

EMOTIONAL RESCUE

Tapping into our mind-body system can help to heal a host of ills.

Tapping with our fingertips on certain acupressure points on our body, while focusing our attention on whatever's troubling us, is a mind-body technique that can dramatically change the way we think, feel and behave, as well as relieve the cause of a host of physical ills. That's the bold premise of the intriguing therapeutic tool Emotional Freedom Technique that has been championed for 10 years by a growing number of alternative and complementary healthcare professionals, most highly skilled practitioners of Ericksonian Hypnosis and Neuro Linguistic Programming.

Experienced EFTers are using the technique to treat life-threatening diseases. For instance, a number of British cancer support nurses have anecdotally reported that patients claim EFT substantially reduces nausea, fatigue and other side effects of chemotherapy.

If acupoint-tapping EFT sounds outlandish, it's worth noting that acupuncture (which involves puncturing the skin with sterilised needles to stimulate acupoints) has been recognised by the World Health Organisation as effective in treating a range of physical and emotional ills. Likewise, "talk therapies", which verbally confront problems so as to allow new perspectives on them, have also demonstrated some variable but acknowledged success.

But EFT and its related energy therapies – such as Thought Field Therapy and Tapas Acupressure Technique – are perhaps the first formal approaches that have brought these two polar practices together so effectively: stimulating acupressure points by tapping, while focusing our attention on the problem.

When it comes to the basic technique of EFT, there are few fixed rules in what is a deliberately freestyle set of technical guidelines but the procedure might go something like this: the therapist demonstrates the technique to the client – tapping with their fingertips on a sequence of acupoints on the head, face, chest and hands. While tapping, the client focuses on his or her problem. This focus is aided by making spoken-out-loud statements about the issue. Sometimes the therapist will tap upon the client, leaving the client free to concentrate on emerging feelings. The idea is that as the EFT session progresses, emotional glitches are cleared out of the energy system until, eventually, the client will no longer be upset by the original trigger.

One explanation for EFT is that it uses the body's meridian energy system, the premise being that our mind and body share an energy

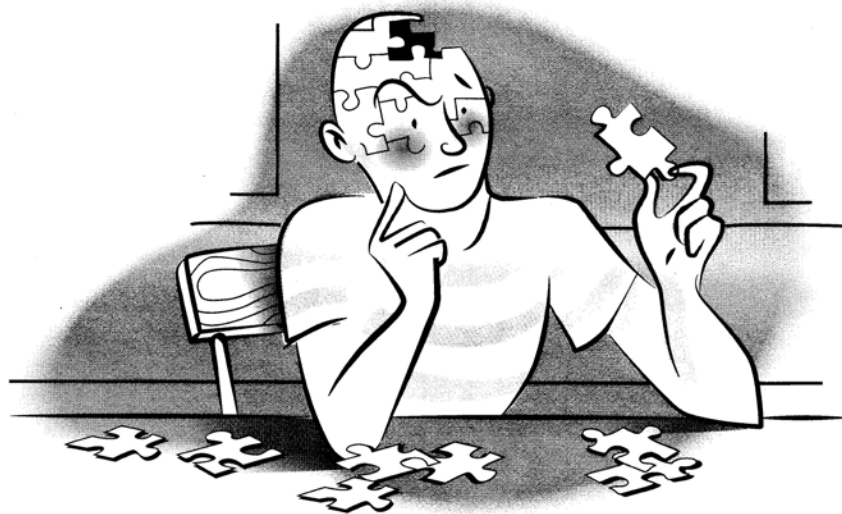
system, rather like a house with all its different rooms, shares the same electrical circuit. A less extraordinary explanation of what's going on is that EFT disrupts the pattern between what we think and how we feel. When we confront a problem by focusing on the disturbing thought, our usual pattern of upsetting responses is not only disrupted but overwritten by new and calming sensory information from our tapping on sensitive acupoints. This second explanation is particularly convincing since it's an established psychological phenomenon that we can benefit from intercepting and overwriting the messages sent between our brain and body. For instance, long-term pain may be the result of a signal that served an initial purpose but was thereafter

unable to turn itself off. It is quite likely that both explanations are true and that it's the synergy between the two mechanisms that gives EFT its potency.

EFT and related energy therapies are being discreetly pioneered in mainstream healthcare settings where orthodox approaches are deemed insufficient. For me, this arena is a welcome reminder of how we need to keep pushing the frontiers of how and what we creatively explore so as to improve our relationship with life.

To learn more about energy therapies, visit emofree.com and energypsych.org.

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REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL: ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Good questions are key to eliciting good solutions. This is a founding principle of all good therapy and education.

"If there was emotional energy driving this problem, what emotion would that be?" "What will life be like when this problem is behind you?" "What are the downsides of you getting over this problem?"

Good questions help reveal self-limiting, self-sabotaging beliefs such as, "I'm not good enough ... not lovable ... not clever ... not lucky ... not meant to be so and so". These are the beliefs that create self-limiting and self-sabotaging emotions and behaviours as well as

many of our psychosomatic symptoms. Good questions can also reveal conflicting agendas in different parts of our mind. Our subconscious wants safety while our conscious wants progress, and the ensuing civil war sabotages the way we lead our everyday lives:

"It's not safe to let this fear go", "I don't deserve to be rid of this albatross", "I won't be me if I lose my trademark illness" and "Letting this problem go will be letting 'them' off too easily" (them being people who have hurt me and who are now being hurt by my illness).

Psychological good health and all-round wellbeing are

very much about integrating – or at least benevolently accepting – the different parts of our life so that we feel more whole, rather than fragmented. The aim being that we feel every part of us is wanting our progress and all the parts are pulling together to achieve it.

Good therapists don't give advice – they ask helpful questions while simultaneously developing our thinking, imagining and behavioural skills to better enable us to boldly explore what solutions work well.

An extract from Learning from Wonderful Lives by Nick Baylis, available from amazon.co.uk.