

Why is EFT So Effective?

by Peter Graham

Tapping on specific acupoints while tuning into a feeling or emotional issue is the heart and soul of the Emotional Freedom Techniques. However, there is a lot more to EFT than just the tapping and there are a number of other important factors that contribute to its effectiveness or play an important role in how EFT is applied.

EFT can be viewed as a number of techniques or processes all rolled into one with tapping as the golden centre-piece. Some of these other contributing factors are standalone techniques in their own right, which helps to explain why omitting one or even some of them can still produce outstanding results. The tapping plus these contributing factors combine into an emotional clearing synergy.

Over the years, many different ideas about why EFT works have emerged and been discussed. Some people think it doesn't matter why it works, it just works. My view is that understanding more about why EFT works can influence the way we apply EFT and enhance the results that can be achieved.

The tapping

Tapping is an external stimulus whether it is done by another person or is self-applied. Even imagining tapping acts as or simulates an external stimulus.

The body responds to certain external stimuli. There are a number of therapeutic and spiritual practices that include the use of external stimuli for healing purposes, such as the human touch, stimulating acupuncture points in various ways, the use of voice, certain sounds (such as those found in nature), drums and sunlight. EFT is a "fingers-on" (hands-on) approach and hands-on healing has a very long history and stimulating acupuncture points also goes back a long way.

The original theory of EFT is that a recurring negative emotion or feeling is caused by *a disruption in the body's energy system* and that when certain specific acupressure points are tapped on (while remaining *tuned into that emotional vibration*) the disruption in the body's energy system is cleared. The disruption in the energy system would have been established originally by one or more painful experiences and that same feeling or emotion occurs each time it gets triggered, although the intensity may vary.

This theory can be experienced to some degree. If you be the observer and closely observe the bodily feeling(s), sensation(s) or emotional vibration(s) that exist before you start tapping and then watch them continuously as you go through each of the tapping points, and also immediately afterwards, you will notice that the felt negative energy will often suddenly shift or reduce in intensity or change into a positive vibration or may even vanish when certain

specific acupoints are tapped on. This phenomena occurs consistently when doing EFT.

There is certainly something going on *energetically* when we tap on acupoints while focusing on a feeling or emotion. The original theory of EFT is not the only explanation of what is happening and there are now a whole range of competing theories, some of which do not mention acupressure points or meridians.

Focusing of attention

When doing EFT, the feeling or emotional issue being tapped on is being consciously acknowledged (often for the first time) and focused on. It is being given attention while tapping on the acupoints. Attention can be defined as *selective or directed awareness*.

Focusing attention is not only an important part of EFT, it is also a critical factor in why it works. The focus of the tapping is what the client's attention is currently on and, generally speaking, the more attention we give a feeling or an emotional vibration while tapping, the more efficiently and effectively EFT works.

When we give full attention to a feeling and allow ourselves to be fully conscious of it, we become fully present (in the now) with that feeling. Being the focus of consciousness, the feeling tends to shift or dissolve.

The focusing of attention is a process in it's own right which is mentioned in the "The Flame of Attention" by J Krishnamurti as well as in "The Journey" by Brandon Bays and Eckhart Tolle's book "The Power of Now". In Buddhism, it can be viewed as an application of mindfulness. EFT encourages and makes use of this natural healing process.

There can be great value in learning to be "the observer" of what is going on inside us. When we do this, we become the "watcher" or the "witness" of our thoughts, feelings, emotions, impulses, imagery and so on, which helps us to detach ourselves from them (and not take them so seriously or personally). When we observe a feeling or emotion, we are bringing that feeling or emotion into the light of consciousness, from the darkness (of repression) into the light. Eckhart Tolle's "The Power of Now" teaches how to be the observer or witness of our thoughts and feelings.

