

Why Does Stress Make Us Ill?

A Short Guide To Restoring Peace
and Well being

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Introduction

Although it is now widely known that prolonged stress leads to ill health most still believe that illness is a chance event or has something to do with genetic predisposition even though new findings about genetics disprove this.

Most of us would find it difficult to deny the obvious correlation between, for instance, prolonged anxiety, undergoing the distress of relationship break up or job loss and feeling distinctly unwell. What can be more insidious is an underlying level of stress such as vague dissatisfactions or buried trauma that has been triggered in some way and then pushed back down. In later chapters I will explain why we are affected quite deeply by less obvious factors.

Perhaps you are reading this because you are worried about your stress levels or that they have already begun to affect your health. Perhaps stress is affecting your ability to do your job well and you are worried about promotion or even starting a new career. Whatever your goal is, if you are feeling the affects of stress, particularly the fatigue that so often accompanies it you will find something of benefit in this short book.

By the end of the next hour you should be feeling a lot more hopeful about how to master your emotional reactions. With the sense of being in control this brings know also that through mastering your reactions to stress you make a difference to your health, relationships, work, personal and spiritual growth - whatever is most dear to you in life.

Some of the exercises contained in this book are very simple to practice in the moment; the other techniques have been proven a thousand fold to ensure positive results.

I recommend that you try each exercise offered a couple of times before you settle on your favourite. Some of the techniques, with practice, can be used in the moment, without anyone knowing what you are doing. This is an invaluable skill to learn in today's less than peaceful world.

Stress is a dangerously escalating problem, Health and Safety at Work statistics on Stress have shown the following:

- Stress has been proven to be the major contributor to physical and mental illness.
- Tens of millions of days a year are lost due to stress-induced sickness.
- Productivity has declined
- General apathy at work has increased.
- Staff moral has decreased.

In the workplace the most common stressors include:

- Increasing workload
- Bullying
- Job cuts
- Rapid change

- Lack of appreciation or being undermined
- Constant deadlines
- Not enough staff

And I'm sure you could add more...

There is also of course the stress we *bring* to work such as relationship problems, family circumstances, financial worries and health concerns or simply knowing we are in the wrong job.

While there are some circumstances we may not be able to change in the foreseeable future we can certainly change the sense of powerlessness we may feel about them. As I will illustrate, this lack of control or loss of power is a common factor in stress.

I believe that taking care of you is a form of respect and appreciation for self that will radiate out to others. If you have ever felt undermined or put down then perhaps it is time to take a look at how you can begin to build up your own sense of self worth and confidence in a way that will be palpable to others around you.

So with that in mind lets begin by looking at exactly what "stress" is and how it affects our health and emotions.

Chapter One

What Is Stress?

The official conclusion from the major medical institutions now is that 95% of illness is caused by stress. There is a lot about this statement that would make for interesting discussion but in brief I would like to use the dictionary definition of stress, “a strain put upon the system”.

Apart from emotional and mental stress this should include the strain we place upon our bodies through inadequate diet, addictions, nutritional deficiencies and lack of movement/exercise. Taking care of oneself physically is important, not just for the health of our bodies but for our emotional and mental well being as well. In this book however, the focus will be on alleviating emotional stress. (As far as physical health is concerned there is information on my website and more will be posted in future newsletters)

Using a client example lets take a look at what is happening in the body when we experience stress.

Sarah’s Story

Sarah was very excited to be offered a job in a field she’d always wanted to work in – the pay was good and although she was a bit nervous, she looked forward to the challenges of a new job in a new city.

Within a month of being in her new job a number of elements had started to cause Sarah distress. Her line manager was busy on another project and had no time to go through what was expected of her so she often felt confused about her role in the project.

The workplace was a huge institution with complicated slow admin procedures – Sarah felt powerless and very frustrated in this situation because despite big efforts and the fact that Sarah works quickly and efficiently very little seemed to move forward.

The most distressing aspect however was that another member of staff in a more senior position regularly undermined Sarah personally and professionally.

Sarah began to take time off work, as she often felt depressed, listless, not wanted, heard or appreciated. There was a lack of support and clear guidance in her workplace.

The most stressful thing for Sarah was the level of personal attack she was under by being undermined; to the unconscious mind this is no different from the threat of physical attack. On a daily basis Sarah’s body was undergoing a series of hormonal and biochemical reactions related to the amount of threat she was reacting to on an instinctual level.

What happens inside the body when we are stressed?

These biochemical/hormonal reactions are of course known as the “fight or flight” response. During this response various glands communicate with each other

prioritising the muscles, heart, lungs and brain – in short the body gears up for action. The liver then releases glucose into the bloodstream for energy. More oxygen and an increased flow of blood for the muscles are needed so the breath becomes more rapid, the heart rate speeds up and blood pressure rises. The strain on the kidneys (and anxiety levels) is felt due to the release of adrenaline, which is needed to increase the heart rate.

Other systems such as the digestive system and the immune system take second place, either being disrupted or having less energy with which to work efficiently.

While this response is useful for running or fighting, it is not so useful if there's no physical outlet to use or run off the hormonal reactions. In today's world most of us react with this level of biochemical intensity when opening bills, facing conflict at work or home, the pressure of deadlines and a hundred and one other daily stresses. As we can't run out of the house screaming every time we open a bill or punch someone when we feel "attacked" we tend to bottle it all up!

The freeze response

This "bottling up" part is what Sarah was having to do, this is the third part to the fight or flight response that people seldom mention and could be termed the "freeze" response. It is of course what most of us do, and when we do this all the hormones and chemicals released have no immediate outlet. They circulate for a few days before being secreted by the body; if stress is ongoing then the chemical build up will become too much for the body to cope with.

In Sarah's case they continued to build up leading to a kind of paralysed feeling, giving up and the need to hide from problems. Sarah started to take days off work, drink more alcohol and eat unhealthily. As her attitude to being undermined became more negative this will have induced an increasing spiral of antagonism between Sarah and her work colleague; it also affected relationships with other staff.

This increased until Sarah had to take some prolonged sick leave, her body could not cope with the strain that it had been subjected to for several months and she had headaches, a severe throat and chest infection, sinusitis and painful joints.

This is when Sarah came to me for therapy; we first of all cleared the worst of the distress she was feeling. The next session was spent on taking a deeper look at the relationship with her colleague; the third was about clearing more distress and installing positive resource states.

We could have done a lot more but this was enough to enable her to cope with the situation and start taking care of herself again.

