

EFT: Tap Into Your Natural Healing Ability

By Ryan Harrison, MA

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Richard had been phobic of spiders for years. Simply seeing one make the slightest movement sent him shivering away, afraid of being bitten. Walking into spider webs elicited a frantic whirlwind of the arms, as he'd try desperately to rid himself of the web and its fanged owner. And he thought he knew why. As a child, his first vivid "spider memory" was of hiding in a bush during a game of hide-and-seek, and realizing that the little white flower on his hand wasn't a flower at all, but a large, too-well-camouflaged spider. He watched in horrific fascination as it bit him! Decades later, he would still smash spiders as they crawled across his bedroom wall, leaving their broken, lifeless bodies there, a silent warning to other eight-legged pests.

One day, Richard came across an innovative technique that was supposedly quite effective for a range of ailments, including stubborn phobias. He stumbled through the motions, following a free "try it yourself" version of the process, naming his fear of spiders as the intended target. At the end of the self-led session, his skepticism in full swing, he put the away the materials, and went back to the daily grind.

It wasn't until a week or two later that Richard realized something had changed, indeed. He watched with interest as a spider scuttled across the wall. After it hid behind a bookcase, Richard's awareness gave a clarion call: I didn't jump up and smash it! A few weeks later, to his own disbelief, he found himself "rescuing" a spider by cupping it in a glass and carrying it outside to be released into his garden. And last night – several years after that single, self-led and incidental "therapy session" – while sitting at an outside concert, he watched a spider scurry across a metal bar in front of him and wondered if it would tickle to have that "little guy" run over his arm.

There had been no medical intervention, no endless hours with a psychotherapist, and no medications involved, yet Richard's decades-old fear of spiders had virtually vanished. Could it really be that one non-supervised self-help session had eradicated Richard's life-long fear of spiders? Some scoff at the proposal, but new research and – arguably even more compelling – personal experience suggest that such rapid and long-term healing is possible. What's more, it is the result of literally tapping into a system of energy that already exists within each of us.

Too good to be true? I'm sure it seems that way. But Richard's story is actually my own. This was my initial and quite surprising encounter with an ancillary therapy called Emotional Freedom Techniques, or EFT.

Ancient Roots, Modern Branches

EFT is one of a body of alternative therapies within a growing area of specialty called “Energy Psychology,” which focuses on how your body’s unique energy can dramatically affect your emotional health, your success in the world, and your level of personal joy and wellbeing. As a field, Energy Psychology is both relatively new and well-received. The journal *Clinical Psychology* called it “an exciting and rapidly developing realm,” concluding that “emerging research suggests that [Energy Psychology’s] methods are very effective indeed, extremely rapid, and thoroughly gentle.”¹

Most techniques that fall under Energy Psychology’s umbrella – and certainly this is the case with EFT – are at least partially founded on the ancient Chinese medicine theory involving the circulation of energy in the body. Just as there are fluids that flow through your body (i.e., blood, lymph), there is an unseen system of energy that circulates, as well. Eastern medicine has long acknowledged the presence of this energy flow and has, over 5,000 years, steadily perfected its approach to utilizing these energies to affect health and healing. Acupuncture and acupressure, two well-known and -respected natural health therapies, are part of this long legacy. The latest “cousin” in the family, EFT is rapidly gaining respect and validity as a tool for quick, efficient, and relatively painless healing.

One of the primary principles of EFT is that *all emotional disturbances are caused by a disruption in the body’s energy system*. It follows that smoothing out or “fixing” that disruption should “heal” emotional troubles. This makes EFT an excellent ancillary therapy for issues such as depression, anger, jealousy, phobias, paranoia, addictions, performance anxiety, low self-esteem, and a host of other mental and emotional ailments.

But EFT also connects the brain with this dynamic energy system. In their groundbreaking book *The Promise of Energy Psychology*, authors David Feinstein, Donna Eden, and (EFT creator) Gary Craig explore the connection between the human brain and emotional health. Their conclusion is that “every thought or emotion that you experience causes a reaction in a specific area of your brain.”² Through EFT, practitioners help their clients shift their brains responses to both external and internal stimuli. The result is that the things that *used* to emotionally disturb a person

EFT In Action

Laura had a particularly sensitive fear of heights. The first time we walked out onto the balcony of a local concert hall, she gripped both me and the railing with white-knuckled intensity. Her fear of falling was intense; she’d get sick just looking down.

After we had reached our seats, and with only ten minutes before the start of the concert, I asked her if she’d like to lose her fear of heights. She was incredulous but open to the idea and proceeded through the basic steps of EFT with me as her guide.

After only two rounds of the technique, a peculiar look crossed her face and she said, “It’s gone.” To prove it, she grabbed the railing in front of us and bent over so far that I was uncomfortable! During intermission and after the concert, she tested the results and was able each time to lean over the railing without any hint of the crippling fear she’d experienced earlier.

To this day – and that was several years ago – her fear of heights in such settings has stayed a thing of the past. So much so, in fact, that she hardly remembers what it was like before our quick, impromptu EFT session.

suddenly elicit a more rational emotional response. (Remember my spider phobia?)