Doing EFT facilitates the person to become the observer of and be more present with the feeling that is being tapped on. Tapping on the feeling and saying the feeling at each acupoint makes it easier for the person to maintain his/her attention on (i.e. stay tuned into) that feeling, or to return to it if his/her attention is diverted onto or grabbed by something else or if it compulsively pull away from the pain.

Connecting with the now

While EFT is being done, the tapping also performs another function. The person (rapidly or slowly) becomes more aware of this moment and more present with the feeling or emotional issue. In effect, the physical tapping is functioning as a kind of wake-up call. To start with, the person is immersed in or has his/her attention fixated on the feeling, emotion or issue. The physical and repetitive nature of the tapping attracts attention and sooner or later leads to an increase of awareness of the here and now.

Typically, when a person is in a negative emotional state or has an emotional problem, he or she is either caught up in the past or projecting into the future and is not strongly connected with the now. He/she is caught up in a trance-like state which may be a light and temporary trance or it may be totally consuming or somewhere in between.

Tapping repetitively helps the client to literally wake up from this trance state into the now and become more present and accepting of this moment. The "waking up" phenomena might occur gradually or suddenly or in stages. When it does, the person may experience a "cognitive shift", such as a positive change of viewpoint, a willingness to look at another's point of view, a softening of his/her position on something or even a brand new way of regarding someone.

Some people have suggested that the tapping distracts a person from the feeling and that distraction is another reason why EFT works. A person may feel distracted by tapping on a feeling, but he/she is being distracted by the now. EFT helps to free up fixated attention. The person becomes detached from the feeling after tapping on it and often he/she can no longer get into that feeling or get it back even when he/she tries to.

Expressing feelings

There are many therapeutic or personal growth approaches (other than EFT) that encourage people to give expression to their repressed feelings. These varied approaches include things like repeating it out loud over and over, or yelling it into a pillow, or "dumping" it on someone, or saying it to an empty chair. The idea is that allowing it to be openly expressed without repression or negative consequences helps to release the pent up energy.

Some people feel greatly relieved to have "unloaded" all their feelings. For a minority, it sometimes seems stir up more than it releases. An important aspect of this approach is allowing it (e.g. strong anger) to be openly expressed and released without hurting anyone or causing any damage (such as to a relationship). Many therapists consider that a wounded part of us needs to express such feelings as they will keep popping up until they've been expressed.

Expressing repressed feelings is built into the EFT process. It allows the person to give expression to his/her feelings and emotions and to do it in a

way that doesn't cause damage or have negative consequences. And, while doing this, the tapping facilitates the release of associated negative energy. EFT is also exceptionally well equipped to deal with any other related feelings, emotions or painful memories that may emerge or get stirred up while doing this, which can and does happen.

Tapping on a feeling while openly expressing it helps the person to stay focused and it also quietens the mind as there is less room for analyzing and mind chatter (which can get in the way). However, there is no strict rule that says it must be expressed out loud as there are times when some people find that tapping and silently focusing on a feeling or emotion, or just whispering it to themselves, works for them.

For most people, however, it works best when they give it verbal expression without holding anything back or restricting it in any way. This helps to take the lid off and let it out. The best advice is to say it with intent, get into the feeling and say it like it feels. If needed, you can even exaggerate it a little (or a lot) or say it louder (or even shout it).

Resistance and persistence

There is an old saying that "what you resist, persists" and this can be easily observed. When we really don't want to think, feel or remember something, it tends to hang around or keeps re-appearing and the more we try to not think, feel or recall it, the more persistent it becomes. A negative feeling or emotion that never goes away or keep re-appearing indicates that it is still being resisted now (compulsively and subconsciously) long after the original event where it originated.

Some painful events are overwhelming and unbearable. Faced with such emotionally painful experiences, we do the best we can at the time and afterwards to deal with the pain. Most people have used repression as a way to not to feel the feelings or to lessen their intensity or to somehow escape from the pain. The consequences of that "solution" are that those experiences will remain in an unresolved state, which means they are unfinished and incomplete – and triggerable. It is an inconvenient fact that the emotional pain in such experiences will continue showing up, or maintain the potential to do so, until they are resolved.