Sarah took back control

Sarah asked her line manager if she could work one day from home, also her work involved projects so she made sure she spent as much time out of the office as possible (not her natural environment to start with!), she also made sure she ate healthily and took good quality vitamins (depression and anxiety can be linked to and at least worsened by lack of certain nutrients).

Sarah stayed in frequent touch with good friends, walked a lot and visited home. She also took time to do positive visualisations and when feeling overwhelmed with stress again she used EFT (one of the techniques taught in this book). She also began to look for another job.

Sarah realised that her nature isn't suited to working in a large institution and although she was accepted for a new job in a place that offers a better support structure and working conditions she plans to build a freelance career.

I think Sarah is a good example of how being resourceful and self respectful enough to make personal changes can not only prevent more serious problems from taking hold but can help insure the forging of a better life for yourself.

Stress and ill health

Not everyone reacts as acutely as Sarah did and this can be quite dangerous, if we are coping with an onslaught of stress but doing nothing to alleviate it small signs of strain will be building up.

One relatively overlooked source of strain is prolonged stress on the adrenals; this can be dangerous in that while we may feel ok, physically we are on permanent hyper alert. This strain on the adrenals can go on for years after certain events eventually leading to a variety of different physical or mental health concerns.

For example over stimulation of the heart can lead to heart problems while less energy given to a system such as the digestion which requires large amounts of energy to digest food will lead to gut dysfunction. Our immune system also becomes tired or over stimulated which can result in frequent and chronic infections or auto-immune diseases, the constant tensing of muscles will of course lead to inevitable stiffness and pain.

Trauma

The other aspect of Sarah's case that is interesting and relevant is the fact that she took steps to insure a feeling of control over her own life again. This feeling of being "out of control" is the root of the freeze part of the stress reaction; this is also the definition of trauma.

Trauma is characterised by a feeling of not being in control; we visit this feeling often from birth onwards, sometimes pre birth as we absorb our mothers stress reactions. The trauma I am talking about here is just the normal experience of growing up for most people; abuse and major traumatic events will of course have an even deeper impact. The emotional impact of trauma over time becomes trapped in the body and in our energy systems to be triggered whenever we perceive something as a threat to our well being. The emotional energy being triggered is dependant upon the feelings we have about each event we are reacting to; this could be anxiety or anger, sadness or hurt, shame or embarrassment and finally complete overwhelm.

What this means is that *our reaction to a current stress* could be the tip of a stress reaction iceberg.

Just for now try the following:

Simple body awareness

1. Without moving, mentally scan your body, starting at the feet and running up to the head.
2. Now move in whatever way you need to.
3. How many adjustments did you make?

Try doing this on a regular basis to prevent the build up of muscular tension and discomfort.

We tend to ignore so many tiny signals of discomfort throughout the day, especially if we are sitting in front of a computer, for instance, thinking I'll just get this done then I will move. Then we may find we have a chronically sore back or stiff neck.

The following short exercise takes less than one minute to do and can be performed anywhere; it is extremely simple but like the exercise above will profoundly improve your well-being if done several times a day until it becomes habitual.

Quick tension release

1. Stretch your hands, release and allow them to rest in your lap.
2. Take a slow, steady breath and hold for a moment.
3. Let the breath out with a sigh – make the out breath longer than the in breath.
4. Drop your shoulders.
5. Let your mouth open slightly and rest your tongue on the bottom of your mouth.

Note how you feel after this, sometimes you will feel relief, sometimes you will actually feel worse. If you feel worse this will only be because you have been sitting on a lot of feelings all day for any number of reasons, usually because we get caught up in work and family and don't take quiet time for ourselves.

Read through the following chapters for ways to more deeply release distress, but before that it will be invaluable to build up a picture that shows exactly where you are regarding your physical and emotional well being.

Chapter Two

Evaluating Your Stress

Before we make positive changes it is useful to take stock of where we are in terms of stress symptoms. As everyone will respond a little differently to their circumstances, instead of issuing a standard stress questionnaire I am going to ask you to think more deeply about all areas of your life.

If you are the type of person that likes to chart progress or keep a journal I would highly recommend using a notebook to evaluate where you are right now and how you progress. This can be useful for the following reasons; most of us have a tendency to ignore how we really feel about what is happening until it becomes severe, by making a regular habit of writing we can pull the truth out of our unconscious mind and onto paper. This often starts the process of releasing distress. In a way that notebook becomes a receptive and quiet counsellor!

Another tendency we have as human beings is to think that whatever exists right now is how it's always been and always will be! That's a bit of an exaggeration but not far off the truth. There is a well known therapeutic occurrence called the apex effect, this is where a technique is so effective that by the end of a session the recipient, despite beginning the session and having spent several weeks in an extreme state of distress, will dismiss their new found peace of mind with a "but it wasn't that bad really".

Taking notes of how you feel even if it's just to check in once a month can be very reassuring as to how much progress you have made. Also, if you hit a stressful patch in the future you can look through past notes and take heart from the fact that you successfully dealt with it before and can deal with it again. This self-knowledge gives you the capacity to feel that you do have the power to heal yourself and improve your life. You are not at the mercy of life or others behaviour.

Physical Symptoms

Start by writing down today's date and then think about how you have been feeling physically, do you have health concerns or perhaps stiffness and discomfort that was not there a year ago? Or have existing ailments worsened? Are you shorter of breath, heart rate permanently faster, do you sweat more or perhaps your hands shake a little? An increasingly common symptom is "tired all the time" (so common in fact it's often just referred to as TATT); this one usually has a myriad of reasons just one of which is stress. (The most common physical reason for TATT is an overgrowth of the yeast organism known as *Candida Albicans* – more about this on my website)

Stand up and stretch various parts of the body; how far can you go without pain or uncomfortable tightness? Write down what you notice in a series of short sentences.

On a scale of zero to ten, ten being extreme discomfort/pain and zero being relaxed ease let a number come into your mind for all symptoms noted.

For instance if when you stretch your neck to one side and it feels stiff and painful let a number come to mind that symbolises how much of a problem neck tension is, just allow your unconscious mind to come up with the number and don't worry if you think it's "wrong".

i.e. "My neck is tight and sore" – 5

Now write down any other physical concerns you have, some ailments could be hard to evaluate so just take note of these and write out the symptoms, i.e. arthritis will have specific types of pain, IBS has several symptoms, write out what is particular or personal to you. Include all health concerns you have whether you think it's stress related or not, whatever ailments you have can be worsened by stress.

All of the evaluations in this section will be useful for some of the techniques you will be learning about shortly.

