

Emotional Freedom Technique : An Alternative Therapy in Destressing

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ABSTRACT

In the present day competitive world, life is full of stress especially for students who are on the threshold of the beginning of their career. It also has been accepted that emotional disharmony is one of the important factors in physical symptoms and disease. Emotional Freedom Technique is being widely used as an alternate healing method for freedom from stress/ disease and with astounding results too on chronic illness. Such techniques are being accepted and used in medical and psychiatric circles as well as in the range of psychotherapies and healing disciplines. In this paper, an attempt was made to study the effects of Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) on stress level of various subjects. It was hypothesized that there will be a significant drop in the stress level of the subjects after using the technique. A sample of university students was selected and the results were noted. Pre and post test design was used. It was concluded that the Emotional Freedom Technique had a positive effect on the stress level of subjects as they felt more relaxed, comfortable and calm after going through EFT. The long term benefits of this technique are discussed.

Key words : Emotional Freedom Technique, Stress, Relaxation, Healing.

1.INTRODUCTION

More often than not, and frequently overlooked, emotional health is crucial for our physical health, well being and healing. Optimal health is unlikely to be achieved despite proper diet and lifestyle if emotional barriers stand in the way.

An alternate form of psychotherapy, using psychological techniques of mindfulness, meditation, systematic desensitization, neurolinguistic programming, gestalt therapy, thought field therapy (TFT) etc, Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) is a form of energy psychology which utilizes a way of psychological acupressure, based on the same energy meridians used in traditional acupuncture to treat physical and emotional ailments for over 5,000 years, but without the invasiveness and pain of needles.

The EFT treatment involves the use of fingertips rather than needles to tap on the end points of energy meridians which are actually situated just beneath the surface of the skin. Referred to as "Psychological acupressure", this technique works by releasing blockages within the energy system which are the source of emotional intensity and discomfort, which continue to challenge us emotionally. The resulting symptoms are both psychological and emotional which include lowering of confidence, self esteem, anxious or depressed or the emergence of compulsive and addictive behaviours.

The Emotional Freedom Technique, now a popular form of energy psychology was developed in the 1990's by Gary Craig, a Stanford engineering graduate specializing in healing, self improvement and optimizing emotional health.

This method involves tapping specific points on the head and chest with fingertips while thinking about the specific problem like some traumatic event, addiction, pain, anxiety, stress, complexes etc and voicing positive affirmations. This can be done alone with practice after being under the supervision of a qualified therapist.

The combination of tapping the energy meridians and voicing positive affirmations eventually cleanse the emotional blocks from the body's bio energy system, thereby restoring mind and body's balance.

Many clinical trials have proven that EFT does reduce the emotional impact of memories and incidents that trigger emotional distress which leads to body rebalancing itself rapidly and accelerates healing.

2.Research Validates EFT's Effectiveness

It has now been scientifically proven in many studies that EFT is effective for mental health and continuous practice produces lasting emotional changes. Church (2014) found in his work on clinical trials on couples that anxiety was reduced by 37%, depression by 39%. Moreover, their relationship satisfaction rose by an average of 26%. Church also found a 45% reduction in psychological conditions like anxiety and depression after an introductory workshop on EFT on 216 health care workers such as doctors, nurses, therapists and alternate medicine practitioners and healers.

Reynolds (2010) examined the effectiveness of EFT on teacher burnout. Traditional Chinese medicine, which includes acupuncture, theorizes that a body's energy force needs to be balanced in order to remain healthy both physically and mentally. EFT is based on the principles of acupuncture which theoretically balances the twelve meridians of the body. A 4 week quantitative experimental pretest-posttest control group design study compared the burnout levels from a convenience sample of 126 K-12 teachers. The treatment group participated in EFT while the placebo control group

practiced a forearm tapping technique for the duration of the study. Participants were assessed utilizing the three components of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI): Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. Differences between groups were determined using a 1 tailed *t* test for each of the 3 components of the MBI. EFT was found to significantly decrease all 3 components of burnout. EFT is inexpensive, easy to administer, and could be added to teacher mentor and retention programs to improve teacher resiliency. A positive impact on teachers whose level of burnout is either negatively affecting the educational environment or has caused them to consider leaving the profession will help nurture and retain valuable assets for student learning.

Bakker et al (2013) in his study included 20 college students who were divided into two groups. One group did EFT while the control group received mindfulness training. Before and after the sessions, positive and negative emotions were assessed.

