

As promised, I am writing to relate an experience during the recent Atlanta retreat. This article illustrates the importance of testing work wherever possible as a way of flushing out any hidden aspects and is really an adjunct to Carol's recent article on testing.

John (not his real name) was one of my home group of 6 at the retreat, and initially presented with claustrophobia, which quickly changed to a fear of being trapped. He had experienced severe panic attacks over the last few years, seemingly for no reason.

Over the course of the 4 day retreat we systematically worked through many specific events where this fear had shown up, reducing each one to zero, either working one to one or using Borrowing Benefits within the group. The movie titles went as follows:

Breathe Deeply
The Music Stopped
Raging Bull
Passageway to Heaven
Root Canal
Porto Fino
Big Squeeze

Very often we had little or no content, but judging by the titles these movies encompassed a wide range of experiences where Bob's physical panic response had been intense.

We worked within the group on many different aspects and tested each movie by getting John to vividly imagine the scene. For the most part he was unable to access any emotional or physical response. He kept saying he was fine about it as he would never have to do it again. What really niggled with him was not knowing why the anxiety attacks began in the first place.

Also, whilst John was free of any emotional charge on the various movies he did not believe the panic response could have gone and needed to wait for an opportunity to test it in 'real life'. This seemed like a compromise and not really an acceptable 'result' for four day's work. It seemed important to test it with him if at all possible.

John had driven to the retreat and his car was parked outside. It was a standard saloon car.

I suggest that we might test the work by sitting in his car. Remember we were a home group of 6 people plus me! At this

suggestion John became visibly anxious, saying he had been dreading my suggesting that all week. We tapped on his anxiety and cleared it after a couple of rounds. He seemed quite excited by the idea and ready to go.

As John's issue was all about being trapped he decided that he should sit in the back of the car with myself and another of the group on either side of him so that he couldn't escape. He did this easily!

Then he decided the whole group should be in the car so that we could recreate the 'stuffy' feeling that often triggered the attacks. So with a few manoeuvres and shuffling around we all piled into the car. John will still fine, in fact he was laughing. He decided it was because he knew we were 'nice' and that we would let him out if he wanted to get out, hence the lack of reaction, so asked us to close all the windows and lock the doors, which we did. His anxiety level did rise briefly, and we tapped on it in situ and it cleared.

John then decided that we needed to have the engine running and the heating on as warmth and stuffiness were the main triggers for him. At this point I decided that it would be safest to tap continually on John during this experience and I asked Lucy, who was sitting on his other side, to help me by tapping on his finger points whilst he experienced this. John was a strong guy and I didn't want to risk anyone being hurt if he panicked, this way we could catch it early, and it was reassuring for him too. His anxiety levels did begin to go up, which was hardly surprising, it was not a very pleasant environment even for the rest of us. But the continual tapping brought them down again very quickly.

One of John's movies was about the dentist so one of the group put a hand over his mouth to imitate the mask. And another put a cloth on his head to increase the trapped feelings.....but they weren't there, in fact John was laughing!

He could not believe he was doing what he was doing, and decided to give it one final test which was to have another member of the group drive the car around the grounds of Simpsonwood, with all of us in it, the heating on and the windows and doors locked! At this point, I confess to being a little worried, especially when the driver suggested taking us out onto the highway at which point I drew the line! But John was completely fine. We certainly looked a sight, seven very hot people steamed up and tapping as we drove, but I considered that the job was done and he was free of his fear.

However, there was one remaining aspect which had the potential to sabotage the work, John's need to know. I was planning on returning to the home room and working with that when he had his own insight, namely that of being stuck in the birth canal! Yet another example of the insights being allowed to surface once the limiting fears have been cleared, a phenomena that occurs so often with EFT.

John left the retreat determined to put his new found freedom to another test. He was flying to Boston the next day and usually he had to take ice packs with him to calm him down, and sit on the aisle seat. He decided to test himself by sitting in the middle seat, without the packs. I got an email from him saying he had been absolutely fine! In his words: "Just a small update to let you know that flying to Boston and back was a breeze. Absolute zeros the whole weekend and that included a lot of tube rides."

This article shows not just the importance of testing, but also of the power of the group. John felt very supported and it really was teamwork. It also illustrates the importance of sometimes letting the client take control of their process. In this case, John led us through the testing process, working through the aspects himself, and playing a major part in his own healing. To John I feel this would have been as important as the therapy itself, and all part of proving that he did feel differently and was back in control.

A big thank you to my home group for joining in with this process, you were all fantastic! I know that at times it was uncomfortable in that car, but you all kept your sense of humour and focus. Thank you!