

What is Emotional Freedom Technique?

Combining energy psychology and acupressure to enhance OT practice

By Emmy Vadnais, OTR/L

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Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) combines energy psychology and acupressure to alleviate physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual symptoms and reach positive goals. EFT is an efficacy-based practice according to the American Psychological Association. Several studies have shown statistical significance with lowering stress, physical and emotional pain, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress syndrome. More research is underway as case studies show additional benefits.

According to the Association of Comprehensive Energy Psychology, energy psychology combines cognitive interventions (including focused awareness and mindfulness, imagined exposure to traumatic memories, positive outcomes, and cognitive reframing) simultaneously with the stimulation of one or more of the human bio-energy systems such as meridians, chakras, and biofields.

Michael Reed Gach, PhD, founder of the Acupressure Institute, states in his book "Acupressure for Emotional Healing: A Self Care Guide for Trauma, Stress and Common Emotional Imbalances" that acupressure extends far back in history to more than 5,000 years ago, when Chinese healers found that applying pressure with their fingers and hands to specific points on the body could relieve pain, alleviate physical symptoms, benefit the function of internal organs, and balance emotions.

EFT is a relatively simple technique that can be taught to children and adults. The practitioner guides a client to focus on words, thoughts, and emotional or physical feelings in the body and energy system related to their problem or challenge, while applying acupressure in the form of gentle touch or pressure, tapping on, or imagining touching on 14 major energy pathway points -- the same found in acupuncture.

Brief History

There are several leaders in the EFT field who have created trainings and education for health care professionals and lay people. Gary Craig coined the term "EFT" in 1995, and it became quickly popular as he shared it with the world via a free tutorial, workshops, and an introductory video series.

Craig developed EFT based on similar methods such as Roger Callahan's Thought Field Therapy (TFT). TFT also uses tapping in a sequence in the form of a healing code, balancing the body's energy system, and can help eliminate most negative emotions within minutes, while promoting the body's own healing ability.

Silvia Hartmann, PhD, founder of the Association of Meridian Therapies, has created several EFT training courses and has expanded the way EFT is practiced.

What Happens in a Session?

An EFT practitioner guides the client to select a challenging area of their life they would like to improve, and what is distressing them about it. They become aware of and notice what emotions they're feeling, and where in their body they're experiencing them. The client can also select the opposite of what is distressing them -- the positive of what they would like to experience or have happen in their life.

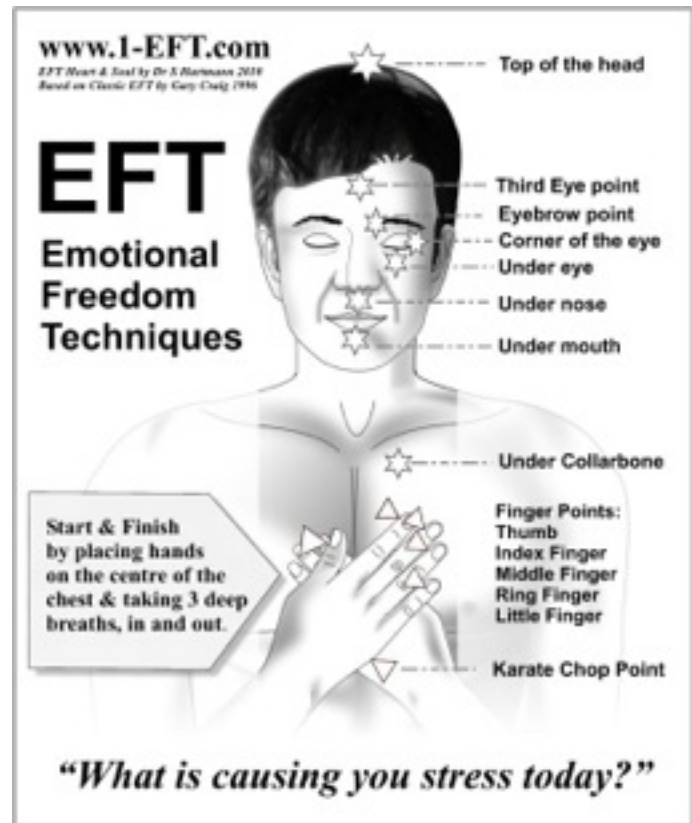
The classic process involves having the client rate their negative emotional or physical challenge on a scale from zero to 10, with 10 the highest and zero when the problem is gone. They then tap while focusing on distressing thoughts or feelings while saying, "Even though I have (insert negative thought or feeling), I deeply and completely love and accept myself." When working with a child, for example, they might say, "Even though I have a tummy ache, I am still a good boy/girl."

