING MAGAZINE:** How did you hear about Brain State Conditioning?

**WYNONNA:** Ted Klontz, my life coach, called me to Onsite to show me the DVD about Brain State Conditioning, and it literally like blew the doors wide open to possibilities I had never experienced before. And I've done it all—literally. I've been on this journey to self-discovery for some time.

**RLM:** What kinds of therapies did you do before Onsite and Brain State?

**WYNONNA:** I've had countless therapists. I was always in some kind of a process, with a teacher saying, "We really love Wynonna and she's such a bright light, but we can't get her to focus." I feel like my whole life has been a process of finding out where to fit in, because there was this norm and I was always out here somewhere. My mom was always trying to find somebody to help me. I always felt like the misfit of my family.

Then, around eight years of age, a special teacher told me, "You're really unique and special," so that was a validation. And then, fast-forward to 15, when I had my first experience with a probation officer, because I stole lipstick from the Kroger in town, I had somebody, a coach if you will, look after me. And then in 1990, my mom and I did our Farewell Tour. The family was so . . . so broken that we all went into therapy together—the whole family, my mom, my pop, Ashley, myself, my husband at the time, my grandmother, everybody would at some point come in and out the door. After the Farewell Tour, my life just exploded.

My entire life was such a paradox at that time—my mom had left the road, I was starting my own career, I was an orphan but I was very successful, I was breaking all the records but I was on my bus alone. One moment, I'm affirmed on stage with ten or twenty thousand people cheering, the next moment the lights are out and I'm alone in my hotel room, trying to find balance.

**RLM:** What was the focus of the therapies?

**WYNONNA:** The focus was—what in the world? I am such in a battle between feeling affirmed on stage and feeling the light, you know, shining on me literally and figuratively, and then stepping off stage and the lights be-

ing out, and being isolated. So, I would go from a hotel room alone to 10,000-20,000 people, and it was just too much. So I was looking for balance.

My mom's book says I was born singing on perfect pitch in search of harmony and balance, and I think that's true, but I was also born into chaos, probably starting in the womb, and somewhere I got the message that I'm part of the chaos, even responsible for it, and I'm looking for affirmation that I'm OK—looking at everybody and everything else but myself. I'm seeing therapist after therapist. I try EMDR, I go to Deepak Chopra's clinic for two weeks and learn that I'm "pitakofa"—fire. I got married, had my children, then in 2003,



I get in financial trouble and my team did an intervention, saying, "What we're watching is slow suicide. What are you gonna do about it?" And they hand me a card that said Ted Klontz, and I called Ted Klontz but he didn't answer, thank God, and I leave a message, thinking I did it, that's it—and then Ted called me right back.

So I wound up at Onsite in 2003. It was supposed to be a financial workshop, sort of how to deal with money, and ended up being anything but. It was like "We have a lot of

work to do before we talk about the money," then it was, "Money is the least of your worries right now, we need to start from your personal process—" So I'm at Onsite, living in a cabin for six days, showing up to class, seeing my whole life, you know, up on the wall, flashing before me, and I'm peeling back the layers, one at a time. It was profoundly life-changing, and I see the addiction and I realize that I'm in a battle for my life, and so in 2005 I went to treatment for 42 days to an all-addictions facility that specializes in eating disorders. It's called Shades of Hope and it's in Buffalo Gap, Texas. I ended up down there and, boy-oh-boy, the whole family came. I had quite a family week. It was wild. It felt like the first time I had had my family in the same room getting along since I was a child.

I come from a long line of addiction. They had me do a genealogy and we're the typical dysfunctional family—there's work addiction, food addiction, alcoholism, gambling, all of it. I had known—and I'm in the perfect business to indulge in addiction because in there's no moderation in what I do. I have to do it with as much passion as I have, and it's always about "more." It's always all or nothing.

Then my husband and I separated, and our family went through a process of realizing that he had his work to do and I had my work to do. I had taken on the role of enabler, the role of the fix-it person, and I had to stop playing the old tapes in my head, the tapes that kept saying, "You're the problem." So now I'm back to being a single parent, raising a family and working. And we entered into a family healing process.

**RLM:** What is the family process?

**WYNONNA:** I have a theory that my family will probably disagree with—I like to refer to it as the "bait and switch." Everyone came to family week because everyone wanted to change me, I was the one that needed fixing. And everyone else got their share of reality and we all benefited. We're all spokes in a wheel and Shades of Hope represents the all-addiction part.

Well I won't speak for everyone. I'll just say that I continue to benefit from Shades. It was my first experience with codependency. It helped me realize how much of a codependent I really was and how I got my absolute happiness from other people. I was the people-pleaser of all people-pleasers in my family, and I had pretty much enabled a lot of people. In my family, I tended to be the mediator, and

tried to carry the load, physically, with weight, and emotionally. I felt very responsible for my mom and my sister. So we're all in this process, and Ted facilitates a lot of it. He does the work with us both individually and as a family. It's multi-layered.

