

PROMISING LIGHTS OUT FOR STRESS

By MARINA VATAJ

October 3, 2006 -- MEDITATION, exercise, booze. Stress remedies are many and varied, but none is as odd as the emWave.

The tiny machine looks like an mp3 player, but instead of plugging in earphones, you plug in an ear clip. Attach the end to your earlobe, turn on the \$200 device, look at the pretty lights . . . and breathe.

The emWave monitors your pulse, and the concept is that if you use the pulsating lights as a sort of metronome to guide your breathing and think of something positive, you'll reach "coherence," or your optimal stress-free state.

Bunkum? Not for captain of last month's championship European Ryder Cup team, Ian Woosnam.

The golf pro, who has admitted to nerves on the greens, has been relying on the emWave since February to rid him of stress and get him in the zone.

"Ian wasn't sleeping well, he was concerned about making speeches and had problems with jet lag, so he came to us to try the stress-busting device," says Chris Sawicki, CEO of Hunter Kane, the company that's licensed the emWave from HeartMath, which developed the product.

After Sawicki worked with Woosnam on the breathing exercise, teaching him to feel positive while breathing in five-second intervals, the golf pro reached coherence - making him more calm, more concentrated and a better golfer, too.

"He didn't necessarily come to us to improve his game, but it has improved," says Sawicki.

The theory behind emWave is that tension, stress and anxiety disrupt your heart rhythm pattern, or the time intervals between heartbeats. Positive feelings restore harmony to the pattern, which reduces stress and improves brain function and immune response. Training with the emWave allows you to return to that harmonious state. The device is available at emWave.com.

Although the emWave was designed for athletes to improve performance, it's been picked up by all manner of stressed-out professionals.

"Since I started the breathing technique two years ago, I'm finding that I have more capacity, I'm more resilient, I have more patience and I even make better decisions," says Ann Mincey, a vice president at beauty product company Redken.

Psychologist Stephen Larson, who runs the Stone Mountain Center in New Paltz, N.Y., found it so effective for his patients, he started using it himself.

"I use it during my sessions, and it works really well for them and for me," he says. "I concentrate more while working with them and they're more relaxed during the session."

So, while it may help you be the ball, no word yet on whether it gives you total consciousness.



The emWave monitors a user's pulse through a clamp that attaches to your earlobe (above). It then encourages you to calm down by breathing in sync with its lights.