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EFT AS A TOOL TO RESOLVE ANXIETY: A CASE STUDY APPROACH

Dr. Neerja Pandey¹

ABSTRACT

Background: The present work examines the extent to which Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) is effective as a tool in resolving anxiety. In recent years various mental health professionals have been focusing on the use of alternative therapies like Thought Field Therapy (TFT), Hypnotherapy, Past Life Regression Therapy, and Reiki but there is a paucity of empirical research on the underlying factors for managing emotional challenges and turmoil. **Objective:** One of the latest techniques, EFT, was established by Gary Craig. Case study method was used for the present case of one individual who had a very high level of anxiety. **Measures:** To measure the level of anxiety Subjective Units of Discomfort (SUD) scale, as an introspective technique for experienced emotional and psychosomatic discomfort, was used as a pre and post measure. **Findings:** Major findings were at two levels a) intensive effect of one traumatic event on the adult life (in this case anger leading to performance anxiety and fear of authority), and b) how EFT helps a person to understand and handle emotions in positive manner. The implication of the study is that the person who practices EFT regularly would be in a better position to understand and handle disturbing emotions. It is a cost effective, easy to learn, simple to use tapping technique that can be used anywhere, anytime, and any number of times in a day. It can be used for all emotions and body pains.

Keywords: EFT anxiety psychosomatic ailments tapping discomfort.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings have a powerful mind that has an equally powerful habit of thinking. Dealing with human-beings signals dealing with human mind. Dealing with human mind entails dealing with thoughts. And dealing with thoughts signifies dealing with emotions. Emotions, in turn, colour the way people perceive, understand, and tackle the ups-and-downs of their life. The negative, painful, toxic, unhealthy, and habitual patterns of thoughts (developed in childhood and carried through into adulthood) create corresponding negative, painful, toxic, unhealthy, and habitual patterns of emotions. If left undealt with and bottled up inside, chances are that these emotions will explode one fine day with drop of a hat. So is the case with anxiety. Persistent anxiety, especially during unusual and testing times, creates complications in life. There are various ways and methods to deal with anxiety one of them being Emotional Freedom Technique or EFT.

EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUE OR EFT

The inherent capacity of the body to repair and remodel itself is used in EFT that is a brief exposure therapy combining cognitive and somatic elements and focuses on resolving emotional trauma that might underlie a presenting manifesting condition (Church, 2010)¹. It was developed by Gary Craig, an Engineering graduate and NLP certified master practitioner, between 1995 and 2010; the duration in which he developed and improvised upon his own technique. Gary Craig was a student of Dr Rodger Callahan, a clinical Psychologist, who has worked towards healing people from fears, phobias, trauma, stress etc. (Hartman, 2003)². It dramatically reduces the therapy time from months down to minutes or hours and there is no side effect from EFT because there are no surgical procedures, no needles, no pills, no chemicals, no pushing or pulling on the body (Craig, 1995)³.

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PROCEDURE

- a) Checking Subjective Unit of Discomfort/Distress (SUD)
- b) Set up: affirmation/EFT statement
- c) Tapping on tapping points
- d) Breath out: breath-in through the nose and breath-out through the mouth while keeping both hands on the chest. Need to do it at least 7/8 times.

Repeating the affirmation along with tapping on the karate chop (centre of the fleshy part of the outside of our hand, either hand, between the top of the wrist and the base of little finger i.e. the part of the hand one would use to deliver a karate chop). Tapping with the tip of index and middle fingers on the karate chop three times and then on different tapping points which proceed down the body below one another. Tapping is preferred to be done with dominant hand on the non-dominant hand. Subjective level of discomfort being experienced by the client is explored before starting with the tapping.

The intensity of an emotion is measured by noting down the Subjective Unit of Discomfort/Distress (SUD) which was originally named 'Intensity Meter Scale' by Craig and later renamed as SUD. It provides a benchmark against which to measure progress. The client is asked to close his/her eyes and rate the intensity of the discomfort on a scale from 0 to 10, where 10 represents the highest subjective unit of discomfort and 0 represents no discomfort, as it exists now while he/she is thinking about it.

Case study research refers to an in-depth, detailed study of an individual or a small group of individuals. Emphasis is placed on exploration and description of a phenomenon. It is narrowly focused, provides a high level of detail, and can combine both objective and subjective data to

achieve an in-depth understanding (Centre for Innovation in Research and Teaching).

RATIONALE

The researcher has learnt the concept, use, and effectiveness of EFT in hypnotherapy training.

