

New Study Validates EFT's Effectiveness

By Dr. Mercola

Although frequently overlooked, emotional health is critical for your physical health and healing. No matter how devoted you are to the proper diet and lifestyle, you're unlikely to achieve optimal health if emotional barriers stand in your way.

Energy psychology uses a psychological acupressure technique based on the same energy meridians used in traditional acupuncture (which has been used to treat physical and emotional ailments for over 5,000 years) but without the invasiveness of needles.

The [Emotional Freedom Techniques \(EFT\)](#) is the most popular form of energy psychology and was developed in the 1990s by Gary Craig, a Stanford engineering graduate specializing in healing and self-improvement. I routinely used EFT in my practice, and highly recommend it to optimize your emotional health.

The method involves tapping specific points on your head and chest with your fingertips while thinking about your specific problem—be it a traumatic event, an addiction, pain, etc.—and voicing positive affirmations. This can be done alone or under the supervision of a qualified therapist.¹

The combination of tapping the energy meridians and voicing positive affirmation works to clear the emotional block from your body's bioenergy system, thus restoring your mind and body's balance.

Clinical trials have shown that EFT is able to rapidly reduce the emotional impact of memories and incidents that trigger emotional distress. Once the distress is reduced or removed, your body can often rebalance itself, and accelerate healing.

While some still view energy psychology with suspicion, EFT has actually met the criteria for evidence-based treatments set by the American Psychological Association for a number of conditions, including post-traumatic distress syndrome (PTSD).²

Research Validates EFT's Effectiveness

In a critical review published in the American Psychological Association's (APA) journal *Review of General Psychology*³ last year, researchers found that EFT "consistently demonstrated strong effect sizes and other positive statistical results that far exceed chance after relatively few treatment sessions."

Other recent studies demonstrate how EFT can accomplish remarkable progress in a very short amount of time for people with a history of trauma. For example:

1. A 2009 study⁴ of 16 institutionalized adolescent boys with histories of physical or psychological abuse showed substantially decreased intensity of traumatic memories after just ONE session of EFT.
2. An EFT study⁵ involving 30 moderately to severely depressed college students was conducted. The depressed students were given four 90-minute EFT sessions. Students who received EFT showed significantly less depression than the control group when evaluated three weeks later.

Most recently, a study published in the *Energy Psychology Journal*⁶ confirmed that the benefits from EFT are the result of the tapping process and not a placebo effect. The 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.”

Tapping Alters Conditioned Responses

Such findings come as no great surprise to other researchers in the field, such as Dr. Dawson Church, Ph.D., founder of the National Institute for Integrative Healthcare. Dr. Church told the Examiner:

“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.”

Earlier this year, Dr. Church published a review⁷ 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	Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	Anxiety	Depression
Pain	Weight loss and food cravings	Athletic and academic performance	Test anxiety

Dr. Church's website, ResearchEFTUniverse.com,⁸ is a great resource if you want 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.⁹ 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.)

Operation Emotional Freedom

EFT has shown particular promise in the treatment of war veterans with post-traumatic stress.¹⁰ I want to highlight this aspect of its use as PTSD is hard to treat, and studies have shown drugs like antidepressants and [antipsychotics to be on par with placebo](#) for the treatment of this condition.

The documentary film entitled *Operation: Emotional Freedom*,¹¹ directed by Eric Huurre, follows a number of veterans and their families who went through intensive therapy using EFT. Gary Craig, along with other EFT practitioners worked very closely with veterans who were all suffering from PTSD, depression, anxiety and a few were suicidal. The results were truly astounding. At the end of treatment, each one of them describes a new feeling of peace and hope that there is help and they were able to overcome emotional traumas experienced in combat.

The film offers a close look at the current state of health care for combat veterans diagnosed with PTSD, and examines the myths and misconceptions surrounding the chemical approach to treating emotional conditions and why drugs are not "the

answer" that pharmaceuticals promise. (You can learn more about the efforts to assist veterans and their families through energy psychology on the film's website, operation-emotionalfreedom.com.¹²)

Research performed by the Iraq Vets Stress Project¹³ also demonstrates the effectiveness of EFT. In a study that included 100 veterans with severe PTSD,¹⁴ 90 percent of the veterans had such a reduction in symptoms that they no longer met the clinical criteria for PTSD after six one-hour EFT sessions! Sixty percent no longer met PTSD criteria after just three EFT sessions. At the three-month follow-up, the gains remained stable, suggesting lasting and potentially permanent resolution of the problem.

How to Perform EFT

For a demonstration of how to perform EFT, please view the video below featuring EFT practitioner Julie Schiffman. This is a general demonstration that can be tailored to just about any problem. You can also find text instructions and photographs of where to tap on my [EFT page](#). For when you're on the go, there are at least four different EFT applications available in the iTunes store. The apps range from a simple recap of the EFTs Basic Recipe to a sophisticated virtual coaching app for specific mental health problems like anxiety and depression.

Bear in mind that while EFT is quite easy to learn and perform, I strongly encourage you to seek out a qualified therapist for more serious or complex issues. It is an art, and tapping for deep-seated issues typically require the kind of skill that only a well-seasoned practitioner will have. If you try to self-treat, you may end up falsely concluding that EFT doesn't work, when nothing could be further from the truth... This is particularly pertinent if you're trying to address trauma-based stress such as PTSD or grief following the loss of a loved one.

Give EFT a Try

Clearly, energy psychology beats pharmaceuticals hands down as a safer, more effective, longer-lasting treatment for stress and emotional problems. And there have been EFT successes with a wide range of other issues—both emotional and physical. EFT is easy to learn, no matter what your age—children included—so I encourage you to add it to your emotional health tool kit.

Some people may initially be wary of the principles that EFT is based on. After all, the electromagnetic energy that flows through the human body and regulates your health has only recently become more widely recognized in the West. Others are

initially taken aback (and sometimes amused) by the EFT tapping and affirmation methodology.

I would encourage you to lay such objections aside and give EFT a fair chance. More than any traditional or alternative method I have used or researched, EFT *works*. Indeed, because of its high rate of success, the use of EFT has spread rapidly, and medical practitioners employing EFT can now be found across the globe.