This included enjoyment, hope, pride, anger, anxiety, shame, hopelessness, boredom, and mindfulness. Overall, the EFT group experienced significantly greater increases in positive emotions, such as hope and enjoyment, along with greater decreases in negative emotional states like anger and shame. The study concluded that: "No significant change was found for mindfulness. Tapping on acupoints, combined with the vocalization of self-affirming statements, appears to be an active ingredient in EFT rather than an inert placebo. The results were consistent with other published reports demonstrating EFTs efficacy for addressing psychological conditions in students."

It has also been proven that e consultations also help in reducing the symptoms of pain perception. Brattberg (2008) examined if self-administered EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) leads to reduced pain perception, increased acceptance, coping ability and health-related quality of life in individuals with fibromyalgia. 86 women, diagnosed with fibromyalgia and on sick leave for at least 3 months, were randomly assigned to a treatment group or a waiting list group. An eight-week EFT treatment program was administered via the Internet.

Upon completion of the program, statistically significant improvements were noted in the intervention group (n=26) in comparison with the waiting list group (n=36) for variables such as pain, anxiety, depression, vitality, social function, mental health, performance problems involving work or other activities due to physical as well as emotional reasons, and stress symptoms. Pain catastrophizing measures, such as rumination, magnification and helplessness, were significantly reduced, and the activity level was significantly increased.

Still, it would be interesting to see the results of other such studies using this simple treatment method which can easily be taught and monitored over the internet.

1. In general, studies have concluded that benefits from EDT accrue and its just not a placebo effect. Dr. Dawson Church, Ph.D., founder of the National Institute for Integrative Healthcare, opines that "We learn early on to disassociate from our emotions. EFT is a way that people can feel safe and empowered to process their emotions. When we tap and use affirmative statements, we can actually change our old conditioned responses."

In 2010, Dr. Church published a review of more than 40 different EFT studies evaluating the effectiveness of the method. In his paper, he cites studies demonstrating the method's effectiveness for a wide range of emotional problems, including phobias, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), Anxiety, Depression, Pain, Weight loss and food cravings, athletic and academic performance etc.

Dr. Church's website, ResearchEFTUniverse.com, is a great resource to learn more about EFT and the research that has been done on each of these ailments, as well as other problems. According to Dr. Church: "EFT has been researched in more than 10 countries, by more than 60 investigators, whose results have been published in more than 20 different peer-reviewed journals... EFT research includes investigators affiliated with many different institutions."

It's worth noting that as a general rule, the research being done on EFT is done using the techniques originally developed by Gary Craig. An expanding list of similar techniques has sprung up since then, and while they might provide similar benefits, EFT is the only empirically validated treatment version. (The APA defines an empirically validated treatment as one for which there are two different controlled trials conducted by independent research teams.

3. Multi faceted benefits

Since its inception by Gary Craig in the 1990's, EFT has provided thousands of people with relief from all manner of problems and conditions, ranging from trauma and abuse, phobias, self sabotaging behaviour patterns, to deep set emotional conditions of anxiety and depression, addictions, physical illness, PTSD, Depression to name but a few.

Precautions while performing EFT

Do not expect magic while performing it. The symptoms improve but gradually over time. It is ideal if you begin your treatment with a qualified therapist and the slowly come on your own. This will help you really understand the nuances of the technique. Else one may falsely conclude that EFT does not work whereas nothing could be farther from the

truth. Especially when we try to address long term issues which have been challenging for us like PTSD or grief after the loss of a near and dear one.

The Procedure

Working on it's discovery statement that:

"Our negative emotions are caused by a disruption in the body's energy system"

EFT works to clear such disruptions and eliminate the resulting emotional response or intensity to restore emotional harmony and offer relief from physical discomfort.

This is done by focusing on the specific problem whilst tapping with fingers on the end points of energy meridians. The combination of sending kinetic energy to our energy system, whilst uncovering and focusing on root causes, facilitates a "straightening out" of the energy system thereby eliminating the "short circuit" to the body's learnt response or negative emotion.