Now think about the physical in day-to-day life; how are your sleeping patterns and perceived levels of tension. Have eating or drinking (tea/coffee consumption, alcohol, water, fizzy drinks) habits changed? Stress can often throw healthy practices out the window when really it's when we need them the most.

Write down anything that you have noticed and give each problem a score if appropriate – either a number or a few words describing how it is.

Mental Symptoms

Do you have difficulty concentrating or suffer from bouts of "brain fog"? Do negative thoughts tend to spiral out of control? Or perhaps you can't switch off at night? Do you find it difficult to make decisions? Are you more forgetful?

Some people find that their head seems to buzz or feels peculiar when they are quiet for a few minutes in the middle of a hectic day. Perhaps you have developed compulsive or obsessive behaviour - despite what psychiatrists say this is actually relatively easy to treat. Take notes on any symptoms and evaluate them with a number from one to ten that symbolises the severity of the symptoms.

Emotional Symptoms

Take a while to think about how you have been feeling for the past six months and more recently. If any of the following is relevant to you then write about it perhaps give numbers for severity right now as you think about the emotion or situation. If it's an ongoing situation then what are your predominant feelings about this situation and include how you feel about yourself in relation to how you are feeling. We often add to the distress by being very negative about our feelings and ourselves.

Has there been an increase in certain emotions such as anger, irritability, embarrassment, shame, fear, panic, sadness, resentment, jealousy or guilt?

Or states such as anxiety, depression, restlessness, apathy/lack of enthusiasm and overwhelm?

Many people find their confidence levels drop after prolonged stress, some becoming quite fearful or shy about social engagements; in fact a decrease in sociability is a common side effect of stress. Other behavioural traits that can surface, or become worse are being judgemental or critical, of self and others; this connects with lack of confidence as judgement and criticism are linked to low self-acceptance and self-esteem.

Relationships – work colleagues, family, friends and partner - can suffer, with escalating conflict and difficulty resolving issues. If you find the relationships in your life are suffering this is often due to some form of stress and it is best not to make any decisions or come to conclusions until you are in a calmer state of mind. Some relationships can be irreparably damaged as a result of emotional states that had little to do with the person concerned.

A form of severe emotional stress can occur when trauma or painful memories from the past are triggered by a relatively insignificant event. The distress of this cannot be overestimated because as the *emotions* of the trauma are retriggered the unconscious mind experiences the event as if it was happening *all over again*. Until the emotional intensity is cleared it can become quite difficult to function in a calm or rational manner. If this is quite severe I would recommend seeing a professional therapist, preferably one trained in energy psychology (such as Emotional Freedom Techniques or EmoTrance), as this will be the fastest, not to mention kindest, way to clear the pain and distress. These forms of therapy do not get rid of memories they merely take out the emotional sting rendering the actual memory neutral to the point of feeling as if you just watched an unpleasant movie that soon begins to fade. New understandings and insights about the past have room to surface once the emotion has been alleviated.

It could also be worth dividing your life into sections relevant to you and evaluating the stress over each area, or how stress in one place has affected how you function in another. Areas such as home and where you live, romantic relationships, family, work, social life, spirituality, personal development, community/contribution to the world, education, health/body.

As you have evaluated each area of your life you may have resolved to make changes such as doing more exercise or dietary or lifestyle changes. For now just make a note of what it is you would like to change and put that aside for later – it is much easier to install healthy new habits when you are feeling relaxed.

Refer back to all of this as you work through the following techniques and over the next few months as you find you regularly use your favourite stress busting methods. It will be very gratifying watching the progress you make in personal well being as you make a habit of relaxation.

Chapter Three

Notice What Is Going On

To really manage or even master stress it is helpful to notice exactly what is going on within you, to become extremely self-aware. In fact one of the most instantly calming things to do when anxious is to simply name what you are feeling in the moment, not only emotionally but also your physical response to the emotions. You may have begun this process in the last chapter, taking stock of your life in relation to stress. You may have gained an enormous amount of insight and made some resolutions for change by sitting down and quietly evaluating things for an hour or so; just doing that *will* have made a difference. What happens however when you are back in a stressful situation?

It's all very well deciding to change your diet, do some exercise, put aside time for conscious relaxation and so on but what happens to those decisions when stress overwhelms us again? The first step needs to be simple and to be very firmly rooted in self-awareness. This also needs to feel good otherwise why would you bother making a habit of it?

One of the most effective ways to deal with distress in the moment is to simply allow whatever we are feeling to just be, to breath into the feeling and let it flow through the body. This sounds simplistic, almost childish, but of course is quite difficult not only to do, but also to practice consistently.

Most of the time we suppress our feelings because we are trying to avoid the pain of them or because we have grown up believing that it is wrong to be emotional so we become very skilled at the art of distraction. Also of course, when we are young we simply do not know how to process certain events or as mentioned in Chapter One many events in our early life are perceived as a trauma due to our not being in control of the situation. We then "freeze" the reaction and store it away until we are able to process it at a later date.

Due to the energy of certain "frozen" reactions we end up with different pockets of emotion stored as energy disruptions all over our body; these can be triggered when we think particular thoughts related to whatever is going on around us. If the emotion is intense enough or enough layers of it build up, the energy of this emotion will end up being stored in the muscles and joints to manifest as stiffness and pain or in the internal organs to manifest as disease.

Emotional Awareness

We have a tendency in the West to ignore our emotions or find them embarrassing and unacceptable. The fact is human beings are emotional; emotional freedom is as much about allowing ourselves to feel as it is about clearing uncomfortable emotions.

A normal upbringing is one where we have learned to feel *bad* in some way for whatever we are feeling. The problem with this is that the following happens. When we have a negative response to something we immediately try to suppress it which means that the response we have to the original *response* is *fear* plus our

typical feeling about our reaction (embarrassment, shame?) so now we have several emotions triggered, which we stuff down!

Whatever is going on emotionally in the present moment is seldom as bad as you think it is. However, a word of caution, if you are experiencing a major form of stress or are used to coping, constantly busy and do not usually think about your feelings then I suggest that you try the following exercise several times on your own in a quiet space with an hour to spare as strong emotions can surface. This is normal and not an indication that you are falling apart or that there is something wrong with you.

There is nothing wrong with you!

If you are worried about your possible reaction then I suggest you seek support and help as you release what has been building up. This is an act of kindness to yourself not an admission of failure. I can tell you that as therapist who has seen thousands of people in distress over the past twenty years and also as someone who has been trained to observe very subtle nuances of body language and voice tonality over the years I can quite categorically state that I have yet to meet a person who is completely happy, emotionally balanced and issue free! This is part of life here on Earth; we are all in the process of learning how to be whole, happy, loving and peaceful.