As EFT started its undeniable and inevitable blooming into the world of holistic and natural health, practitioners and clients alike noticed another startling fact: EFT has the capacity to help with many *physical* ailments, as well! People suffering from conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome, neck pain, backache, headaches, PMS, toothaches, migraines, IBS, the common cold, high blood pressure, and many other health concerns can find relief through this new and exciting technique.

In large part, this may be due to the mind-body connection, which has been the focus of many studies in recent years. It's become an undeniable fact that our minds can affect our bodies in both positive and negative ways. As we discover and heal mental "triggers," many physical issues can clear up seemingly on their own.

Another reason EFT may help heal physical maladies is due to its unique ability to smooth out the energy system in the body. People with significant health issues may have developed a disturbance in their energy system that has actually, in time, become part of the problem itself. Recalibrating the energy flow with regard to the particular illness or disease in question may actually allow the body to more easily heal and rejuvenate itself. This is, after all, the aim, function, and success of acupuncture, which has a long and distinguished history of helping a wide range of physical ailments.

All of the above boils down to something like this: EFT allows people to change both brain chemistry and energy patterns surrounding psychological problems, which in turn "disarms" emotional and mental triggers and can rapidly and effectively help treat emotional, mental and sometimes even physical issues. Positive results are often rapid, painless and long-lasting.

It *does* sound too good to be true, doesn't it? Well, for once, it's not.

Granted, EFT may not cure every ailment and may not work in every situation, but the ease of its use, the painlessness of its delivery, and the odds of its success certainly make it worth investigating. But let's nip the skepticism in the bud. Most people assume that if EFT works at all it's due to the "power of suggestion," some kind of subtle hypnotism, or perhaps even the charisma and enthusiasm of the practitioner. While these are understandable arguing points, the truth is that EFT recalibrates a person's energy system around negatively charged thoughts so that undesirable emotional responses are eliminated. In fact, EFT's effectiveness with infants, children and even animals has been documented. In these cases, it certainly isn't a placebo affect at work, nor hypnotherapy. Rather, it's the direct action of EFT on the recipients' energy system.

Incredulous? That's fine! I didn't believe it at first, myself. And in my opinion, that only adds to EFT's credibility: you don't need to believe in it for it to work. EFT can affect positive changes in people who have zero faith in it. How can this be? Because your energy system and your brain's neural pathways don't rely on your value judgments to perform. As an Advanced Practitioner, I

will certainly suggest that a positive outlook or “hope” may increase a client’s rate of success due to the power of intention, but I have yet to see proof that incredulity keeps EFT from working its magic at least on some level.

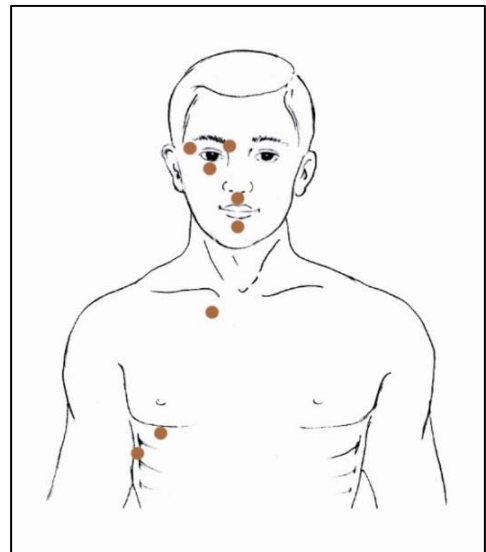
The Basic Recipe

Perhaps one of the most surprising aspects of EFT is how very simple and non-invasive it is. At the center of EFT is a working knowledge of what are called the body’s *acupoints*. There are at least 360 acupoints distributed throughout the body, tiny areas of the skin that, when stimulated, send signals directly to areas of the brain that are connected with our emotions and our bodies’ energetic systems. MRIs have demonstrated that “stimulating specific points on the skin not only *changed* brain activity; it *also deactivated areas of the brain that are involved with the experiences of fear and pain.*”³ Further, working with acupoints has been shown to increase the release of serotonin (a natural, beneficial neurochemical), necessary from a neurochemical standpoint to minimize depression, addictions and mood disorders.

Acupuncture uses needles to stimulate various acupoints, while acupressure rubs them, sometimes intensely. EFT, on the other hand, uses a series of gentle taps with two or three fingertips on only a handful of these points to provide an incredible healing journey.

In short, you take two fingers of one hand (typically the index and middle fingers) and use them to tap on various acupoints located on the upper body (and sometimes also on the hand). To the right, you see a picture of some of the most common acupoints stimulated in EFT.

The tapping itself is gentle; there’s no need for a forceful or high-pressured approach. Practitioners typically aim for about seven taps on each of the points, though far less attention should be paid to how much tapping is happening at each point than to what is being said during the tapping sequence.



Perhaps just as important as the tapping itself is the Set-Up Phrase used to isolate and address the issue in question. This phrase is typically comprised of two parts: the statement of the problem, and a positive affirmation. For example, if you are working with a fear of spiders, you would start with the phrase:

“Even though I am terrified of spiders...”

