



## **EFT and an Eating Disorder**

Louise is a young woman with a history of anorexia and bulimia. Her history included parental divorce and an incident of sexual abuse, both of which happened within two months of each other when she was eight. She had been in and out of therapy all her teenage years and whilst she could get temporary respite from her eating disorders the relief never lasted and the bulimia would return.

Louise was now married with two small children and was concerned not to pass her eating anxieties on to her daughters.

She was aware, from her years in psychotherapy, that the eating problems started around her tenth birthday when she was sent away from home to boarding school. She was the youngest in the school, and the only one from a split home.

We tapped through various memories from that time when Louise had felt abandoned and very alone. She would take refuge in her tuck box and gain temporary comfort. But nothing seemed to totally take away her pain, no amount of food could clear the feelings.

Gradually she began to put on weight, which resulted in her being teased by her peers at school. At home her mother was critical of her weight and put her on a strict diet regime. She hated the food she was being given, she said it felt 'cold'. She began to throw it back up as she couldn't bear the coldness in her body, as she put it 'the food wasn't nurturing or loving'. Bulimia soon became her way of feeling in control.

We tapped through all the aspects above:

Even though I was abandoned..

Even though they sent me away...

Even though I was all alone....

Even though the food felt cold...

Even though I felt unloved...

Even though I had to get it out of my body...

As is so wonderful always with EFT and IET, the next piece to work with presented itself. It was the sexual abuse. Louise had done much work with this before we met so was able to easily tell the story and did not seem to have any high emotional response to it. She had obviously told it many times before and it seemed almost boring to her. Still, I took the precaution of tapping on her whilst she spoke.

As I was quite close to her I was able to carefully monitor the details of her physiology whilst she spoke and what I noticed was that she seemed to be rolling her tongue in her mouth between sentences. I asked her what was going on in her mouth and she said her tongue felt very big and furry, like there was no room in her mouth for anything else. We tapped on that and it seemed to reduce a little, but not completely. I asked Louise whether this was a familiar feeling and she said yes, it happened before every binge eat. Was there any taste with it? Yes – Louise started to cry and retch. What was happening? She said she had a taste and smell in her mouth she couldn't bear, and it was the smell of her abuser. She was desperate for some chocolate, something sweet, to get it to go, to escape it.

This was the perfect opportunity to tap, and we started tapping simply with 'this smell' and 'this taste'.

We did not do very many rounds on either, which surprised me, before the smell and taste faded.

Louise said she had always been very sensitive to smells in particular, but also tastes. There were particular smells which she knew she overreacted to, particularly those of dirty or old musty clothes, and bad breath.

She then had the insight that her boarding school was full of old musty clothes and blankets etc. No wonder she had needed to eat! Perhaps there had been more to it than the surface abandonment.

I suggested that Louise tap on the first sign of any feeling in her tongue or unpleasant smell and see what happened with the bulimia. I wasn't sure we had completely cleared it, and I wanted to see whether any more aspects would arise. The session was over. The other important factor I suggested was that if tapping didn't reduce the feelings then she was free to binge anyway, because there may be another layer to it, I didn't know. I think there was something important about giving her 'permission' to eat as she liked whilst doing the work. Perhaps that in itself gave her some comfort.

I didn't see Louise again for a couple of weeks although we exchanged emails. There had been a couple of times when she had noticed the feeling coming back in her tongue, but had managed to tap through it and keep on track. She had noted the times and we tapped through them when she came back. They were both to do with people wearing dirty clothes.

But the bulimia didn't return, nor has it done again, and that was over two years ago.

We did need to do further work as Louise needed to learn how to eat properly and enjoy a healthy relationship around food, but the old behaviours were gone in that first session.

I think that Louise had encoded the memory of the abuse in her senses of smell and taste, both of which are extremely powerful. By tapping with those senses, continually testing as we went, Louise was able to change a core behaviour that she had been battling with for years.

I am sure that the many hours of psychotherapy and counseling she had done to that point made our work quicker and easier, but nonetheless without getting to those primary senses I doubt she would have been so very successful in the end.

Emma Roberts

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