Is EFT Tapping an Evidence-Based Treatment?

There is a continually-growing number of publications on the effective use of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) Tapping as a treatment for many conditions. As of Spring 2018, EFT Tapping is reportedly in the top 10% of treatments being researched in the field of Energy Psychology. Research to date includes at least 50 randomized controlled trials (the gold standard for research), 40 pre-post outcome studies, with 98% of those 90 studies showing effectiveness. In addition, four meta-analyses, five systematic reviews and many hundreds of case studies contribute to the evidence that EFT works.

Researchers will often refer to EFT Tapping as evidence-based in their publication of findings, leading to confusion about the term and status of EFT Tapping. Their research may indeed include randomized controlled trials showing that treatments using EFT show statistically significant benefits over controls or similar treatments. But because EFT is not yet listed in the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP), it is not officially considered an evidence-based treatment. NREPP is part of the US government’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The purpose of this document is to simply help bring light to the situation and the confusion surrounding the state of EFT Tapping research, and to provide a sample of the articles which provide evidence of the effectiveness of EFT in the treatment of various conditions. The list is only a brief sample of studies that can be used to help those who ask about the validity and the benefits of using EFT Tapping. In addition, also included is a list of valuable resources that have consolidated the many research articles for us for when we want to dive deeper.

EFT Research Highlights

**The Effectiveness of Emotional Freedom Techniques in the Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Meta-Analysis**
“The analysis of existing studies showed that a series of 4–10 EFT sessions is an efficacious treatment for PTSD with a variety of populations. The studies examined reported no adverse effects from EFT interventions and showed that it can be used both on a self-help basis and as a primary evidence-based treatment for PTSD.”

**Food for Thought: A randomised controlled trial of emotional freedom techniques and cognitive behavioural therapy in the treatment of food cravings**
“...the current study supports the suggestion that psychological interventions are beneficial for...”

Terry Maluk
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food cravings and both CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) and EFT could serve as vital adjunct tools in a multidisciplinary approach to managing obesity.”

**Emotional Freedom Techniques for anxiety: A systematic review with meta-analysis**

“Emotional freedom technique treatment demonstrated a significant decrease in anxiety scores, even when accounting for the effect size of control treatment. However, there were too few data available comparing EFT to standard-of-care treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy, and further research is needed to establish the relative efficacy of EFT to established protocols.”

**Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) to reduce the side effects associated with tamoxifen and aromatase inhibitor use in women with breast cancer: A service evaluation**

“Statistically significant improvements in Total Mood Disturbance and anxiety, depression, and fatigue occurred at both 6 and 12 weeks, respectively, compared to baseline. In addition, mean fatigue interference and global scores, numbers of hot flushes and the hot flush problem rating score decreased at 6 and/or 12 weeks. These preliminary findings suggest that EFT may be an effective self-help tool for women with breast cancer experiencing side effects from hormonal therapies.”

**Efficacy of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) in reducing public speaking anxiety: A randomized controlled trial**

“A significant reduction in PSA as measured by Subjective Units of Discomfort was demonstrated within the first 15 minutes of treatment with EFT, with further significant reductions also demonstrated at 30 and 45 minutes. EFT was found to be a quick and effective treatment for PSA.”

**A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized and non-randomized trials of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) for the treatment of depression**

“The results show that Clinical EFT is highly effective in reducing depressive symptoms in a variety of populations and settings. EFT was equal or superior to TAU and other active treatment controls. The posttest effect size for EFT ($d = 1.31$) was larger than that measured in meta-analyses of antidepressant drug trials and psychotherapy studies. EFT produced large treatment effects whether delivered in group or individual format, and participants maintained their gains over time. This meta-analysis extends the existing literature through facilitation of a
better understanding of the variability and clinical significance of depression improvement subsequent to EFT treatment.”

World-first brain scan research shows ‘tapping’ effective in combating food cravings
“Bond University Clinical Psychologist, Associate Professor Peta Stapleton led the research into Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) or ‘tapping’, which is used to treat a number of conditions including chronic pain, obesity, anxiety and stress.”

Comprehensive Search-Based Resources
Below are several searchable lists we can use and to which we can refer others so that we can all keep up with the new research and scientific studies as they are published.

EFT Tapping Training: http://www.efttappingtraining.com/eft-research/
EFT Tapping Research, searchable by topic, includes editor’s notes provided by Craig Weiner, DC.

The Association for the Advancement of Meridian Energy Techniques (AAMET International): https://aametinternational.org/discover-eft/eft-science-research/
The Science and Research behind EFT Tapping, searchable by topic, author, article type and year published.

Searchable by scientific rigor and provides pdf downloads of studies organized by specific condition, case studies, review articles, as well as a complete list of Energy Psychology studies.

EFT Universe: https://www.eftuniverse.com/research-studies/eft-research
EFT Universe list organized by type of study and then condition, provided by Dawson Church.

If you are so inclined, more research is always needed! If you are a practitioner, contact a researcher from any of the lists above who may be doing work in your area of expertise. Combine efforts by learning how your work can be structured and conducted to add to the growing proof! Let’s keep EFT Tapping in the news and worthy of consideration by NREPP as an evidence-based treatment.