I did this thing at Onsite that really helped me understand why I do what I do. It was "The Wall"—they hook you up to a harness and you have to climb this wall. I tried for close to an hour, huffing and puffing, and there was this professional rock climber standing right there. After about twenty tries I was just fighting mad, and Ted sat me down and said, "Did you ever think about asking for help?" I said "No! I am woman, hear me roar!" I kept trying and it didn't work, and finally the moment came when I went, "Oh, I might need to ask for help. I might need to reach out and get some advice." No one ever taught me to do that.

**RLM:** Where do you meet with your family?

**WYNONNA:** We meet usually on the farm—at one of the houses on the farm—around the supper table. Ted sits in the center, literally, and I want to say he holds court. We're all three very strong alpha females and we're pretty opinionated and passionate like any other family, and Ted has to be the one who says, "I need you to stop. Hang on just a second!" Sometimes in my family we want to be right more than we wanted to be loved. And Ted sort of holds up the mirror, and says, "I hear you saying this, let's take a look at that."

What I do is to hold on to information so that the others will come to me and ask, because I'm needed. I had a tendency to stand between my mom and sister a lot and say to my mom, "I need for you to talk to Ashley about that." And when I got fired as the person everyone came to, it got real lonely. But I got really sick of that role. In treatment, we did this exercise where I carried a tray of glasses filled with water, learning to balance it with one hand so I could do other things, and it took a whole two weeks before someone finally came up to me and said, "You don't have to carry that anymore, you know?" No, I didn't know. But I learned my lesson.

**RLM:** Okay, so when did you start Brain State?

**WYNONNA:** In May of 2008 on my birthday. I came here with my mom. It was a gift to me for my birthday, quite a great gift. I walked in here wanting to be the student, and yet wanted to really do it right, be smart, be savvy, be a champion. And the whole time we were here, Lee Gerdes kept saying that it was about not driving and not controlling. He told me to just let go, which is not something I'm good at—letting go and letting God—because

I'm recovering from perfectionism, which they say is the highest form of abuse. And I came in here really wanting to do it right, wanting to be the teacher's pet, wanting to raise my hand and figure out the answers. And here I am, realizing that I don't have to write things down and get the answers right. Are you kidding? You mean I don't have to do anything? I don't have to be smart or be successful or be perfect? I can just sit here and let my brain get balanced? Is that possible? It's too easy. I mean, what a concept! For the first time, I don't have to be smart, beautiful, talented, funny, charming. I can just show up and wait for God to walk through the room.

**RLM:** How long was your first session of treatments here?

**WYNONNA:** Ten sessions, two a day. We did an intensive, because of our schedules. I wanted the birthday surprise, and bulldog that I am, I wouldn't leave until the miracle happened—

**RLM:** So when did it happen?

**WYNONNA:** I felt some subtle things and some shifts right away, but it wasn't until later, a week or two, that I started seeing changes. There were validations along the way—people have said, "Something's going on with you" or my mom says I didn't interrupt her this time or Lee says he's never seen my eyes look so clear. You get these validations and you smile and go "I didn't have to take a pill, I didn't have to get all the answers right, I didn't have to list all the things I did today!" And it's been pretty incredible. And my family said that my tone was softer and that I mirrored them without giving them advice. That's huge! It's huger than huge! I should win a Nobel Prize for that!

**RLM:** Has Brain State Conditioning affected your music—or you professionally—in any way?

**WYNONNA:** In all aspects.

**RLM:** How so?

**WYNONNA:** Are you ready? Okay. I'll give you an example of a recent experience that was huge for me. I've spent a lot of my career putting on the brakes to try to slow things down, because I tend to go at 100 miles an hour. So I had a real problem with being late, procrastination is huge for me. I have battled performer's anxiety—PTSD—the fear of being eighteen and having to show up and sing in front of 50,000 people, feeling afraid and terrified of failing or whatever. I remember my first time on stage, in front of 10,000 people. The curtain was going up, and I looked at my mother and said, "I wanna go home"—sort of, "how



could you do this to me?" And I see 10,000 people and the term "fight or flight" comes to mind, where I was just terrified. I've spent a lot of my career in that mode, wanting to show up and sing the music but feeling that the cost was too great.

And here we are at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, a couple of weeks ago. I showed up early, prepared, calm, and open to talking to people, which has never happened. Usually when I hit that bus door, I go straight from A to B, point B being stage. Everything from point A to point B, I am not fully present for. I don't hear people, I can't concentrate, I can't engage with anyone. I don't hear them. It's just that anxiety takes over me, and I make a bee-line for that stage, and once I'm on stage I'm great, you know, and I have a great experience, and then I go right back to my bus, then I go into a little bit of post-holiday depression. Crash-and-burn, I call it. And this time, at the Opry, I was ready before they came to get me. Usually they're standing at the bus waiting, and saying, you know, "We need to go." And I'm able to walk through all those people and be fully present and live consciously and still have enough energy to be on stage and do my show—all without medication, or going into my pre-show ritual of chanting affirmations, putting on the armor and leaning forward like I'm a linebacker, going into the Super Bowl. I'm telling you, that doesn't happen. That's huger than huge. I thought, "Oh, my gosh, this is profound."