The emotional pain may have been so overwhelming that a person unconsciously and obsessively avoids going anywhere near where the pain is. Identifying and acknowledging a problem or feeling is an important step in the healing process. "We cannot change anything unless we accept it." - Carl Jung.

The first part of the EFT Setup ("Even though I have this ..." or similar) directly assists the client to consciously acknowledge and accept the existence of the problem, feeling or emotion. It is often the case that he/she has never fully acknowledged that before and that there has been resistance, denial or repression connected with it. The setup may spontaneously reduce his/her resistance to having that feeling or issue or it may happen later during

the tapping. The setup statement helps to bring the feeling or issue into consciousness and opens the door to acceptance of it.

The tapping then takes it a step further. As the client taps through the acupoints, his or her resistance to that feeling or emotion tends to wane and drop away. This may in part be because some of the resources normally allocated subconsciously to keeping the "repression lid" firmly on it are otherwise engaged in the tapping and repeating the "reminder phrase".

Acceptance is the other side of resistance. As the resistance drops, the intensity drops. When the client is present with the feeling and fully accepts the feeling with no resistance, the feeling simply dissolves and vanishes as there is no longer any resistance holding it in place.

Self-acceptance

The second part of the EFT Setup is an *affirmation of self-acceptance*, which directly addresses a fundamental core issue that underlies almost all other issues, including the person's self-image. There are many ways the affirmation can be expressed or worded as mentioned in Gary Craig's EFT manual and in EFT articles on the web.

Quote: "No real success or genuine happiness is possible until a person gains some degree of self-acceptance. - (from "Psycho-Cybernetics" by Maxwell Maltz, Chapter 8, 1960).

Quotes: "I find that when we really love and accept and approve of ourselves exactly as we are, everything in life works" and "Self-approval and self-acceptance in the now are the main keys to positive changes in every area of our lives". - Louise Hay (from "You Can Heal Your Life", Chapter One).

This second half of the Setup invites the person to affirm self-acceptance despite having that specific problem or feeling. The inclusion of a self-acceptance affirmation can sometimes stir up unresolved issues. Some people literally choke when asked to say those words, so powerful is their self-rejection and self-judgement. Tapping on these important issues when they arise can be extremely rewarding.

There can, however, be times when the issue of self-acceptance is so huge or overwhelming that it needs to be directly addressed as THE problem to work on. Steve Wells' excellent series of articles "EFT and Self-Acceptance" provide some useful approaches for directly addressing this issue and its contributing aspects.

The main function of the self-acceptance affirmation in the EFT Setup is **to neutralize or suspend self-judgement and self-rejection where that is necessary so the person can make progress.**

Negative self-judgements can get seriously in the way of or block emotional healing with respect to a particular issue (or, in some cases, all of the person's issues). When this is occurring, the person is subconsciously and compulsively *attached to or identified with* his/her negative self-

judgements. The standard EFT Setup effectively resolves this most of the time for most people. However, sometimes, it requires the person saying it with a lot more "oomph" and intention.

There can, however, be instances where it becomes clear that there is something stubbornly in the way of self-acceptance. An individual can become "fragmented" as a result of a painful experience (or a series of them) that he/she could not successfully process and come to terms with. Consequently, he/she can end up with *fragmented parts* of himself. These "parts" may then subconsciously manifest themselves in self-sabotaging behaviours and negative thoughts or stories in the area concerned.

In such a situation, a simple variant of the Setup statement can often make a big difference and help to re-integrate that part. For example, instead of using "*Even though I am incredibly angry, I deeply and completely accept myself*", replace it with something like "*Even though a part of me is incredibly angry, I completely accept myself including this part of me*". The use of "a part of me" in the Setup helps the person to realize that it's a "part of me" that feels or thinks that way (and NOT all of me), and his/her attachment to it tends to weaken or dissolve and progress can then be made.

