

Tapping is taking over and it's a good thing

(My Journey with the Emotional Freedom Technique)

By Bob Schmidt, LPC

It really works!

I first heard about Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) or as it's commonly known, "Tapping" when I read an article in my local paper last year. The article was about Nick Ortner, author of *The Tapping Solution*, who lives in my town, Newtown. It explained how Tapping can be used to treat a wide variety of problems including phobias, pain and even trauma. It was successfully used to treat PTSD with people impacted by the Sandy Hook tragedy. It sounded too good to be true, so I immediately bought the book and read it. It was an easy read, and it explained how tapping was "discovered" and why it works. It is written in layman terms and teaches the reader how to tap.

I just had to try it on myself. I started small and simple. I was upset about something and I tapped. I was angry about something and I tapped. It worked! It really worked!! I tapped some more. I tapped when I had a headache, when I couldn't sleep. It worked! Now I was ready to try it with two of my clients. It worked! Is this too good to be true? No, it is not! Is it the "thing" we've all been searching for to help our clients? Yes, I really think so! Using the mind body connection it enables clients to release the emotional baggage that is blocking them. One of my clients was suffering from panic attacks. In two sessions, they were gone! I was convinced - I had to learn more!

Learning more about it

I had the great pleasure of meeting Dr. Lori Leyden when she presented at the CMHCA Conference in November 2013 (A good reason to attend our professional development activities). About a year before that, Lori had been in Rwanda treating the survivors of the horrific genocide that had taken place there. Nick Ortner called Lori and asked her to come help the people in the Sandy Hook Community. She came to Newtown right away.

Lori is an amazing person! She is a charismatic, guru-therapist with a huge, compassionate, warm heart. Deb Del Vecchio-Scully talked with her and she volunteered to do a FREE wellness workshop for Sandy Hook counselors. With my Newtown Lions Club as a sponsor we held the workshop on December 8. To everyone's surprise and delight, Nick Ortner came and did the workshop with Lori. They even brought free books and videos for the participants. Everyone left that day feeling so much better.

Training

Lori told me about the EFT training sessions that were coming up. Deb got the idea that we might ask one of the Newtown Charities for money for stipends to encourage therapists in the Newtown area to get formal training. Thanks to Sandy Hook Promise we received \$4,000 and

there were a record breaking number of counselors at the Level 1 training in January. Deb and I were both using Tapping more in our practices and so we signed up for Level 2 training the next week. We both plan to go for the Level 3 training when the opportunity comes. When you see how quick you can get to an issue and unblock a client, it is nothing short of a miracle. I cannot imagine working with a client and not using EFT at some point in the treatment. In fact, with some clients I will use it almost exclusively in treatment.

There is a parallel, or dovetail with EFT and many of the counseling techniques we all learned. For example: REBT used the term *irrational beliefs*. EFT refers to them as *False Beliefs*. Ellis challenges the beliefs; EFT breaks them down into small “aspects” and taps them down. In the EFT training there are many Rogerian pieces that we all use; the listening, the gentleness, and the unconditional regard for the client. They just have a different way of saying it. You can learn a great deal from reading the book, but when you go for the training you learn how to go deeper and you have opportunities to try it out with others in the class. If you want to see when and where the training is, go to www.TappingSolutionFoundation.org

Tapping is versatile

Tapping can be effective with clients as young as 4 years old. Of course, the verbal part has to be modified, and often with young children, the mother taps on her child. Once you teach your client how to tap, you have given them a coping skill that will last a lifetime. In case you are concerned about the idea of touching the client, there is no need to worry. Unlike EMDR, which has a tapping component where the therapist taps on the client, in EFT the client taps on him/herself.

How does it work?

The amygdala, which is part of the limbic system in the brain, signals the body when there is a perceived threat or danger. Cortisol is produced (stress hormone) creating the fight or flight reaction. The tapping technique interrupts that process and re-programs it. Most of us instinctively use tapping points to calm down and don't even realize it. Have you ever rubbed your temples, your forehead, or your chin when you were stressed or tired? Well, those are some of the tapping points.

Tapping can halt the stress response. The tapping points are acupuncture points. Instead of using needles, we tap on those spots. The combination of stimulating the acupoints while thinking of an upsetting event or problem also retrains the limbic system response. Tapping retrains the limbic system rapidly and with repetition the hippocampus gets the message that was previously filed as dangerous or uncomfortable as no longer a threat.

Get started now

I recommend you begin by purchasing the book. It's already on the NY Times best seller list. Then try it out. If you see that it works for you then go to a level 1 training session. My only regret is that I did not learn about this technique years ago. But then, it's only been around about 15 years. I warn you, that you may be hooked and want to continue to level 2 and 3. So, what are you waiting for? Go to Amazon.com and order the book!