With this in mind please be patient and kind with yourself as you try out exercises you feel drawn to over the next few pages.

The following is a technique for instant release of whatever is going on in the moment; it needs to be practiced first before it becomes a source of comfort during distress.

1. As you slowly breathe in ask yourself "What am I feeling right now?" As you breathe out let the answer come to you. Silently or out loud name the emotion that comes to mind.
2. When you next breathe in, breathe into the feeling. Then as you breathe out, let the feeling go with your breath.
3. As you are breathing in again, say, "(Name of emotion) is what I am feeling right now and that's ok".
4. Continue to breathe slowly in and out asking the question again "what do I feel right now" and repeating, "it is perfectly ok for me to feel this" or "this is the best I can manage right now" until all you are aware of is calm.

Occasionally performing this will overwhelm you with emotions that will need some release, such as crying or allowing yourself to feel and breath through anger, if you think this is likely then obviously privacy is preferable. If you have had a very difficult day at work or in some other situation sitting with this simple exercise for 15 minutes when you come home will release what has been building up, allowing you to enjoy your evening. Mostly however this exercise will serve as a quick release of whatever you are holding onto in the moment.

The real beauty of this exercise is that doing it regularly trains the mind to come into the present moment, which is actually, for the most part, very peaceful. I was

surprised at how quickly it became possible for me to be aware of a strong emotion and while allowing myself to feel it I was also aware of a deep feeling of peace below that. Often the relief in actually naming the feeling releases the tension to the extent that you can feel it draining out of you.

Relaxation and Self-Healing Exercise

The following exercise can be used for deeper relaxation, again if practised a few times you can run through the main steps in five minutes if you don't have much time.

This exercise can also be used to send healing to various parts of the body that need it; simply focussing positive attention on the body has been proven to boost the immune system by increasing white cell count. It does a whole lot more than that however; one of the best books I've read recently about the power of our mind when it comes to healing the body is "How Your Mind Can Heal Your Body", in this book, pharmaceutical scientist David Hamilton, goes into detail about his research into the placebo effect and how we can use visualisation to bring about near miraculous recovery from illness. It's very readable and contains entertaining case studies and clear instructions.

If you also find it difficult to appreciate your body this exercise will help, especially if you customise it to what you would like to achieve (it's difficult to imagine, say, your skin improving or having a slim body if you constantly bring yourself down with negative self defeating thoughts).

When in a receptive relaxed state of mind we can talk to our self – literally reprogram our mind – with positive words and suggestions. Just let your imagination take over – you may be pleasantly surprised.

Done thoroughly, especially if you add your own variations and imagination, this exercise can take about 20 minutes.

I have used the imagery of white light, but you can substitute this for a colour you prefer. For instance blues, greens and pinks are calming, pink and gold is soothing, dark blue, white and gold is protective, pink is associated with love, orange with joy, red with courage, energy and passion, silver with grace. For many more examples look up a book on colour healing or just use whatever colour seems right to you in the moment.

Perform the following in a room with gentle light. Make sure you are comfortable, warm and will not be disturbed for half an hour. It is best if your spine is straight, you can sit or lie down but be aware that if lying down you could fall asleep – though this is obviously good if you perform this at the end of the evening.

Quiet, soothing music helps, particularly if it contains binaural beats (these are embedded beats/pulses that encourage the mind to switch into deep relaxation patterns).

- Start by simply observing the breath, you will notice that as you are doing this, your breathing slows down. As smoothly as possible deepen and slow the breath, focus on nothing but this for about three to four breaths, making the outward breath longer than the inward.

- Take your awareness down to your feet and as you breathe in point the toes away and as you breathe out release them, repeat this as you pull the toes towards you. Move up to your calves, breath in and tighten the muscles, release as you breath out. Continue to work up the body, one part at a time, tightening the muscles as you breath in and releasing on the out breath.
- As you reach the hips/buttocks pause for a deep breath in and out relaxing your lower body even more. Then continue to work up through the abdomen, chest and shoulders, also bringing awareness to the spine and back muscles as you move up the torso. Work down the arms to the hands then back up to the neck, over the scalp and finally the face.
- Breathe smoothly and naturally as you think about relaxing the muscles around the eyes, jaw and mouth, allow the lips to open slightly and let the tongue rest on the floor of your mouth.
- Just observe how you are feeling now, if you are feeling emotional in any way simply breathe into this and let the feelings flow out of you.
- Now imagine that soft, healing white light (or your preferred colour) is pouring into the top of your head, running through the skin, the muscles of the scalp and down the face and sinking through your entire head. Really imagine this, see the light filling every cell, bringing balance and healing.
- Move down the body with this light/colour; think about it filling every body part, every cell and all the spaces in between. Feel the soothing softness of this light bringing deep relaxation to the muscles. Also to deepen the effect, talk to yourself about what is happening – your body will respond.
- If any areas seem dark or tense spend some extra time there.
- When your body is flooded with light see this pouring out of you with each breath, filling your energy field with healing and protection (you can imagine that light is shielding you from other people you may find stressful – eventually though the more peaceful you become the more difficult it is for others to bother you) With each outward breath expand and strengthen this until it seems to fill the whole room.
- As you continue to peacefully breath in and out just repeat some words that are meaningful to you, perhaps “I am ok as I am right now”, “right now I need do nothing”, “I choose peace” or “what if, just for now I relaxed”.

I recommend reading any of Masaru Emotos' books on the energy of water for an example of just how profoundly our thoughts and the words we use affect us. I would also recommend watching the film “What The *Bleep* Do We Know” for some very visual examples of what is occurring in our body at a molecular level when we are emotional. I find having watched strong and colourful visual imaginary on screen makes any visualisations I do for healing a lot more powerful. (Science Fiction and Fantasy provide good visuals!)

Chapter Four

EFT And How To Use It

Gary Craig developed Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) in 1992 after he had taken training in Roger Callaghan's Thought Field Therapy (TFT). Although he had witnessed and experienced remarkable results with TFT, as a Stanford educated engineer he wanted to modify TFT into a system that was so simple a child could use it, so EFT was born.

EFT, having been around now for 18 years, has been added to and refined even further but the basic technique remains extremely user friendly and most important of all *it works*. The thousands of Psychotherapists, Hypnotherapists, Master Neuro Linguistic Programmers and many other therapists and healers who have trained in EFT and their clients can testify as to it's effectiveness. Many of these therapists have now added their experience, knowledge and improvements to the system, at Gary Craig's request, to an ever-growing database.