Having said all this, the Setup is not always needed every time EFT is done (as mentioned in Gary's free EFT manual under "Shortcuts") and some people do well without it or only do it when things are slow or blocked. The essence of EFT is the tapping while focusing on an issue or feeling and, much of the time, EFT works easily and well whether we do the Setup or not.

The power of intention

Other than the tapping, one of the most frequently mentioned reasons why EFT works is intention. The subconscious mind responds more to intention than to anything else. Our intentions need to be consistent with our natural functioning and healing processes.

Quote: "Understanding the power of intention can be transformational as you follow your unique path for personal development. Intention is the energy that powers all actions. I like to think of it as the thought behind the thought, or the thought that underpins the words, or the thought that propels actions. It's the starting place in your mind. You may be aware of your intention or not. The more you are aware of your intention, the more you will empower your personal development and growth." - www.empowering-personal-development.com/the-power-of-intention.html - Jeanie Marshall.

If someone is doing the EFT process on a feeling with the intention that "it must go away NOW" or "I hope it wont ever come back again" or "I never want to see or think of that again", it is less likely to work or reduce all the way to zero intensity. The reason for this is that the person is continuing to resist, or exclude from consciousness, what is being tapped on rather than facing, acknowledging, accepting and being present with it. It is also not consistent with the natural healing processes that

include the subconscious mind bringing things up that have not yet been resolved (so we can resolve and integrate them).

When using EFT, intention plays an important role and gives a powerful message to the subconscious mind. It may be the intention to release certain emotions (such as repressed anger), or the intention to let go of something, or the intention to forgive someone, or the intention to face something, or to accept something and move on, or simply to be present with and accept the feeling as it is, or the intention that the subconscious mind will bring up the aspects of a problem one at a time, at the right time and in the right order, or similar.

The role of repetition

Another reason why EFT works is the use of repetition which is a key part of EFT. We don't tap only once or twice on just one acupoint for a problem or feeling. We tap many times on a number of acupoints. We don't just put our attention on the feeling or issue once or a few times, we do it many times or maintain our attention on it continuously. We don't just say the problem or feeling once or a few times, we say it as many times as needed, and maybe some humour, challenges or variations all around it as well to reframe the issue so the client can view or interpret it differently.

If we only tapped once on one acupoint each time we did EFT, we wouldn't get the same results that we are getting. The use of repetition in EFT can be powerful, especially when combined with focusing attention and expressing the feeling or issue. Persistent tapping will often make the difference between getting somewhere or getting nowhere when a feeling or issue is particularly resistant.

Repetition is used widely in many meditations (such as in mantras and chanting) and has been for thousands of years. Some therapeutic techniques also make use of repetition where something is repeated many times or a certain action or question is repeated (such as touching something or repeatedly asking the same open-ended question).

When doing EFT, the use of repetitive tapping and repeating the reminder phrase tends to reduce or stop compulsive thinking. It's not uncommon for clients to find themselves in a calm or meditative state or even experiencing a sense of inner peace, at least for awhile, after tapping.

Pattern interruption

A particular brain pattern is re-formed or re-generated again in response to being reminded of a painful memory. This brain pattern is the same every time that it is triggered and it generates the same emotional response with its electrical activity and biochemical reactions that are experienced as feelings and sensations or impulses.

An alternative explanation of what is going on when we do EFT is that the tapping supports a natural process called "pattern interruption".

In an article on EFT entitled "Emotional Rescue", Dr Nick Baylis from Cambridge University offers the following explanation: "When we confront a problem by focusing on the disturbing thought, our usual pattern of upsetting responses is not only disrupted but overwritten by new and calming sensory information from our tapping on sensitive acupoints. This ... explanation is particularly convincing since it's an established psychological phenomena that we can benefit from intercepting and overwriting the messages sent between our brain and body." (see my web site for a full copy of this article, published by The Australian newspaper in August 2007).

