

EFT AND TRAUMA

Trauma comes in all shapes and sizes, as does people's response to it. EFT can be used successfully with all of them but is one area where it may be appropriate to work with a qualified practitioner, at least initially. The primary concern when working with trauma is your safety or the safety of your client. This is paramount as re-traumatising and abreaction are to be avoided at all costs.

Trauma influences our cognitive schemas at a profound level. It undermines our beliefs in both ourselves and our existence, and also our sense of reality as we know it. The resulting beliefs can seriously disrupt the every day running of our lives without us necessarily even realising it.

EFT's effectiveness in working with trauma is extensive. Whilst it can bring immediate relief from traumatic memories, it is also a gentle tool for revealing the many layers and aspects that may be connected with trauma, working through them systematically and effectively until their emotional charge has gone.

In this article I will look at the different manifestations of trauma and the options for working with them using EFT.

Self Care for Therapists

Before beginning to work with trauma it is vital to look at ourselves as therapists and our own response to trauma in its many forms.

The first step is to work on any unresolved trauma we may still be attached to so that we are not triggered by our clients' experiences. The difference between empathising and colluding with the client needs emphasising. Whilst it is important to feel empathy for the client it is not useful for them if we are accessing our own stuff and we will be getting in the way of the process. As Gary often says, allow the work to be through you not by you. We must be a clear channel in order to fully serve our clients and get maximum results.

Test drive your trauma 'buttons' by imagining different future possible scenarios and/or past events and noticing what, if anything, still gets an emotional response.... Apply EFT to it.

Also recognise that you are human and things can sneak up on you and surprise you. You are likely to hear some horrific stories. If this happens during a client session imagine putting it out of the room, or in a box, remembering to return and work with it at the earliest opportunity. If you are tapping alongside your client you may clear your response during the session anyway.

Using EFT yourself on a regular basis is even more important in trauma work than most areas. Trauma therapists traditionally experience a high level of burnout. EFT gives us the opportunity to change that and be of even more powerful use. Walk your talk!

Trauma can be broadly broken down into four categories:

1) Prolonged past traumatic experiences

Systematic abuse over a prolonged period of time which is over in the present day eg childhood abuse, bullying, war experience etc

2) Ongoing trauma

Systematic abuse continuing today where client is constantly re-traumatised eg domestic violence and marital rape, psychological abuse, bullying at work etc

3) One-off trauma

Rape, terrorist attack, accident, assault etc

4) Perceived trauma

Trauma not physically experienced by the client but witnessed in a secondary manner via the media, friends, colleagues, stories etc

The Presenting Client

Some clients will need to tell you their story immediately. When they do their energy system will be disrupting massively and you will need to tap continually on them. In order to do this and keep rapport with a new client it is important to preframe this when introducing yourself and your work. I recommend tapping on your clients wherever possible for the following two main reasons:

- 1) By connecting two energy systems physically the effects can be doubly powerful.
- 2) It allows the client to focus on their issue without worrying about 'getting the tapping wrong'. Whilst this can be a useful way of unearthing core beliefs, such as not being good enough, I don't consider it to be initially helpful in the context of trauma, rather another door to be returned to when they are in a more comfortable place.

Other clients will present with physical issues such as insomnia, migraines or even cancer where they make no connection to any previous traumatic events. However, when an event happens that challenges our beliefs of the world, and our personal safety, it can create a physiological response as well as an emotional one. In these cases, always start with where the client is at, using your detective skills and careful questioning to gently ease out any specific events that may be contributing to the current state.

Others will have totally detached themselves from the traumatic event/s, they will be unable to access any emotion, and often just present with a general feeling of depression or anxiety. In these cases again you will need to apply all your detective skills to coax out the underlying specific emotional contributors and events.

The following set up statements can be useful here:

Even though I have all these problems I deeply and completely accept myself

Even though life is grim I deeply and completely accept myself

Even though things can only get worse I deeply and completely accept myself

Even though I feel bad and am not sure why I deeply and completely accept myself

Here, Gary's question 'If you could live your life again which person or event would you leave out?' is an excellent way of getting to the specific core issue.

