

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT): A Look at the Evidence

By Steve Wells

This paper provides evidence that EFT is emerging as a technique of interest for psychologists

Research Evidence for EFT

A scientifically controlled study, conducted at Curtin University by psychologists Steve Wells, Kathryn Polglase, Dr Henry B Andrews, Dr Patricia Carrington and Dr Harvey A Baker, found that a single 30-minute treatment session of EFT could produce valid behavioural and subjective effects. Behavioural improvements obtained following treatment were maintained and possibly enhanced at 6-9 month follow up. This study has been the subject of extensive peer review, and has been published in a peer review journal (Journal of Clinical Psychology, Volume 59, Number 9 (September 2003) pp. 943 – 966).

This research has been independently and scientifically corroborated in a follow-up study conducted at Queens College in New York by Drs Harvey Baker and Linda Siegel. Their study, which compared EFT treatment to a no-treatment control as well as a non-directive counselling condition, produced results that almost directly paralleled the results achieved in our study.

Reference:

Harvey A. Baker and Linda Siegel, "One session of Emotional Freedom Techniques is effective for reducing fear of specific animals: A controlled laboratory study," Paper presented at the second annual meeting of the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology, San Diego, May 2001.

In addition, over the past 7 years I (Steve Wells) have had input into and am aware of several other research studies on EFT that have been conducted and still others that are in the process of being conducted in various universities and clinics throughout the world.

- Several research studies have been conducted on EFT and published / presented at professional meetings.
- Further research studies on EFT are currently in progress.
- Related research studies have been conducted on associated meridian-based approaches including TFT (Thought Field Therapy from which EFT evolved), acupuncture (from which the acupoints used in EFT were identified), and therapeutic touch.
- Clinical experience of the author and that of several hundred other clinicians throughout the world who have been experimenting with and using these procedures attests to the efficacy of techniques such as EFT (Accessed via various list serves over the past 8 years in which I have participated, through membership in the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology, and through their various writings and conversations at conferences, workshops and via ongoing conversations with clinicians and researchers).

Details of Above:

Further Research Studies on EFT:

Psychologists Wendy Waite and Mark D. Holder (2003) from the Department of Psychology, Okanagan University College in Canada, found that a single application of EFT produced significant reductions in self-reported fear in a university cohort. They argued that EFT works because it shares some of the same components as systematic desensitization.

Wendy L. Waite and Mark D. Hodder, (2003) "Assessment of the Emotional Freedom Technique: An Alternative Treatment for Fear", The Scientific Review of Mental Health Practice, Vol 2, No. 1, pp. 20-25.

Psychologists Sharon Jones and Dr Henry B Andrews from Curtin University (Jones and Andrews, 2001) studied EFT treatment (vs. waiting list control) of public speaking anxiety in treatment sessions of 45-minutes conducted by psychologists in the University counseling center. The authors found significant improvements in self-report (Spielberger STAI) and subjective levels of anxiety for EFT treatment. In tracking the results of EFT treatment throughout the session, they found that subjective anxiety was significantly reduced after just 15 minutes of EFT treatment and continued to reduce throughout the treatment session.

Sharon Jones and Henry B. Andrews, "The efficacy of emotional freedom technique in reducing public speaking anxiety: An exploratory study." Paper presented at a meeting of the Western Australian branch of the College of Counselling Psychologists, March 2001.

Dr. Paul Swingle and his colleagues (Swingle, Pulos & Swingle, 2000), studied the effects of EFT on auto accident victims suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. These researchers found that three months after they had learned EFT (in two sessions) these auto accident victims showed significant positive changes in their brain waves and in self-reported symptoms of stress.

Swingle, P., Pulos, L., & Swingle, M. (May, 2000). Effects of a meridian-based therapy, EFT, on symptoms of PTSD in auto accident victims. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology, Las Vegas, NV.

In another study, Dr. Swingle used EFT as a treatment for children diagnosed with epilepsy. The children were administered EFT by their parents every time each day that the parents suspected a seizure might occur. Swingle found significant reductions in seizure frequency among these very young children, as well as extensive clinical improvement in the children's E. E. G. readings after exposure to two weeks of daily in-home EFT treatment.