EFT utilises the Meridian System familiar to Traditional Chinese Medicine but instead of using acupuncture needles or potentially painful pressure point massage we use a light tapping method to relieve uncomfortable feelings. I use the word feelings instead of emotions as we are dealing with what is going on, not just in the emotional body, but also in the "energy" body or system. This takes into account pain in the physical body, distressing emotions and also the "felt sense" of any given problem. In EFT we are tapping into the emotions that are connected to each organ of the body and it's corresponding meridian.

This does sound like a bizarre way to deal with distress but EFT has been proven through studies, and tens of thousands of successful cases to not only relieve anything from stress to severe trauma in the moment but for this relief to be permanent. This means that when all the aspects of a particular problem have been cleared that they remain clear months and years later.

Each problem presented can take from one to ten sessions to clear, on average about three sessions will do. Compare this to traditional "talk" methods where someone will expect to be in therapy for a few years, with very slow and sometimes no clearance of debilitating feelings and memories. Though in fairness EFT is more effective in the hands of an experienced therapist who is familiar with psychology and has the skill to get to the core of a problem.

The fact that EFT can be taught simply, putting the power for change and relief of distress into the clients' hands is for me one of the most attractive aspects of EFT. I love the fact that it is a very client centred way of working. In a session we follow the clients lead as much as possible and also as Gary Craig is fond of saying "we need to get ourselves out of the way" to allow genuine intuition to guide sessions as well.

For any sceptics out there I can only suggest that you try it, and try it on a strong emotion!

In brief, EFT is performed as following:

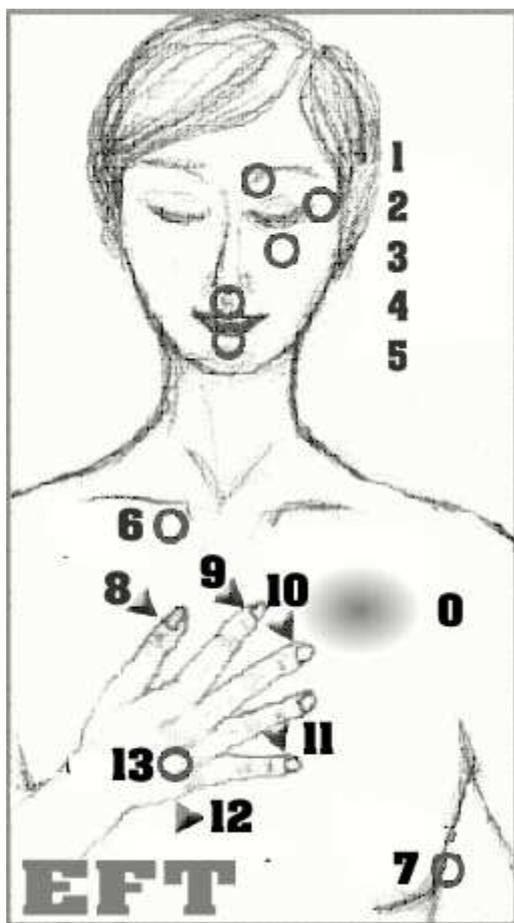
1. Think about your problem and come up with a sentence that describes how you feel about it. This will formulate what is called The Opening Statement.

2. Think of a number between 1 and 10 that symbolises how intense the feeling is.
3. State the Opening Statement 3 times as you rub what is known as the sore spot. This is called The Set Up
4. Tap round the acupressure points, as illustrated below, twice.
5. Re-evaluate your original number, if it is not 0 then repeat steps 3 and 4 again.

Read through the following instructions first, it may be helpful to print out the main diagram and instructions for EFT so that you have a quick reference to guide you until it becomes familiar.

I would suggest that you first tap through the acupressure points with no problem in mind to familiarise yourself with them, especially the first seven points
Most EFT practitioners now only use the first seven tapping points, (1 – 7 as listed below, 0 is a different part of the protocol) but I have included the points down to the hands, as I believe in thoroughness! It is up to you whether or not you use these points as well.

For stress management you will usually only need the first seven points.



0 = The Sore Spot - On your chest where you would pin a medal or a brooch. Gently push around this area until you find a spot that feels tender.

1 = Start Of The Eyebrow - Where the bone behind your eyebrow meets the bridge of your nose.

2 = Corner Of The Eye - On the bone on the outside corner of your eye.

3 = Under The Eye - On the bone just below your eye, in line with your pupil if you look straight ahead.

4 = Under The Nose - Between your nose and your upper lip

5 = Under The Mouth - In the indentation between your chin and your lower lip

6 = Collarbone - Inside the angle formed by your collarbone and the breastbone

7 = Under Arm – Under the arm in line with a man's nipples, or on the bra strap if a woman.

8 = Thumb - all finger points are on the side of the finger beside and at the base of the nail bed. Note which side on the diagram.

9 = Index Finger, 10 = Middle Finger, 11 = Little Finger

12 = Karate Chop Point - on the side of your hand.

13 = Gamut Point – a centimetre behind and between the knuckles of your ring and little finger.

Getting Started

First think about the problem you want to address. Let a statement about the problem come to mind and say this out loud

Choose a statement that makes sense to you, it should be in your words, the way you would describe your problem to a friend. The more truthful, direct and specific you can be, the more profound a change you will experience.

Examples of emotional problem statements:

- I am terrified of the dentist
- I can't resist that piece of chocolate cake
- I feel overwhelmed at work
- I am so worried about my daughter/son
- I can't decide what I should do
- I am so angry at ...
- I'm going to fail this exam

There is no need to censor your self when it comes to your feelings. I have been very general with the above statements but lets take as an example being angry at your boss, perhaps your statement would end up as "I hate my boss, he/she is an absolute..."

You then keep tapping until you feel neutral or even affection and understanding towards the person (yes it really does happen!).

Physical Ailments & Pain

EFT has proven excellent for use with physical issues, especially when you can connect the problem with an emotion. A fairly obvious one is when IBS or eczema flares up in response to a stressful event.

Opening statements for physical ailments can be created in many ways.

You probably have already a way you describe physical symptoms to yourself or to friends, use your personal description for your opening statement

Examples:

- My neck is so tight/sore
- My back's killing me
- My stomach's churning with anxiety
- This sharp pain in my knee
- My eczema is unbearable
- My head is throbbing

If you are aware of the stress linked to a physical problem then include that in an opening statement. For example, " I'm so overwhelmed with deadlines my back is killing me" "I'm so worried about ... my ... (IBS symptom) is playing up again".