Silvia Hartmann created the Heart and Soul method, in which the client first rates their area of focus on the Subjective Unit of Experience Scale (SUE). This scale includes positive and negative feelings. The scale runs from minus-10 to zero to a positive 10. Then, the client places their hands over your heart center, and repeats the words that are related to the challenge or positive outcome desired.

Both methods involve the client being guided in one to several rounds while repeating words or phrases that connect the client to a previously distressing experience or a positive experience they would like to move toward. The client is guided to focus on the physical body sensations, thoughts, and emotional feelings during the rounds. Often, the client will experience a lowering of distressing thoughts, emotions, and physical symptoms, and new helpful insights with a higher rating on the SUE scale.

A Client Story

Recently, I worked with a woman who fell on the ice while walking to her car in a parking lot. She suffered from post-concussion syndrome. Her symptoms included headaches, neck pain, decreased cervical range of motion, and interruption of fulfilling her normal work day. She received CranioSacral Therapy, energy healing, and other forms of healing. Her symptoms were improving, but not as quickly as she had hoped they would. It seemed that she might benefit from EFT to help her physically, emotionally, and spiritually.



I guided her through one round of EFT and she repeated, "Even though I have this neck pain, I deeply and completely love and accept myself." She would press, hold the points, and breathe slowly through the round of the 14 points. I guided her to pay attention to the sensations in her body and any emotions that were present, and to be aware of her thoughts. She said at the end of the round, "I don't like saying that. It's not true. I don't love myself, but it's good for me to say it." I guided her through one more round. At the end of the second round she said, "I mostly judge myself. The solution for me to love and accept myself is connecting to the Divine."

We conducted one more round slowly, pressing and holding the points while she repeated, "The way to deeply and completely love and accept myself is through connecting to the Divine." She said she felt more relaxed and calm. She said that loving and accepting herself will help her to take better care of herself with regular meditation practice, yoga, less stress, and greater awareness and presence. She felt that her injury and her healing path has helped her to pay attention to what will help her brain and neck heal, and will also improve how she lives her daily life.

Incorporating EFT Into OT Practice

EFT can be a wonderful tool to incorporate into sessions. Most, if not all, of the clients OTs work with are experiencing or have experienced significant stress or physical or emotional trauma that is affecting their ability to function well in their lives. OTs can easily apply EFT to the client or teach the client to follow along on the points. It is a tool that can be taught to the client and can be used by practitioners for self care to enhance daily functioning and quality of life.

It is possible that everyone can benefit from EFT, as it has an ability to calm, relax, relieve emotional and physical pain, and bring harmony and flow to a disrupted energy system. EFT can help transform negative emotions and beliefs, and can assist with rewiring neural connections, improve immune system functioning, and enhance mind, body, spirit healing.

The mind and body are inseparable. EFT elicits the relaxation response. There is much evidence that regularly experiencing the relaxation response can heal and prevent disease, and positively affect gene expression.

Learning More

EFT is relatively simple to do, which is probably one of the reasons it's become so popular. Here are some resources for you to begin learning about EFT. Perhaps they will take you deeper into an understanding of energy healing and the powerful abilities it has to help heal and stay well. If you have a strong interest in EFT, acupuncture, or energy psychology, consider taking professional development courses.

The best way to begin learning EFT is to experience it. It is highly recommended to be guided by a certified EFT practitioner for the best results and to have a session specifically tailored to you. There are also several videos to tap along to on the internet. This video, with Silvia Hartmann, PhD, on improving your energy, is a wonderful place to start: http://theamt.com/energy_eft_video_by_silvia_hartmann.htm

More resources:

- The Association for Meridian Energy Therapies (AMT) - www.TheAMT.com. The AMT has a large library of EFT resources and a strong Meridian Energy Therapy community, and contains hundreds of articles, techniques, diagrams, links to newsgroups, events, trainings, and information on EFT.
- EFT Universe -- www.eftuniverse.com. EFT Universe has EFT research, training, a vibrant EFT community, EFT books, research, books, and DVDs.
- The Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology (ACEP) -- www.energypsych.org. The ACEP has thousands of members around the world and sponsors the main Energy Therapies Conferences in Europe, the U.S., and Canada.

To connect with OTs interested in mind, body, spirit medicine, prevention, and wellness, visit the www.HolisticOT.org website, the Holistic Occupational Therapy Page and Group on Facebook, LinkedIn, and HolisticOT on Twitter.

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Emmy Vadnais is a holistic OT who combines EFT and other holistic healing approaches into her private practice in St. Paul, MN. She is a certified EFT master practitioner trainer with the Association of Meridian and Energy Therapies (AMT), and teaches several holistic healing modalities to health care professionals. She can be contacted at emmy@emmyvadnais.com. Visit www.emmyvadnais.com or www.HolisticOT.org.