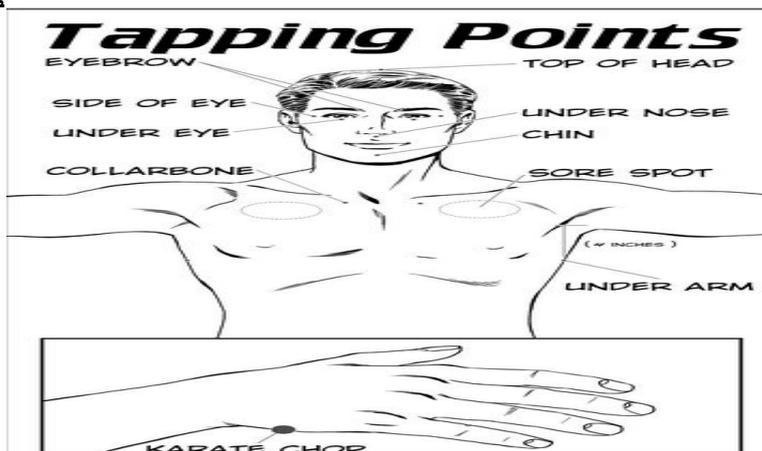
The detailed procedure is discussed in the paper. It draws from Mindfulness, Transpersonal Psychology, Gestalt Therapy, Cognitive Neuroscience, Voice Dialog Therapy, and many of the other very best practices for change.

Aim of the present study- To measure the effects of Emotional Freedom Technique on stress level of various subjects studying in university. It was hypothesized that there will be a significant change in stress level of subjects.

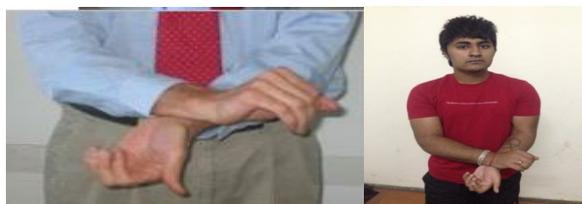
Sample- A sample of 30 students was taken from the Amity University (Gurgaon) hostel, wherein 15 subjects were placed in control group and another 15 in experimental group.

Methodology included use of EFT by demonstrating to the clients. The detailed procedure is described as below.

Points for EFT tapping



KC: The Karate Chop point (abbreviated KC) is located at the center of the fleshy part of the outside of your hand (either hand) between the top of the wrist and the base of the baby finger or (KC has been substituted by WR)



TOH: On the top of the head.



EB: At the beginning of the eyebrow, just above and to one side of the nose.



SE: On the bone bordering the outside corner of the eye.



UE: On the bone under an eye about 1 inch below your pupil.



UN: On the small area between the bottom of your nose and the top of your upper lip.



Ch: Midway between the point of your chin and the bottom of your lower lip.



CB: The junction where the sternum (breastbone), collarbone and the first rib meet. To locate it, first place your forefinger on the U-shaped notch at the top of the breastbone (about where a man would knot his tie).



UA: On the side of the body, at a point even with the nipple (for men) or in the middle of the bra strap (for women). It is about 4 inches below the armpit.



Procedure

We begin by identifying what exactly troubles us mentally and take up one issue at a time in one session. This becomes the target of our EFT session for that day. Like some old emotional conflict happens when I talk to my father or see his face; thought about my ex still “hurts” me; Feeling guilty about the break up ; difficulty in “forgiving your mom” about your childhood rejection/ ; food cravings even though we are putting on weight and wanting to come out of it.

The point is that anything which distresses can be de stressed using EFT. But take up one issue at a time. Trying to combine two or more issues in one session will only complicate the result.

We start with the first round of continuous tapping beginning with th point on KC.

There are two things to be achieved in this phase :

- ❖ Acknowledge the problem
- ❖ Accepting ourselves at all times.

The first affirmative statement can be :

“Even though I have this _____, I deeply and completely accept myself”./

Even though I hate my friend X, I still accept and love myself and I will not let it come in the way / or the humiliation I faced in the office today – I will let it stand in the way of my self esteem. I will let it have any power over me. I am going to shoo it away.....

The Sequence

Tapping continuously on the Karate chop (KC), going to the top of the head (TOH), Beginning of the eyebrow (EB);Side of the eye(SE), under the eye (UE), Side of the eye(SE);under the nose (UN), Chin point (CP),Beginning of the collar bone (CB); Under the arm(UA).

You tap around 5 times on each point. Finally, you establish an "after" level of the issue's intensity by assigning a number to it on a 0-10 scale. You compare this with the before level to see how much progress you have made. If you are not down to zero then repeat the process until you either achieve zero or plateau at some level. This is how the process works.

4.Result and Conclusion

The purpose for performing EFT was to determine the stress level of the subjects and help them ease down by making them feel relaxed and comfortable.

Pre test stress level was tested on a scale of 0 to 5 where higher score indicates higher level of stress.

The technique was conducted on 30 subjects who were divided into 2 groups, namely, the Control (normals), and the experimental (depressed) groups.

Anyone claiming to have a stress level of above 2 was put under the experimental group and the ones having stress between 0-2 were put in the control group.