One case that had the most powerful impact on the researcher was of the student (pursuing his post-graduation) who had been repeatedly failing his semesters, was a chain smoker and had been on psychiatric medicine for 7 years for depression. She used EFT continuously for two-and-half hours with him, changing the statement as and when needed, till the memory of the core issue surfaced. It brought with it the revelation that all these years he had been reacting negatively to his situation. The new awareness helped the student re-align his thought patterns and the corresponding emotional reactions. With guidance and regular practice of EFT the student came out of his mental status, started talking to his father and improved his relationship with him, quit smoking, was off the medicines, and cleared his back-papers. Today he is in his native place taking care of his father's business.

While looking for published work on EFT, the researcher found that maximum publications were from other countries. she could manage to find only two Indian publications and one conference presentation which have worked with EFT. Ms. Ambika Warriar (2018)⁴, and Dr Jasubhai with Prof Mukundan whose work have been published in 2018⁵ whereas Mr. Yuvraj Kapadia had presented his work in World Congress for Regression Therapies, 2006⁶. There are many books on EFT which are written by Indian authors. The published researches are mentioned below in review of literature section.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Warrier (2018)⁴ worked with 46 clients to understand the effect of EFT tapping on Anxiety and Quality of Life on adults who were invited to a two-week long intervention programme. The anxiety level was reduced significantly with three sessions. State Trait Anxiety Test was used to measure anxiety level using 3 EFT sessions on everyone in a span of two weeks. Jasubhai and Mukundan (2018)⁵ worked with 10 subjects suffering from anxiety and depression and they concluded that EFT treatment produced marked improvement in depression after three sessions. Kalla, Simmons, Robinson, & Stapleton (2018)⁷ interviewed eight practitioners of EFT and after the data analysis it was found that EFT may be used by health practitioners to support the psychosocial aspect of chronic disease healthcare. Boath, Good, Tsaroucha, Stewart, Pitch, and Boughey (2017)⁸ worked with EFT to reduce anxiety & improve communication skills in students of social work. Participants found EFT calming, relaxing and helpful. Boath, Stewart & Carryer (2013)⁹ used EFT on 46 Staffordshire University students to reduce anxiety and to stay calm and focused. Stapleton, Dawson, Sheldon, Porter, & Carlopio (2013)¹⁰ have worked with depressed adults who were obese. Four-week EFT treatment brought the obesity down and with it came down the depression symptoms. Feinstein (2012)¹¹ researched fifty-one peer-reviewed papers that reported clinical outcomes of acupuncture tapping to address psychological issues leading to conclusion that demonstrated strong effect of EFT. Church, Asis, & Brooks (2012)¹² used EFT as an intervention for depression in college students which resulted in reduced depression in EFT treatment group. Beck Depression Inventory was used to assess the students for depression. EFT has also helped people overcome their anxiety of public speaking (Jones, Thornton, & Andrews,

2011)¹³. Church (2010)¹⁴ used EFT for five days on 11 war veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and statistically significant improvement was found which was maintained at 30 and 90-day follow-ups. It has been successfully used as an alternative treatment for fear by Wendy & Mark (2003)¹⁵.

EFT is being used for issues ranging from chronic pains to phobias, anxiety, trauma, depression, fear of public speaking, academics, PTSD and many more. However, efforts to study the efficacy of EFT in India is in its infancy stage.

OBJECTIVE: To examine the efficacy of Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) on with the anxiety.

METHOD

Case history of the client is taken, mental postulate is picked-up (the distressing emotion or issue based on which the EFT statement is constructed using the client's own words), check the subjective unit distress/discomfort (SUD), start with EFT, if the current issue gets resolved then practice for 21 days advised for it to become a habit. Using the Case Study method with ideographic approach (observe and explore a single participant) one case of anxiety has been illustrated in the present paper.

CASE OF AK - Anxiety.

AK, a 24-year-old under-graduate student had come to psychology department as a subject in practical class and had scored 95 on Anxiety Scale. The psychology student referred him to the researcher (a counsellor and faculty in Psychology department) for his high anxiety level. AK reported that he has had anxiety since 2016 when he was in another college in other state studying in B.Tech. He could not clear three papers and got year back twice. He used to fall sick with severe stomach upset due to anxiety every time during exams. Once he had slept dur-

ing one paper. He has been living happily with his maternal grandparents in India since childhood whereas his younger brother lives with their parents abroad. He reported that his maternal grandparents (Nana and Nani) are his substitute parents.

The presenting complaints were that 'he gets irritated with small things; gets attached to things like a pen, once he lost a pen and cried for two days because of it; one thought keeps going in circles in his mind'. His irritation, whenever the routine was upset, used to get converted into anxiety leading to non-productivity in terms of his studies. 'Kutch socha aur who nahi hua toh anxiety hoti hai, kutch karne lagta hoon to ajeeb lagta hai'. He had the belief that 'to be successful in life you need to adhere to a set routine and if you do not follow the routine then you will not be successful'. The researcher, with his consent, picked this up as his mental postulate and asked him to rate his anxiety on SUD. He put his anxiety on SUD 10.