**RLM:** Have you noticed other changes?

**WYNONNA:** I've spent a lot of my life with my brakes on—everything is too much too fast too soon, and I wanna go home. Years ago, someone said to me, "Did you know you're an introvert?" And I said, "I'm a comedian, come on! I'm the funniest gal alive!" I've been so taught to be an entertainer that I didn't realize that there was that part of me that craved to be



alone. That's why I isolate. So Brain State was kind of the cart before the horse. It actually planted this beautiful idea that I can be both people at the same time. I can be introverted and extraverted in the same environment. I don't have to fight and battle my way through. I'm now able to show up in the studio without sitting in the car for ten minutes trying to get up enough courage to come in. And it's pretty organic—I'm now off all medications.

All my life I've heard, "Be the change you want to see in the world"—and I've got all the books, I've got all the bumper stickers, I've got all the T-shirts. I've read the books, and in my mind I'm really smart and I know way too much. And yet I didn't apply it. People would say, "You're smarter than you act." What does that mean? I've spent so much of my adult life in adolescence because I just craved playing and enjoying my success, and I wasn't able to. When I went on Oprah, I got 700,000 emails from people saying "I had no idea that you were in this much pain!" Yet I've battled depression as long as I can remember.

Brain State is the final frontier, is my final sort of resting place, if you will. I noticed right away that I was making different choices. I tend to be in morbid reflection, to live in the past. I can go to the Judd Library and see what I was like when I was twelve—we have the biographies, the shows, the hairstyles and I lived in that past—or I could contemplate the future because we're planners—but I didn't know how to live in the present. And I notice now that I can actually engage and be in the present without multi-tasking, looking at my clock, thinking about tomorrow, without my static brain being full of fifty thoughts in three seconds. I've been waiting for someone to give me permission to live.

And I stopped playing the little game I play with myself called "Borrowing from Peter to pay Paul." I usually say yes to everybody. Ask my manager. She's like, "Wynonna, I don't know that it's necessary to do a hundred ben-

efits this year." But I say yes because I love the light-up on the face, I feel I can't give back enough. I'd book two and three things at the same time and then I'd end up making people mad. Now, I say, "Wait a minute, I don't know if I can."

Also, as a mom, I just don't feel the need to overtake and control my children like I did, but I would tend to drive them the way my mother drove me when we were on a bus for ten years, whether it's their hair or their clothes or their friends. Since Brain State, I actually don't need to do as much. It's huge and it's breaking the cycle.

**RLM:** You've been battling your weight issue and contemplated gastric bypass surgery.

**WYNONNA:** Yes, I was desperate. I've been suffering in silence until the Oprah shows a couple of years ago. That opened up a whole new door to Wynonna's journey, and people were living vicariously through me and watching me so they don't have to look at their stuff. I feel like I have a key to the door now, a key I didn't have before.

Since Brain State, I don't crave sugar like I did. I use sugar for two things—when I'm hungry and when I'm not. Not anymore. Usually, I have to have my mini-bar ejected, and I didn't this time. That's huge. I haven't ordered dessert with my meals. That's huuuuuge. I'm not so consumed by it like the heroin addict is.

**RLM:** Are you in a 12-Step program right now?

**WYNONNA:** I would say I'm in a process. One of the traditions of

12-Steps programs is not to broadcast it. No media, no radio. But talking to you as a friend, I could share my story. Food and money continue to be part of my journey. They're interchangeable; they're one and the same. I've lived that typical American life—"Make a lot, spend a lot, make a lot, spend a lot"—it's the debtor/spender thing. Now the word I just keep hearing is "balance, balance, balance."

About the money, I still remember the day my people came to see me and said, "You continue to do this and you'll end up like that other guy from Memphis, Tennessee—the guy named Elvis." It was time. And with the food, I've caught myself saying, "I'm hungry, I haven't eaten," when I just ate an hour ago. I was in such denial, I didn't realize what I was doing. I wasn't living consciously.

Bottom line is Brain State has allowed me to live consciously. What is that line? "Everything's not okay but I'm okay with everything." I went from zero to sixty in three seconds. And now I can gear up and gear down. Before, between zero to sixty, there was no in-between. Now I'm learning to live in the in-between, in the balance. That's just not the Judd way! But I like living consciously in-between zero and sixty. Brain State has taught me, "Just in case you're wondering, there is a Higher Power, and you're not it." But, hey, other than that, there's not a whole lot going on. ■