Swingle, P. (May, 2000). Effects of the Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) method on seizure frequency in children diagnosed with epilepsy. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology, Las Vegas, NV.

Large Scale Study on Energy Psychology (Including EFT) – Joaquin Andrade, MD and David Feinstein PhD:

In preliminary clinical trials involving more than 29,000 patients from 11 allied treatment centers in South America during a 14-year period, a variety of randomized, double-blind pilot studies were conducted. **The largest of the sub-studies, conducted over a five-and-one-half year period, followed the course of treatment of approximately 5,000 patients diagnosed with anxiety disorders.** These patients were randomly assigned to an experimental group (imagery and statements paired with the manual stimulation of selected acupuncture points – as in EFT and TFT) or a control group (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy supplemented by medication as needed). Half of them received the energy therapy treatments and no medication. Interviews at the end of treatment, along with follow-up interviews at 1, 3, 6, and 12 months, showed that the energy therapy was significantly more effective than the CBT/medication protocol in both the proportion of patients showing some improvement and the proportion of patients showing complete remission of symptoms:

Outcome Comparisons with 5,000 Anxiety Patients at Close of Therapy

	CBT / MEDICATION	ACUPOINT
Some Improvement	63%	90%

Complete Remission of Symptoms	51%	76%
--------------------------------	-----	-----

More details of this extensive ongoing research program, excerpted with permission from *Energy Psychology Interactive* are provided in the appendix.

Joaquin Andrade, MD and David Feinstein PhD, "Energy Psychology: Theory, Indications, Evidence." In David Feinstein, *Energy Psychology Interactive*, (Ashland, OR: Innersource 2004, distributed by Norton Professional Books)

Brain mapping studies conducted by Dr Andrade and his team revealed that subjects with generalized anxiety whose acupuncture points were stimulated tended to be distinguished by a general pattern of wave normalization throughout the brain which not only persisted at 12-month follow-up, but became more pronounced. Details of this research and a sampling of brain scan images from this research can be found in *Energy Psychology Interactive* and online at:

Details of study findings: http://www.innersource.net/energy_psych/epi_research.htm
Imagery: http://www.innersource.net/energy_psych/epi_neuro_foundations.htm

Further studies on EFT currently underway include:

A controlled study of EFT in a clinical setting is in progress at Stairways Behavioral Health, an outpatient clinic in Erie, Pennsylvania. The study consists of a treatment group using EFT, a group using a psycho-education approach for the same number of weeks as the treatment group (6 weeks), and a no treatment control group.

A study on the effects of EFT on Math Anxiety is being conducted by Doctors Lois and Ronald Worthington and Dr Harvey Baker of Princeton, NJ.

A number of studies on EFT are being undertaken and planned under the guidance of Dr Harvey Baker in conjunction with other researchers including:

- (1) A study in the Psychology Department of Queens College in New York, to determine the effect of EFT vs. gentle calisthenics, and the effect of a no-treatment control group, on "free throws" in basketball.
- (2) Clinical research planned by Father Kurien George and Harvey Baker, to take place in India. These researchers plan to study the effects of EFT on alcohol addiction in a small village in India.
- (3) A different type of replication of the Wells et al. and Baker-Siegel studies will also be undertaken by Harvey Baker who has just received a small grant to partially support it. Dr Baker will compare EFT using the standard tapping points, to a form of "EFT" which uses other body locations.
- (4) Harvey Baker has also designed a study which will use a virtual reality program for fear of public speaking to assess the effects of EFT on this fear.

Related research on TFT, Acupuncture, Healing Touch:

Details of much of this related research is provided in our research paper that was published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. Although research on the meridian-based interventions now being used in psychology is still relatively sparse, the research on acupuncture, from which they are derived, is quite extensive. If required, I can provide a copy of this paper to the Board, and can also provide further details of related research.

EFT is becoming increasingly recognised as a technique used by psychologists

Whilst EFT and other meridian-based techniques have only very recently become known to many psychologists because they are relatively new techniques, meridian-based interventions such as EFT are the subject of much psychological interest and study worldwide, are being studied and used clinically by many thousands of psychologists worldwide including several hundred Australian psychologists.

