



Health on Tap

Emotional Freedom Technique is a shortcut to relief **By Julie Barnes**

It was at a weekend seminar in 2003 hosted by Donna Eden and her husband, Dr. David Feinstein, authors of *Energy Medicine* (Tarcher), that Helen Driscoll first saw a demonstration of a therapy known as “tapping.” As Driscoll, a Pasadena small-business owner, recalls, “It was simply remarkable.”

“Feinstein gave a talk, and then chose a volunteer with a phobia of needles. The volunteer was in her early 60s and had a medical condition that made it necessary to inject herself, so the phobia was a real problem. David went through the process with her, and most of her phobia was resolved in about one hour.” Turns out an early childhood experience of being held down by six adults for a series of vaccinations before a trip abroad had a lot to do with her phobia.

What Is Tapping?

Tapping, or meridian tapping, otherwise known as Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), is an often-effective short-term energy therapy that combines ancient Chinese acupressure and modern psychology. Originally developed by Dr. Roger Callahan in the 1980s, it was modified and expanded upon by personal performance coach Gary Craig. Since then, thousands of psychologists, doctors, coaches and individual users have adopted this powerful technique for use on themselves, their clients and family members.

“The reason it works on such a wide range of challenges is because it helps relieve stress and negative emotions, which have an impact on almost every aspect of our physical and emotional health,” says Jessica Ortner, producer of a documentary on the subject, *The Tapping Solution*.

The documentary follows 10 people from around the country who have a variety of challenges, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), chronic back pain, fear of public speaking, fibromyalgia, weight issues and smoking addiction. Ortner explains, “Tapping has spread so quickly around the world particularly because of results in relieving pain. It has also really spread within the veteran community because it’s a tool that can help those with PTSD. Veterans who struggle with talking about their experiences can tap by themselves for relief.”

Moving Energy

Though there has been extensive research documenting results from tapping, the exact reasons for its effectiveness are still not

precisely understood. It’s believed that any negative emotion is a disruption in the human energy system. In a way somewhat similar to acupuncture, the tapper, by stimulating acupressure points while focusing on unwanted energy, begins to move trapped energy and release negative emotions and stress.

Ortner says, “What we do know from research is these acupuncture or ‘stress release’ points are places on the skin that are especially sensitive to bioelectrical impulses in the body. When we stimulate these points, it triggers the release of endorphins, which are the neurochemicals that relieve pain—so as we stimulate these points, muscle tension yields to finger pressure, enabling the fibers to elongate and relax, blood to flow freely, and toxins to be released and eliminated.”

The process is also effective on the emotional level. When powerful emotions roam free and unresolved, the body tends to store the resulting tension in the muscles. Tapping can help restore emotional balance by releasing the accumulated tension caused by these repressed feelings. When the blood and bioelectrical energy circulate properly, we have a greater sense of harmony, health and well-being.

Ramp Down the Negative

“Tapping brings balance to the energy system. It also promotes self-acceptance. When we do not accept how we are feeling, those feelings are stuck in our body and mind. When we accept how we are feeling, those negative emotions are more able to dissolve,” explains Michelle Ercolini, a Bay area-based certified EFT practitioner. “An EFT set-up statement might sound something like this: ‘Even though I feel anxious, I love and accept myself.’”

Tapping points are located primarily around the face, head and hands, and in cases of agitation, not just the points, but also the surrounding area is tapped. So when working on herself, Ercolini will tap all around the tapping points several times, repeating the affirmation until she feels better. “When my agitation level is greatly reduced, I will conclude with a choice statement such as, ‘I choose peace.’”

Driscoll used tapping to clear her fear of heights and bridges. “It took about 10 to 15 sessions. Now I just tap when I notice an issue or aspect come up,” says Driscoll. “Fear is sensory and physical—if I observe a fear reaction, I will deal with it. If not right on the spot, then later.”

“Your mind is like a garden, your flowers (positive thoughts) won’t grow if you don’t spend time to weed the negative thoughts with EFT first,” Ortner cautions. “Tapping in positive statements is powerful, just make sure you address the negative thought pattern first.”

Ercolini reports she is just happier in general. “I smile all the time and laugh easily. With my mind clearer and uncluttered by doubts and fears,” she confirms, “I’m able to see the best in others, too.”

Unfortunately there is no comprehensive list of EFT therapists, but an online search reveals a number of providers in the Los Angeles area.