If you can't connect the symptom with anything specific just tap on the symptom itself. In a later book I will go into a lot more detail about how to connect with the physical body in a very deep and illuminating way for the purposes of healing.

Now that we have the words for the problem we are ready to do the set up.

The Set Up

In the set up we say an affirmation that includes our problem statement, this is known as "the opening statement" while we rub the "sore spot" (Q on the illustrated diagram).

The Opening Statement

The opening statement is our problem combined with the positive phrase "I deeply and completely accept myself".

For example:

"Even though I'm overwhelmed by work I deeply and completely accept myself"

Or

"Even though I have this craving for chocolate I deeply and completely accept myself"

So to do the **Set Up**:

Find the sore spot, either side of your chest, it doesn't matter which side of the body you work on; rub it gently and state:

"Even though (insert problem statement),
I deeply and completely accept myself."

For example, if you decided your problem was "I feel sick about my presentation next week", you would say as your Set Up Statement:

"Even though I feel sick when I think about my presentation next week,
I deeply and completely accept myself."

Repeat this **three times**, rubbing the Sore Spot continuously as you do so, and please do endeavour to put some meaning and energy into the "I deeply and completely accept myself" part.

You don't have to say those exact words. You could say:

- I deeply and profoundly accept myself
- I love, accept and forgive myself
- I am willing to let this go now

"I deeply and completely accept myself" is the "default" statement of EFT and you can have any variation on a positive theme that is meaningful to you. The beauty of having this basic statement however is that it's there when you just need to tap on your problem and are in a hurry or too distressed to be creative about a positive counter balance to the problem statement.

Why do we do the set up?

The set up is to combat something called Psychological Reversal; this occurs for two reasons. One reason it occurs is through habitual negative thinking about a specific problem or where a negative belief about your self, others or the world has formed. The other reason is to do with addiction, in your mind you may believe that you want to give up the cigarettes, chocolate, wine, etc but emotionally and subconsciously you have very good reasons to continue with your choice of addiction.

Psychological Reversal is present 100% of the time with addiction and about 40% of the time with emotional issues in the average person. Some people may be reversed only about 10% of the time and some people are so relentlessly negative it's present up to 90 – 100% of the time (I'm sure we've all met someone like that!).

The positive part of the opening statement begins to cancel out the negative, and on an energetic level the sore spot we are rubbing actually reverses for a short period of time any entrenched negative thinking. When we are psychologically reversed there is a polarity reversal in our energy system. This discovery has had wide ranging implications in the world of health and healing. It explains why despite our best efforts we cannot for instance stop over eating no matter how strong our will power, it also explains, in part, why we don't respond to treatment for certain ailments.

In EFT while most problems will clear remarkably fast there is the occasional issue that will only respond to persistent effort, perhaps several weeks or even months of tapping. This is often the case with a health problem that has been there for years and involves chronic pain or when you have had a particular problem or attitude for two maybe three or four decades plus it could be a family trait (i.e. everyone in your family has failed relationships or weight problems). This needs frequent attention, I'd recommend about five times a week, 10 – 15 minutes a day of EFT including the set up statement to turn around something that may have become deeply entrenched in your whole system.

The Tapping Round

Once you have repeated the opening statement three times while rubbing the sore spot you can begin tapping the actual acupressure points.

Tap each point 7 – 10 times with your fingers, firmly enough to feel the resonance of the tapping. As you tap repeat a reminder phrase every few seconds about the problem.

For example:

“My presentation”

Or

“Tight neck”

Or

“Churning stomach”

Or

“I feel anxious”

Or

“This chocolate craving”

This keeps you “tuned” into the problem as you tap. Alternatively really think about the problem as you tap. For instance, if you have a presentation to make picture the audience or let yourself think about the worst that could happen. For EFT to work you need to be fully engaged with the feelings of the problem.

Tap through the points twice. Take a deep breath in and out and then evaluate where you are with the problem now.

Measuring the Intensity and Testing Your Changes

A great way to ascertain the intensity of a particular feeling is to put a number on it. The technical term is taking a SUDs Level or SUDs Scale reading, which stands for Subjective Units of Disturbance.

What that means is you ask yourself:

On a scale of 10 to 0, 10 being the highest imaginable pain, upset, distress, fear, sadness or discomfort, and 0 being completely calm, pain free, tranquil, relaxed or happy, how would you rate what you are experiencing at this moment?

This works for physical sensations as well as emotions, just let your unconscious mind come up with a number that represents the scale of the problem.

On a scale of ten to zero:

- how depressed are you right now?
- how painful is your leg?
- how bad is your fear of heights?
- how distressing is this memory?
- how much do you hate this person?

Before you begin tapping for any subject or problem, take the time to take a SUDS rating and make a note of it. Then, when you have tapped a couple of rounds ask the question again to find how much has changed. It's a good way to be able to assess how well the treatment has worked and if you need to repeat the treatment.

Sometimes, the problem can go from as high as 10 to as low as 0 in the first tapping round. (The tapping round is the set up plus two rounds of tapping round the points)

More often though, you perhaps start with 7 or 6, and after a round of tapping, the severity is reduced to a 4 or a 5. This means that the treatment is beginning to work but there's more to be done.

Subsequent Tapping Rounds

In EFT we repeat the full protocol with each aspect of a problem until we reach 0 or at least a 1 or a 2. If you cannot get it down to a zero it simply means there's

another aspect to the problem that you are not yet aware of. Or in the case of chronic pain getting to a three would be miraculous after years of being at six.

As we do each subsequent round the wording can change a little; this is to acknowledge that even though the problem has not cleared yet we have made some progress.

So the next set statement would be “even though there is *still some* of this problem remaining I deeply etc.”

For example “even though I *still* feel sick at the thought of the presentation I deeply etc.”

On the last round it would be “even though there’s a little bit of the sick feeling left *I am willing to let this go now*”.

Aspects

I have mentioned aspects a few times; these are the different points that make up a whole problem. For instance if the problem is “overwhelm at work” take a sheet of paper, write overwhelm in the middle and draw lines out from the centre to connect with each part of the problem that comes to mind. (Basically you are mind mapping your problem).

Write down each different feeling, if you feel anxious and angry, separate them and make up different set up statements for each one. Perhaps your confidence has gone, track down exactly how that feels and write it down. Any physical symptoms? Record all of it and then rate each aspect with a number that symbolises the intensity/severity of each part of the problem.