By using a pre and post design and by comparing them, It is clear that the EFT has worked and stress levels have been lowered in subjects, thus, proving the hypothesis.

Table no. 1-Pre test

Control	Experimental

Deepak (0)	Sushobhan (3)
Jayesh (1)	Shubham (4)
Mayank (2)	Chaitany (3)
Sanchit (2)	Umang (3)
Aryaman (2)	Mohit G. (3)
Mohit (2)	Jatin (3)
Rohit(1)	Kishan (4)
Naveen (0)	Neeraj (3)
Pardeep (0)	Rahul (5)
Aman (2)	Divyansh (4)
Rajesh (1)	Ravish (4)
Navkeerat (1)	Sunaam(3)
Mohanna(2)	Ravi(3)
Rohan(1)	Kailash (4)
Rishabh(2)	Mohit(3)
Mean – 1.3	Mean – 3.5

Table no. 2-Post test

Control	Experimental
Deepak (0)	Sushobhan (2)
Jayesh (1)	Shubham (3)
Mayank (2)	Chaitany (2)
Sanchit (0)	Umang (1)
Aryaman (1)	Mohit G. (1)
Mohit (0)	Jatin (3)
Rohit(0)	Kishan (4)
Naveen (0)	Neeraj (3)
Pardeep (0)	Rahul (4)
Aman (1)	Divyansh (2)
Rajesh (1)	Ravish (4)
Navkeerat (1)	Sunaam(3)
Mohanna(2)	Ravi(3)
Rohan(1)	Kailash (4)
Rishabh(2)	Mohit(3)

Table no. 3-

Groups	Mean (Pre)	Mean (Post)
Control grp.	1.2	0.71
Experimental grp.	3.5	2.5

Results and discussions

Stress levels are on the increase these days due to various reasons, rat race being one of the important ones along with razor sharp competitive spirit. People want to have the luxury of psychotherapy/ healing therapy at their own pace and in their own space which is fast becoming the need of the hour.

In the present scenario, Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) has made a niche for itself in the healing arena the world over. The technique can be followed very easily and has its foundations in the positive psychology. Research reviews

suggest that this technique has been successfully used in various neurotic disorders, stress, anxiety panics, relationships management etc and definitely enhances the overall wellbeing of the individual.

Our study also treads the same path. A look at the table 3 reveals that there is definitely improvement and lowering down of stress levels of university students using this technique. The results are quite encouraging and requires more such studies which will establish its efficacy for enhancing the mental health and overall well being of the individuals.

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Appendix

Some Conversations with the subjects

Most of my conversation were in Hindi, So the translated version is given here.

The subjects were asked these questions -

- a) How do you feel at the moment?
- b) Tell me about the things that stress you?
- c) How do you feel after performing EFT?
- d) What do you think about EFT?
- e) Do you see yourself implement it in daily life?

Some of the conversations with the subjects are given here -

Deepak

- a) Nothing specific, just bored and sleepy.
- b) Im really not stressed about anything other than a few assignments.
- c) Neutral, pretty much the same as I did before.
- d) Don't know what to think, It didn't work.
- e) No.

Rahul

- a) I feel fine I guess.
- b) There are lots of things, like studies, sports, mostly cricket, I used to be good in cricket but I've stopped playing now. I don't really get the time. I play a little basketball sometimes though.
- c) I feel a little better.
- d) It's a good technique to ease your mind.
- e) I guess so.

Sanchit

- a) Tired, had a long day.
- b) My academics, but mostly my health.
- c) It's like a quick fix for a short period.
- d) I might.

Umang

- a) I feel fine, just came back from playing.
- b) Many, like, relationships, future, and other things. Will I ever get a girlfriend, how far I'll go in sports, that kind of stuff.
- c) I feel good, much more relaxed.
- d) It's a good technique, It made me feel less of the negative emotions.
- e) Yes, I do.

Mohit

- a) Nothing specific really.
- b) The usual, like my future and what life will be like, getting a job, about my family and parents.
- c) I feel relaxed, feel good.
- d) It's great.
- e) I think that's a possibility.

Sushobhan

- a) Not too good, I had a fight today.
- b) Not much apart from academics, but what happened today was bothersome.
- c) I feel much better now.
- d) It's good
- e) Maybe

Shubham

- a) Not too good, I have day scholars in my room, I'm worried someone might come to check.
- b) The only thing I'm stressed about right now is the problem at hand.
- c) A little better.
- d) It's alright.
- e) Not so sure about that.