This establishes the problem and helps trigger your body’s subtle energies surrounding this issue. The next step in the Set-Up Phrase process, however, is to tell your body/mind that, regardless of the issue, it is loved and accepted:

“...I deeply and completely love and accept myself.”

This entire phrase – “*Even though I am terrified of spiders, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.*” – simultaneously addresses the issue and primes the energy system for what I like to think of as “recalibration.” Essentially, you allow your body to slip into the negative energy pattern (by calling out the problem) and then offer yourself love and acceptance in spite of the perceived negative response.

This statement is repeated a few times while tapping on a point on the hand, and then the rest of the tapping sequence commences. What stands out to most EFT newcomers is that when tapping on each of the acupoints, they are asked to repeat the *problem* indicated by the Set-Up Phrase (e.g., “*I’m terrified of spiders!*”). In my practice, most clients ask why we don’t instead repeat the positive affirmation. “Aren’t I just tapping the problem in even deeper?” is the question I usually get. Quite to the contrary, by repeating the problem while stimulating the acupoints, the body is sent a signal to release the disruption in the energy system around that particular issue, in effect “recalibrating” it so that the problem (e.g., fear of spiders) no longer sends the energy system into shock. It’s like a massage therapist rubbing out a knot in your back – she doesn’t just work on the parts of you that are fine, she works right on the problem area. Of course, EFT is much gentler than massage, and you can do it yourself at just about any time and just about anywhere.

The result of all this tapping and problem-repeating? The fear of spiders is reduced – sometimes dramatically and often very quickly – and what’s called a *cognitive reframe* occurs. That is to say that the circumstances haven’t changed – spiders still exist! But the way the client perceives them shifts dramatically. Often, fear gives way to curiosity, as people start to wonder what they were so afraid of to begin with. This, in turn, can even bloom into appreciation, as other aspects of the problem shift into focus.

Remarkably, EFT has the ability to release emotional, mental and even physical pains that far surpass simple fears. Indeed, it has been known to help with sports performance, reduce many body aches and pains, and even disarm traumatic memories and events such as abuse and rape. The power of EFT is only now starting to become widely recognized, and I foresee it being used in many situations as a first-response approach to a wide array of emotional and physical issues.

What, Where & How?

What you can expect from a session may vary widely from practitioner to practitioner. In part, this is due to the fact that anyone can learn EFT; many EFT practitioners are trained psychotherapists and doctors, while others are laypeople convinced that they have found something worth sharing with others. Naturally, that doesn’t mean that all EFT practitioners are equally good at facilitating healing. Nor should one assume that only a degree-carrying

practitioner can achieve lasting results. Quite the contrary, varying degrees of knowledge, skill, intuition and finesse can be found just as assuredly in the home office as the doctor's.

Probably your best bet, when looking for a qualified EFT Practitioner, is to look for one that is certified (or certificated) on at least a basic level. Look for a practitioner that evidences some kind of proficiency: Has she written articles on the subject? Does he have a sizeable clientele? Has she been practicing long? Does he have an official "business" (including a business license from the city)? Feel free to call or email the practitioner and ask how long he or she has been using EFT with others, as well as any other questions you may have.

EFT Certification

There are only a few certifying or certifying bodies for EFT Practitioners. Be sure that you choose a Practitioner who displays some signatory letters after his or her name. The most common include:

EFT-CC: EFT Certificate of Completion

EFT-ADV: EFT Advanced Practitioner

EFTCert-I: Foundation Level Certification

EFTCert-II: Intermediate Level Certification

EFTCert-Honors: Honors Level Certification

A well-trained EFT Practitioner will help you become comfortable and adept with the technique within a session or two. Your questions about EFT and what you can expect during the healing process should be answered within the first session, and you should experience some kind of identifiable emotional or psychological "movement" with regard to the problem for which you're seeking EFT help (i.e., easing of anger, removal of guilt, lifting of embarrassment, etc.). Initial sessions should include an introduction to EFT, to the tapping points and the Set-Up Phrase, and several runs through the system, targeting your specific issue.

When a client leaves my office after an initial visit, she has not only used EFT, but feels comfortable trying it out on her own, too. This is one of the most surprising and fantastic aspects of EFT: once you learn it, you can use it in your daily life without the help of a professional. While it may take a seasoned and skilled EFT Practitioner to help with some issues, many people can learn EFT effortlessly and use it successfully in their own lives when they need it most. This unique combination of ease and effectiveness promises to make EFT a popular technique with anyone who is eager to explore and tap (quite literally!) the healing power within.

For a free manual on EFT, and to learn more about this dynamic healing technique, click [here](#).

¹ Phil Mollon, Review of *Energy Psychology Interactive*. *Clinical Psychology* 42 (2004): 37-39

² David Feinstein, Donna Eden, & Gary Craig, *The Promise of Energy Psychology: Revolutionary Tools for Dramatic Personal Change*. (2005): 13

³ David Feinstein, Donna Eden, & Gary Craig, *The Promise of Energy Psychology: Revolutionary Tools for Dramatic Personal Change*. (2005): 21