If you have several it may take a few days to work through it depending on how much time you have. A tip is to start with the highest number as bringing this down can affect the severity of the other aspects.

Finally don’t worry about searching for the right words or if you are doing it “properly” – all that matters is that you contact the feeling and even if you’re not sure tap anyway – something usually always happens!

All tapping you do is good for you!

Any tapping you do stimulates the meridians, relaxes you, and makes you feel a little better. Regularly stimulating or clearing the meridians results in a healthier, stronger immune system.

Even if you can’t quite contact the problem or it doesn’t go away, persistence will pay off in simply feeling calmer and isn’t that what we are really aiming at here?

EFT - Frequently Asked Questions

I'm not sure I have found the exact right points?

Don't worry about that. As you tap, the vibrations spread out through your skin and bones and can be felt for quite a distance. As long as you're roughly in the right area, it will work.

I can't find the Sore Spot?

If you can't find the Sore Spot, and this can sometimes happen according to the type of problem you're working on, just place your whole flat hand over the general area.

Wait until you can feel the warmth of your hand on your skin through your clothes, and rub the whole hand round instead.

I'm really unsure what to say for the opening statement?

A whole tapping round only takes about 4 minutes, so it's not the end of the world if you get it wrong! I have found that just beginning the tapping will throw up deeper feelings and more insight into the problem as the surface layer dissolves.

Which side of the face/body should I tap with which hand?

Twelve of the meridians are in pairs on each side of the body so changes in one will affect the other. It doesn't really matter which side you tap on.

I've missed a point!

Relax. The main thing is, did you get a good noticeable shift? That's all that matters. It only takes a few goes and you are completely familiar with the procedure.

How hard/fast should I tap?

You should tap with light, short movements that resonate just like you would tap on a drum to make it ring out.

Don't tap too hard – it should not hurt in any way, but you should be able to feel it clearly and also feel the resonance in your body.

As to speed, try different speeds and rhythms to find something that feels right for the problem you are currently working on.

Nothing's happening! I'm doing it all wrong!

Please, be calm! This is a gentle and very easy treatment procedure.

It is very forgiving to inaccuracies and truly foolproof.

If you have read the instructions and looked on the chart to the locations of the points, chances are you ARE doing it right. Perhaps try a different opening statement, or a different subject or topic. Play with it. Experiment.

Allow yourself time to experience how the treatment affected you right after you did it, a few hours after that, the next day and so on. Share it with a friend and try it on each other.

But most of all, "Keep At It!"

I've tapped on something small and now I've unlocked a whole hornet's nest of terrible feelings and memories!

If you find yourself overwhelmed by negative emotions it would be helpful to see an EFT therapist

What can help tremendously in moments of overwhelm on your own is to tap without any opening statements to let the relaxation go where it is most needed, or to do very general statements such as, "Even though I can't cope ...", "Even though I'm overwhelmed ..." or "Even though I just feel awful", etc.

Below is the whole treatment at a glance as a handy reference.

Emotional Freedom Techniques

“The cause of all negative emotions is a disturbance in the body’s energy system.
EFT overhauls that system”

Gary Craig

Step 1 - Name the problem, clearly and truthfully.

Step 2 - Take a SUDs reading of how bad it is right now, 0-10

Step 3 - Do the Set Up - "Even though I have this problem, I deeply and profoundly accept myself" three times out loud, whilst rubbing the Sore Spot to correct for any possible Psychological Reversal.

Step 4 - Choose a shortened "reminder phrase" and say this as you tap through each point.

Step 5 - Do another round with the reminder phrase as in Step 4.

Step 6 - Take a deep breath in and out and take a new SUDs reading.

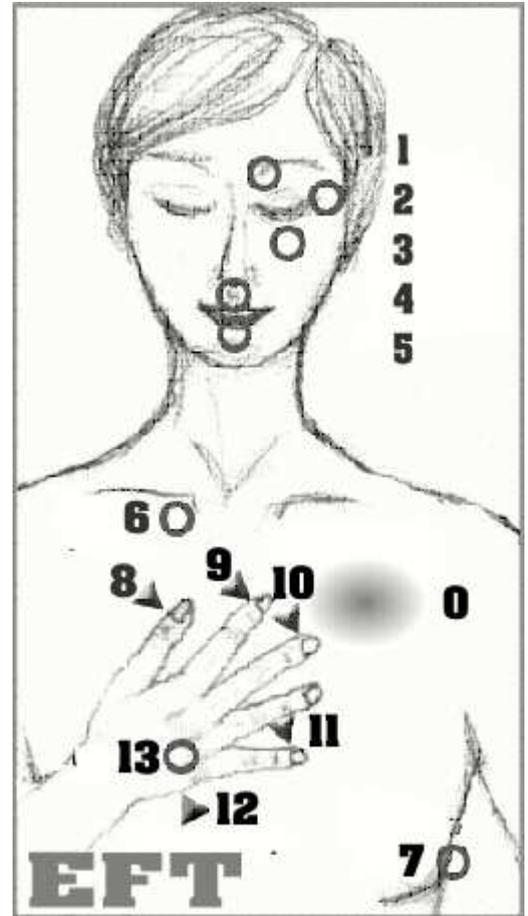
Subsequent Rounds - Change the Set Up to:

Even though I still have some of this problem
I deeply and completely accept myself.

... And finally:

To get your problem right down to 0.

“Even though I have a little bit of this problem I am willing to let go of it completely”.



Chapter Five

The “Felt Sense” of a Problem

In the early 1970's a psychotherapist called Eugene Gendlin discovered that when patients focussed upon what was going on in their body as they thought about an issue – when they described either the physical sensations or what they “saw” in their mind, even down to describing the smell and texture of the problem - changes would occur that led to the complete clearing of the issue. Gendlin referred to this as the felt sense of a problem and called the method he developed “Focussing”, which he then went onto write a book about. When Focussing was used the results were more rapid and efficient than was normally experienced in psychotherapy. The technique of focussing is similar to hypnotherapy methods for pain management and some modern day therapists have expanded upon these methods for the pain of emotional distress.

The most remarkable method to date using a similar concept is a technique called EmoTrance; EmoTrance was developed by Sylvia Hartman a few years ago to release distress and quickly turned into something that went way beyond this.

In this chapter I will bring these techniques together to outline a simple way of using the felt sense in combination with EFT or on it's own as a quiet way of releasing stress in the moment. Simply tuning into the body in this way is both calming in and of itself and will further enhance self-awareness.