Another client group will be aware of the trauma but anxious about even thinking about it, let alone talking about it. With these clients the first thing to do is, again,

to meet them where they are at and work with the presenting anxiety. Some of the following set-up statements can be useful here:

Even though I don't want to go back there again I deeply and completely accept myself

Even though I am anxious even thinking about the event I deeply and completely accept myself

Even though I am frightened to look at that time again I deeply and completely accept myself.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD can be caused by one event or by prolonged exposure to traumatic experiences, such as war (see Gary's DVDs The EFT Course, Part 1, Video 3, 6 Days at the VA). Sufferers of PTSD store the memories of past events in their minds as though they are happening today, they replay them through flashbacks, hyper-vigilance, nightmares, jumpiness and other physiological symptoms. They may also have removed themselves from normal life, as the world is seen as unsafe, making them detach and withdraw both from becoming involved both physically and emotionally.

Methods for working with Trauma

- 1. Tearless Trauma**
- 2. Movie Technique**
- 3. Telling the Story**
- 4. Tsunami Technique**
- 5. Imagination Technique**

Tearless Trauma

This is a very gentle way of using double dissociation to keep the client safe from abreaction and is usually the best starting point when working with a specific traumatic event.

- Identify a **specific** traumatic incident from the past. An example might be, "the time my father punched me when I was 12." By contrast, the phrase "my father abused me" would be too broad because, chances are, the abuse took place over many, many incidents.
- Get them to make it into a mini movie and put it on a wall away from them
- Give it a title.
- Ask them to **GUESS** at what their emotional intensity would be (on a 0-10 scale) **IF** they were to vividly watch the movie. Instruct them NOT to actually watch it (although some will close their eyes and do this anyway). This **GUESS** is a surprisingly useful estimate...and...it serves to minimize emotional pain.

- Have the client develop a phrase using the movie title for the EFT process such as "this father-punch emotion" and then proceed with a round of tapping.
- After this round of tapping, ask the client to GUESS again around ask them to state their new number.
- Perform more rounds of EFT (numbers. In my experience, a total of 3 or 4 rounds will bring just about everyone down to GUESSES of 0 to 3.
- Once the client is down to acceptably low GUESSES, then perform another round of tapping and, after this round, ask them how they would feel about watching the movie. Notice that this is the first time you are asking them to do this. All previous times have been relatively painless GUESSES.
- If they are OK with that get them to watch the movie, instructing them to stop at any part that still 'gets' them and tap on it.
- Keep going until they are able to watch their whole movie with no emotional attachment. Often they will say something like 'It is like watching someone else' or 'I cant see it clearly any more'.

In Brief:

- Locate **specific** trauma
- Make it into a movie and put it on the wall away from you
- What is it's title?
- Don't look at it, draw a curtain over it
- Estimate 0 – 10 intensity **if** you were to watch it (**guess**)
- Create Reminder Phrase using movie title for the EFT process
- Do EFT on it
- **Guess** at the intensity again
- Do more EFT rounds until '**guessed**' intensity is low
- Watch the movie, **stopping** at any part that still 'gets you'
- More rounds of EFT as necessary

The Movie Technique

This is the same principle as Tearless Trauma only without the double dissociation. If the trauma is not perceived as too intense then this would be a safe starting place too.

- Create a mini movie of the specific event
- How intense do they feel about watching it (using SUDS scale 0 -10)
- If high intensity rating revert to Tearless Trauma above
- If OK run movie, stopping at any point where there is emotional intensity and tap
- Keep going until whole movie is clear of any emotional intensity

Telling the Story

Telling The Story is an excellent way of testing your results and clearing up any remaining undetected aspects. Ideally, use this once you feel you have reduced the intensity to an

acceptable level, or cleared it completely. However, sometimes you will need to use it immediately, as detailed above.

