

HELICOR STRESSERASER

Challenge

Prior to Helicor's inception, inventor Michael Wood and his business partner Adam Forbes knew they wanted to create an electronic product to aid in stress reduction. The challenge was to take the idea to marketplace through matching patent-pending technology with a winning interface and design, and seeing it through production.

User Perception, Medical Opinion

Stress can be triggered in many different situations, from boarding an airplane to paying your credit card bill. Adam and Michael had developed a set of breathing exercises that harness the body's natural ability to release stress. The question was how to get these exercises into people's hands when and where they need them. The experience had to feel simple and natural for the product to succeed at its primary purpose, reducing stress.

Ethnographic research revealed an unexpected weakness. There was a common skepticism to the likelihood of a handheld device reducing stress, even among the divergent group of physicians, personal trainers, and possible users surveyed. It was therefore critical to position the product as a practical medical device, by partnering with physicians and building quantitative scientific support rather than relying on user testimonies alone.

Pocket Guidance

User interface (UI) lessons were taken from computer games and exercise equipment rather than typical handheld devices (such as cell phones and digital cameras), which provide little guidance to the user. The StressEraser guides the user through a sequence of activities, using feedback and coaching to teach users to adjust their breathing and mental focus. A thorough, competitive scan revealed that none of the existing products related to biofeedback and heart rate monitoring provided this in a portable device.

Coaching is provided through an innovative combination of audio feedback, lighted controls and a small, 160-pixel display. The lighted controls and portable design proved critical in improving insomnia, where the StressEraser has demonstrated great success.

15 Minutes to a Healthier Mind

A multi-disciplinary team worked closely with Helicor throughout the process, from industrial design, mechanical design and electrical engineering to user interface design.



ABOVE

The award-winning StressEraser balances functionality and portability, ensuring reliable and consistent user support.

While it was an extremely challenging task to combine the mechanical and electrical engineering functions in a medical-grade product, the end product is a radical departure from other medical devices — a sleek, brushed metal case the size of a deck of cards, with a simple UI, that relaxes the body and calms the mind in 15 minutes. The StressEraser can be used to treat insomnia, quickly relieve intense stress, and even help break habits. Portability allows it to support you when and where you need it, making it perfect for mobile professionals and those not helped by other modalities.

Result

The StressEraser is an award-winning, handheld relaxation-training device, able to provide effective relief from chronic stress at the physiological, mental, and emotional level. It costs a fraction of scientific-grade biofeedback systems and is the first machine discrete enough to be used in public.

Frost & Sullivan's awarded Helicor, Inc. their 2006 Award for Technology Innovation of the Year, for developing a stress relieving device technology that simultaneously aids in the attainment of physiological, mental, and emotional relaxation.

StressEraser was featured in The Best of Gadget Lab in WIRED Magazine's June 2006 issue and received a 8 out of 10 rating in a WIRED Gadget Lab write-up earlier in the year.