Observable relaxation responses frequently occur while tapping though the acupoints, often manifesting as a sigh or laughter. Gary points this out when it happens during the live sessions on his EFT DVDs. Psychologist, Steve Wells, writes that: "EFT is a process of tapping on the meridian points of traditional Chinese acupuncture whilst focusing on emotional problems. Most people who do so experience a relaxation response almost immediately, as well as a lessening of the problem emotion and more positive thinking patterns." (from www.eftdownload.com).

Using brain monitoring equipment, rapid and observable changes in brain waves have been observed while tapping on emotional issues. Gary Groesbeck and Donna Bach report that they have seen evidence that EFT works at a verifiable level in the field of brain wave measurements and have made some amazing observations that were instantly visible during an actual tapping session by Gary Craig. They report that: "Initial field studies show some very rapid and significant changes in the overall brain wave patterns that mirror the release of emotional issues during sessions, and a movement towards a more optimal brain function." See www.emofree.com/Articles2/brain-wave-improvements.htm for their report.

Aspects

A very important concept in EFT is that most problems are made up of a number of contributing factors, known as "aspects". Examples are negative emotions and feelings, limiting beliefs, unhelpful attitudes, painful memories, old solutions and decisions (that aren't relevant any more), and so on. Some problems only have a few aspects, whereas some other problems (such as self-esteem issues) may have up to hundreds.

It is important that every EFT practitioner and anyone who self-applies or uses EFT takes the trouble to develop a good understanding of aspects and learns some effective ways of breaking problems down into their component parts. This gives EFT more specific targets to work on and also makes progress much more measurable. It is especially needed when faced with long term, complex, multi-layered and tangled issues coated with layers of repression and denial. If that's the way it is, then that is the way it is. Accepting that is a starting point that can open doors.

Gary Craig's analogy of a "forest" (as the problem) and its "trees" (the various aspects that make up the problem) is very useful. It is also honest as it

acknowledges the reality of the situation, the real problem. This concept allows progress to be made with even the most difficult problems by focusing on specific "trees". There is an open and sharing culture in the world-wide EFT community and new approaches for locating aspects are readily shared.

People using EFT who don't have a grasp of aspects, or who haven't learned any of the simple strategies for identifying them, usually only tap on general issues or the problem as a whole. This limits the results that EFT is capable of and the person may give up thinking that EFT doesn't work. Even then, EFT often still weaves its magic, especially if a general issue is tapped on persistently.

Information on how to locate aspects can be found by doing hands-on EFT training or workshops and also on Gary Craig's website in the "Tutorials" and by watching his sets of EFT DVD videos. Learning about aspects is open-ended in that you can use what you have already learnt and learn more as you proceed along the healing highway. EFT as an invaluable tool for the journey of life.

EFT toolkit

As we have already discussed, there is a lot more to EFT than just tapping on acupoints. EFT stands for Emotional Freedom Techniques (plural). The same EFT tapping technique, or a shortcut version of it, is used by and part of all the other EFT techniques. These other EFT techniques, that all include and make use of the tapping, are mostly designed for specific purposes.

For example, the Movie Technique is for resolving painful memories. When using this technique, each one of the negative emotions and feelings and emotionally intense parts of a painful event get "tapped on" separately (using the same simple tapping technique) to reduce their intensities. This is done until the whole event no longer has emotionally intense parts when the story is recounted by the client.

The first thing that someone new to EFT learns is the EFT tapping sequence as described in the free EFT manual that can be downloaded from Gary Craig's EFT website. There is a lot more to learn about EFT and how to use it.

Quote: "If your training in EFT is limited to our EFT Manual, please be reminded that you have just begun your EFT education. Although you may be pleased, or even thrilled, with your results there is much, much more that you can do with EFT. By comparison, if mastery of all of our video sets is equivalent to a PhD, then the EFT Manual has taken you through the 3rd grade." - Gary Craig.