Evidence for the above claim:

Research studies being conducted on EFT and other meridian-based interventions at a large number of psychology departments in various universities and clinics worldwide. See details of studies above. A full list of those whom I am in contact with and aware of can be provided on request.

Association Membership and Conference Attendance:

An international association, The Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology (www.energypsych.org), has been created to sponsor research and study of these techniques. ACEP held its first international conference in 1999 and has since held annual workshops in the USA, Europe (since 2001), Canada (since 2000) and Australasia (2004). *ACEP has over 600 paid professional members worldwide many of whom are psychologists*, and several thousand psychologists have attended international conferences sponsored by ACEP in the USA, Canada, Australasia (Singapore), Europe and the UK.

Participation of psychologists in workshops and trainings:

Several hundred Australian psychologists have participated in advanced trainings conducted by myself and/or Dr David Lake. Full details of numbers attending can be supplied on request. Several hundred more are conservatively estimated to have participated in trainings conducted by other psychologists who are conducting trainings in EFT and TFT. I would estimate that well over 1000 Australian psychologists have attended an *advanced* training in at least one of the meridian-based therapies.

Participation in and writings on various list serves and discussion groups:

Over the past 7 years I have participated in a number of list serves and online discussion groups on which psychologists and other professionals who have been studying and using EFT and other meridian-based approaches have discussed their own clinical experiences in using and studying these techniques. I am willing to provide a summary of these e-lists if you require this and estimate participation rates of psychologists in these forums to be in the thousands.

Practitioner listings:

A large number of psychologists list EFT among the techniques they use. The quickest source of such information is the practitioner listings on various websites. Apart from psychologists who have been trained by myself and Dr David Lake, many psychologists are on the international EFT practitioner listings maintained by Gary Craig, the developer of EFT at www.emofree.com, and by Patricia Carrington PhD at www.eftupdate.com. Many psychologists listed on the ACEP website at www.energypsych.org cite EFT as one of the methods they use. In addition, Fred Gallo, PhD has a listing of psychologists using Energy Diagnostic and Treatment Methods (EDTM) on his website at www.energypsych.com, all of whom would be familiar with and/or using EFT.

Public acknowledgement by respected figures in Psychology.

EFT and meridian-based interventions have been publicly acknowledged by many highly respected psychologists and psychiatrists who have cited them as worthy of psychological attention. These include notable figures such as Bessel A. van der Kolk, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Boston University School of Medicine; Charles Figley, PhD, leading expert on trauma, Traumatology Institute Director and Professor Florida State University; Bill O'Hanlon, PhD, leading figure in brief therapy; Lee Pulos, Ph.D., Former President, Canadian Society of Clinical Hypnosis; Nathaniel Branden, Ph.D, Author, *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*; Joel Elkes, M.D., Professor Emeritus and Former Chair Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine; Patricia Carrington, PhD, Clinical Professor; Department of Psychiatry, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Piscataway, NJ, and several dozen others whose details I could provide on request.

Extensive writings appearing on EFT and Energy Psychology generally by psychologists and notable publications by psychologists on Energy Psychology and EFT:

A large number of publications exist, both books and articles in which EFT and meridian-based interventions are being presented as a viable treatment option for psychologists and these are being written, purchased, read, reviewed and praised by psychologists. A very basic search will reveal over a dozen published works by psychologists which focus on EFT

and other meridian-based interventions. Notable works include: *Energy Psychology*, by Fred Gallo, PhD; *Energy Psychology Interactive* by David Feinstein, PhD (NB: The Energy Psychology Interactive Advisory Board consists of 27 leading figures in the Energy Psychology field, 19 of whom are MD's or PhD's); *Energy Psychology in Psychotherapy*, by Fred Gallo, PhD; *Energy Psychology and EMDR*, by (psychologists) John G. Hartung and Michael D Galvin.

For the reasons outlined above I contend that EFT, although a newer technique, and one which is still gaining recognition in the wider world of psychology, is certainly recognized by many psychologists as a technique that is worthy of their clinical study, research and teaching. Whilst research is continuing, those of us who have used the techniques clinically for many years (over 8 years in my case of research and clinical application/study) have little doubt about their utility when appropriately integrated within psychological practice.

Steve Wells
Registered Psychologist
Western Australia

27 March 2006