Energy Psychology and Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)

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Psychosensory Therapy and Energy Psychology

Energy Psychology (EP) has been very controversial. On the one hand, there are abundant anecdotal reports that show an extremely high level of clinical effectiveness that surpasses that of established treatment modalities in speed and power. There are thousands of reports by hundreds of therapists that after a short, successful treatment, the SUD (Subjective Units of Distress, on a 0-10 scale where 0 is none, and 10 is extreme distress as reported by the patient), goes down from 9-10 to 0-1. The ability to visualize a clear image of the trauma diminishes and many times the emotional distress is gone, and for good!

In addition, what makes the procedures even more controversial is the fact that they are rooted in an unfamiliar paradigm of Eastern concepts and medicine, and some of the protocols look bizarre. To make it even more complicated, there is great disagreement regarding the mechanisms of action.

Dr. Roger Callahan found that tapping under the eye of an individual with a water phobia immediately and permanently cured this problem (Callahan, 1997). Callahan suggests that activating a distressful thought disturbs the energy field that surrounds the body. His model is based on Chinese medicine; that is, when energy flow is disturbed, a person becomes ill. By tapping on specific traditional Chinese medicine acupoints in a specific sequence, the disturbance in the energy “thought fields” disappears and healing occurs. He calls his method, Callahan Techniques-Thought Field Therapy (CT-TFT) (Callahan 1995, 2001). Variations on this therapy have been
developed: Energy Psychology by Dr F. Gallo, EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) by Gary Craig and others.

Fred P. Gallo, PhD, in his book, *Energy Psychology* (1998, with a second edition in 2005) defined Energy Psychology (EP) as an approach that combines physical interventions, such as the stimulation of electrically sensitive points on the skin, with cognitive interventions including the use of imagery, self-statements, and subjective distress ratings, for the purpose of shifting targeted emotional response patterns.

Many variations can be identified. Most of them adapt practices and concepts from acupuncture and acupressure. All of them stimulate electrical fields or specified electromagnetically-sensitive areas of the skin while a maladaptive emotional response is mentally activated. This simultaneous pairing of the thought and the intervention into the electrical system is believed to send signals to the brain that interrupt the emotional response pattern.

The two leading meridian-based therapies are Thought Field Therapy (TFT) (Callahan, 1997) and Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) (Craig, 1995, 1999). As stated above, TFT was developed by Roger Callahan from his study of the energy meridian system of acupuncture which he applied to the treatment of emotional problems, combining this approach with treatment techniques developed by George Goodheart (1987), and John Diamond (1985). TFT utilizes light tapping of meridian points in a protocol, which involves the use of specific sequences of these points (called "algorithms"), each of which addresses a specific emotional problem or category of problems.

After studying with Callahan, Gary Craig attempted to simplify Callahan’s protocols into an approach that could be used by the general public outside clinical settings. His Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) does not utilize muscle testing, and does not match different sets of acu-points with different conditions. It simplified the procedure by using a set designed to stimulate each of the body’s major meridians, which he believes to be sufficient for almost all conditions. For this reason, it can easily be self-applied. EFT also has a detailed manual, which allows for well-controlled research.

Since 2007 there were many double blind studies that documented the effectiveness of EFT.

David Feinstein, PhD, recently summarized the available research done about the effectiveness of Energy Psychology. This was published in Review of General Psychology, an official publication of the American Psychological Association.