- Have your client tell their story of the event/memory/trigger.
- As soon as any emotional disturbance is detected stop and tap on the last statement the client made.
- Test by having the client re-tell that part of the story. They should be able to go past the previous emotional point easily. If not, there are further aspects to be addressed.
- When the client is calm on the first point, have them continue to tell the story. Stop and tap on each emotional disturbance.
- Test by asking your client to tell the entire story from start to finish. Your work is completed when your client can do this and remain calm throughout.

The Tsunami Technique

In these days of mass disasters, natural or otherwise, we thought you might be interested in an EFT phenomena which came to the fore during Sue Beer and I's recent trauma workshop at The EFT Centre, London.

The workshop was for a small group of Level 2 and 3 EFT practitioners and focussed more on working with clients than self application. However, we wanted to give them an experience of Tearless Trauma so they would know how it would be for a client.

Thinking that the most contained way of doing this as a teaching example would be to go for a group experience, we asked them to each pick a specific memory/image/photograph from the Tsunami that still 'got' them now. We knew that no one had had any direct experience of the Tsunami. Most of them had a problem even finding this memory.

We did a group tap on these 'Tsunami emotions' and it quickly became apparent that each and every one of them had associated into something completely unrelated to the Tsunami. It seemed that when the slight Tsunami emotion had cleared other powerful, seemingly unconnected emotions and past events surfaced.

Whilst this in itself is not particularly unusual with EFT, it did come as a surprise in this environment. It revealed new aspects of earlier specific traumas that they thought they had cleared, and in a couple of cases specific events were recalled that had hitherto been repressed.

Obviously we then had to take a detour from the course content and help them clear these issues – swiftly achieved.

Again, none of the above may be a surprise, and although unexpected, all the responses were easy to clear and some important work was done. However, these were an unusual group in that they were all dedicated EFT practitioners who had worked consistently through their own issues and who were using EFT on an ongoing

basis daily and considered they had cleared the big trees from their emotional forests.

We now use the 'Tsunami technique' with some clients who seem stuck as a way to facilitate unearthing underlying trauma, where there doesn't seem to be an obvious door to go through and it ALWAYS gets results. In a seemingly roundabout way, something good and positive has emerged from the appalling events of that Boxing Day.

- Check no direct emotional involvement with Tsunami
- Pick Tsunami memory/image/photograph
- Put it on screen, behind a curtain (as in Tearless Trauma)
- Tap on this 'Tsunami emotion'
- Keep tuned into client and monitor emotional response
- What does it remind you of?
- Tap on whatever comes up, following the chain until emotions are fully resolved
- Test results with both the emergent specific event and also original memory
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Imagination Technique

I sometimes introduce this as a game, and it can be particularly useful when working with children.

Sometimes people may only have a sense of having experienced trauma. This can be to do with the age at which the trauma occurred, if it was pre-verbal and stored in pre verbal memory, and how much is stored cognitively. In cases where there is no actual memory, just a physical sense of something having happened, or a knowledge that it did, but no memory, get the client to 'make it up'. It is not important whether it is true or not, what is important is the resultant limiting behaviours and beliefs that are showing up today. Imagining and guessing in the west is what the east call sixth sense... it comes from somewhere, trust it and go with it, it is often an important door.

However, be careful to never ever suggest trauma or abuse has occurred and to frame the Imagination Technique as a game, and not the truth.

To conclude, EFT is an exciting new tool in working with Trauma. It allows the client to get immediate relief from traumatic experiences and gently opens the door to revealing and clearing the multiple layers of aspects and beliefs which may be present in a pain free, systematic manner. Trauma can be experienced at many different levels and there is no fixed formula for specific trauma groups. However, as a general rule, the higher the intensity the more the need to dissociate the client, using the Movie Technique or Tearless Trauma. For unfeeling clients, the Tsunami and Imagination Techniques are useful.

In order to achieve maximum results when working with clients it is important to keep more flexible than your clients, and whilst the above techniques provide a valuable framework within which to work, allow your creativity to flow and your intuition to guide you!