The results that the tapping alone can bring about can be greatly enhanced by also learning the most useful EFT techniques and strategies. When working on complex problems, the most profound and lasting results are often the result of using these essential EFT techniques and skills plus persistence when needed. These skills can be easily and gradually developed by doing EFT training workshops and also watching the EFT DVD videos and reading EFT newsletters.

It is vital that professional EFT practitioners thoroughly learn these skills. Non-practitioners who are self-applying EFT and may also be using it with friends, family, etc. would also benefit greatly from learning these simple and relatively easy to learn foundational skills and strategies. They are not hard to learn but it takes practice and experience in using them to really master them.

Ownership and responsibility

Our own healing is accelerated when we take responsibility for and accept ownership of our own feelings, emotions and emotional issues. A practitioner can facilitate, educate, guide, encourage, point and push, but no-one else can actually do our emotional healing for us, no more than he/she can live our lives for us.

Accepting ownership of our feelings and emotions is not always easy to do, especially where we blame someone else for something that may have happened long ago. However, we all know deep down that blaming others does not lead to emotional healing or inner peace. The truth is that whatever happened back then is not happening now. Thus, we must be subconsciously re-generating the emotional responses now. In other words, in this situation, we are actually doing it to ourselves whether we consciously know that or not.

The good news is that if we are doing it to ourselves, then we can cease doing it. How would it be if becoming free of a feeling or issue depended entirely on someone else doing or saying something to us such as delivering a genuine apology or righting a wrong? We might end up waiting forever.

When doing EFT, there is an unstated assumption that the client can and will accept ownership of his/her feelings or issues. EFT comes from that point of view. When we recognize one of our feelings or issues and acknowledge it in the setup and use it in the reminder phrase while tapping, we are being encouraged to accept and own it whether we realize that or not. When we fully own it and cease resisting it, we have arrived at truth and emotional freedom blossoms.

The client perspective

There has been a lot written and taught about how to get consistent excellent results from using EFT and how to work with this or that particular issue. It is ongoing as EFT continues to grow and evolve. Almost all of these articles are from a *practitioner perspective*.

There is another perspective that is also important and that is *the client's perspective*. How can someone get more out of an EFT session as a client or when self-applying it?

An EFT session is essentially a *team activity* where the client and the practitioner work closely together but have different roles and responsibilities. Both have a responsibility to contribute to the session and to take responsibility for it's success. A real EFT session is not an activity where a client has a "fix me" attitude, sits back,

contributes nothing and waits for something to be done to him/her which will somehow magically make all of his/her problems go away.

My eBook "Getting the Most from EFT" (also available as a printed booklet) is almost entirely from the client's perspective. It provides information, understandings, insights and practical advice that will help him/her to be much more effective as a client or when self-applying EFT.

The booklet/eBook is of exceptional value for those who are or will be *self-applying* EFT. When a person is self-applying EFT, he/she is "the practitioner" as well as "the client" and is swapping roles as the tapping session unfolds.

This booklet/eBook is useful for *EFT practitioners* as well, especially those who recognize that their clients need to be encouraged, educated or coached to become more effective and successful as clients. Getting them to read it or going over selective parts of it with them clarifies what is required of them *before, during* and *after* a session.

It also explains how to maximize the benefits by knowing how they can proactively *contribute to* and *participate in* their EFT sessions more effectively and enhance the *teamship* with their practitioner.

Happy tapping for emotional clearing and inner peace!

Peter Graham, certified **EFT Master** and **EFT Honors**
Perth, Western Australia.

Web site: www.tap4peace.com.au or www.integrative-clearing.com.au

Email: pgraham@tap4peace.com.au

Version 2.1 (March 2010)

NOTICE: This document may be passed on or freely copied or printed or shared providing that it is not altered at all or subtracted from or added to in any way and includes the author's name and the copyright notice. This document may be refined and updated from time to time and the latest version will be available on the author's web site.

Copyright © 2009 and 2010 by Peter D. Graham. All rights reserved.