The EFT setup phrase that we constructed was: "Even though I feel that to be successful in life you need to follow a set routine and if you do not follow the routine then you will not be successful in life, still I choose to heal and integrate that part of me totally and completely. I love and accept myself". He repeated the statement loudly along with gentle tapping on all the eleven prescribed tapping points (referred to as round one).

After first round of EFT, he had to rate the intensity again and it had come down to 7, after second round the intensity was at 3, and by the end of third round it had gone down to 1. The amazing part was that during the third round of EFT, a memory surfaced of the time when he was two years old. In this memory he was scared of his father who was shouting at him. He remembered that the scolding was because of low marks. Researcher used Psychodrama at this point, asked him to remain in that memory

and visualise himself as the 24-year-old adult putting both his hands on the shoulders of the 2-year old AK to comfort him. AK was instructed to tell the young one that 'it's over, I am here with you now' which he promptly did. Then AK was asked to tell his father, in this memory, that he loves him, but AK refused to say so. Because the client is not supposed to be forced to do anything against his wishes, he was asked instead to bring the 2-year old inside in his heart and let him grow to the current age. That part of AK's consciousness was integrated which had been left behind at the age of two. Understand, all our experiences, memories and emotions are stored in our subconscious mind.

EFT tapping continued and same memory of 2-years of age resurfaced but this time the young one was not scared, rather father's face seemed nervous. The adult, 24-year old AK, realised that father was nervous for some reason and he was not angry with him. This awareness was therapeutic for AK who, in this memory, hugged his father and told his dad that he loved him. The complete session was of 40 minutes' duration with three rounds of EFT tapping.

During this session, the researcher became aware of disturbed father-son relationship wherein AK informed that he hadn't talked to his father since childhood, his father has been strict and had been more concerned with percentage in academics. After practicing EFT for 21 days, he reported on 23rd day that he was talking to his father now. AK had called up his father and had telephonic conversation with him. Later he participated in college beauty pageant in which he was the top five finalists.

This case represents a fundamental aspect of emotional handling in everyday life. Emotions that affect us negatively, that do not let us live our life fully, that do not let us achieve our goals, that are no more needed and can easily be released.

DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of EFT in dealing with issues ranging from reduction in depression to treating anxiety, PTSD, Phobias along with physical ailments has been established through researches (Dawson, Feinstein, Stapleton and many more). EFT is a cost effective, easy to learn, simple to use tapping technique that can be used anywhere, anytime, and any number of times in a day. It can be used for any emotion and body pain. Persistence pays in EFT.

The researcher has used EFT as a tool to break through the resistance of individuals. Client reaches a very relaxed state by the end of second, or at the most third, round of gentle tapping. By this time the conscious judgements, analyses, and justifications get exhausted and suppressed memories with corresponding emotions surface up. Review of the event from present grown-up's perspective becomes therapeutic for the client. On the other hand, new neural pathway is formed, by repeating the phrase, "I choose". Also, the client is choosing to take charge of how she/he feels. Thus, the older pathways are counteracted. Moreover, when the memory of the painful event surfaces, then psychodrama at this stage helps let go of the somatic charge (bodily reaction) associated with that memory. The researcher has learnt to call this whole process "onion peeling" because the emotional layers peel away, one by one, just like the layers of an onion till we reach the inner core.

EFT can be monitored by self. Initially, in the throes of emotional disturbance, it is advisable to undergo therapy with the therapist/counsellor to get a feel of it, to understand how to keep formulating the mental postulates i.e. the EFT statements and to become familiar with the emotional bodily charges as and when they surface. It be-

comes highly effective with habit formation of being aware of bodily changes under emotional barrage.

Handling of emotions is the most important life skill that a person can have to be successful in life. Furthermore, understanding of emotions is most important to be able to enjoy that success in life. Emotional Freedom Technique is a skill that empowers and enables the individual to first identify the emotional disturbance and then dissipate it. With practice and conditioning, short version of EFT can be used which is equally effective and doesn't take more than five minutes. The short version comprises of karate chop tapping and breathing out only.

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TESTIMONIAL

Before: I was anxious ~~for~~ because of my academic failures ~~and~~ due which I was not able to talk to my father.

After: Ma'am helped me through EFT and helped me overcome my first instance of fear that occurred with my father and my family.

Now, I feel much more comfortable talking to my father. And whenever there is an issue I try to follow the techniques which ma'am taught me. If any serious issue occurs again I will come to ma'am again.