What is The Felt Sense?

The felt sense is the description we give to what we are aware of in the body when we feel a particular emotion. Some people claim they have no awareness at all in the body in relation to an emotion but the majority of us will have felt something at some point; it merely depends upon what the issue is. A common observation is “butterflies in the stomach” in relation to nervousness. Think about what happens in the pit of our stomach when we meet someone we find attractive. Or what about the pain we can feel in our chest after a relationship break-up?

These are all very real manifestations of the *energetic disturbance* that occurs in our body in response to thought and emotion.

How much we sense and what form that sense takes is dependant upon what in NLP is called our representational systems, or the predominant sense with which we experience the world. Why do no two people describe an event in the same way? Because we do not “see” the world with our eyes, we see it with our mind. What does this have to do with managing stress? Well, when we understand that *everything* we experience (actively and passively) is experienced through our own filters and that all we have lived through up until the present moment is informing the present moment, the “facts” become almost meaningless!

Our thoughts, feelings, beliefs, issues, opinions, attitude and how we are feeling second by second including any physical discomfort will influence how we experience each moment - as Gary Craig is fond of pointing out “it's all an inside job”.

The more we understand this and learn how to make changes the more we realise that how we respond to events and people is a choice. The rewards for maintaining the discipline of this realisation are quite profound; they include a sense of self-empowerment (it becomes impossible to think of yourself as a victim of circumstance despite “victim consciousness” being almost entirely what the world is run on...), inner peace and improved physical health including looking and feeling more youthful.

Getting back to the representational systems I mentioned earlier, people tend to sense the world as either a Kinaesthetic (more feelings and physically orientated, need things to “feel right”), a Visual (more sensitive to visual stimuli, need things to “look right”), an Auditory (more sound aware, often good singers or have a melodic voice, things need to “sound right”) or an Auditory Digital (this is a more logical or academic approach to life that is less natural, usually comes from university education or a lot of study, things need to be logical or make sense).

Some examples

Say there is an event coming up that seems to be worrying. The following are examples of the different ways of referring to it:

Kinaesthetic: “This feels worrying”.

Visual: “This looks worrying”.

Auditory: “This sounds worrying”.

Auditory Digital “I think this is worrying”.

Play around with language with friends until you are clearer about your preferred patterns.

The above explains why people describe things very differently, use certain types of descriptive language and find certain ways of going through the world more important. It can even make the difference to whether or not relationships work - when we understand what is important to another it makes it easier to get along.

As a final note on this, there are some people who are about equal to all senses, these people are generally more sensitive to stimuli and tend to suffer from stress more acutely. If you suspect this is you then more steps to find quiet and peace in your life will need to be taken.

Read through the following carefully before trying it out on your self, perhaps experiment with a friend, having someone say certain things to you makes it easier to feel the “impact” of the words and feelings in the body.

Sensing the problem

1. Think about something that causes distress. A painful memory perhaps, a recent conflict or an upcoming event that you are worried about.
2. Describe this out loud for greater impact.
3. Now ask yourself (or have someone else ask) the following questions, remember that some of them won't mean anything, you simply will not notice that particular response in the body. Work with what *you* notice. This

exercise may seem convoluted at first but with a little practice you will rapidly become familiar with your own personal ways of sensing the energy of your feelings.

When you think about ... (your problem) or hear these words...(if someone is saying them to you)

What part of the body do you sense this in?

What does it feel like? (Describe the sensation - heavy, hard, hollow, fluttery, jaggy etc.)

What does it look like?

What colour is it?

What is its texture like?

How big is it?

Does it have a sound?

Does it have a smell?

4. Whatever your description is it is good to remind yourself that **it is just energy**, how you are describing it is the symbolism that your mind has given the issue. This is helpful to realise as you observe the energy changing, it will feel and/or look different as you continue with this exercise and is a gauge as to how much of the problem has cleared.
5. Just breath into the area of the body in which you sense the distress and continue to observe the energy as it changes in response to your observation, your breath and your intention.
6. It helps immensely to do this with a curious expectation of *how* this energy will change as you interact with it. All you have to do right now is **think about the energy softening** and watch what happens.
7. Continue to breathe and observe the energy until changes occur, at this point there will have been some movement, (i.e. if it felt or looked like a concrete block this may have dissolved into something else, if it was hard and black this may have softened into smoke or mist). Now *think* about the softened energy beginning to flow or move in some way and observe what happens. Some people will observe this moving through and out of the body in an obvious way; others just sense that it has dissipated right through the skin.
8. It can also help to imagine something helpful flowing down through your body to help clear the energy of the emotion such as cleansing light or water or perhaps a colour. If you have difficulty with visualisation just speak to yourself about what you want to happen, i.e. "Light (or water or a colour) is now flowing through the top of my head, down my body and dissolving this ..."
9. To test the changes keep coming back to the subject of distress you began with and think and talk out loud about it. Each time you do this continue to observe what occurs in the body. It will probably change most of the time. You are aiming for no response or at least a much lesser one to the original distress.

10. The method so far can easily stand on its own but to turbo charge results try combining the above with EFT. To do this go through steps 1 to 3 then tap on your description.
11. For example: "Even though I have this weight in my stomach that's the size of a football and is a sickly green colour I deeply and completely accept myself" The reminder phrase would be "this green weight in my stomach".
12. Tap a couple of rounds and think about the original distress, observe how it has changed and tap on the changes i.e. "This jelly like, light green stuff in my stomach" Tap a couple of rounds and again repeat the above using the changing felt sense until you feel clear.

Why use this with EFT? Remember that in EFT, as with this felt sense method, we are dealing with the energy behind the emotions, the actual place the emotions come from, so while it is good to get right into the emotions of a problem in order to facilitate healing the difference when we use this exercise is that we go straight to the source. The source being the energy itself, by tapping directly on this we quickly clear the problem.

What you will most likely feel after this exercise is very energised. If you feel sleepy or odd just tap on that – it is usually just your body's way of balancing out the changes and you can help speed up the balancing process with EFT.

Sometimes you will feel worse and this will be because some deeper emotions have been given the chance to rise to the surface of your awareness, this just means you have more work to do. If you suspect that the problem you are about to address is the tip of the iceberg it is best to give yourself plenty of time or seek help if you feel overwhelmed or scared about what may be there.

Drink plenty of water as you do any work on stress and emotions, as you will become quite dehydrated with this work. Energy needs water to help it move more easily out of the body and in fact being a bit dehydrated can prevent energy from shifting. So if nothing much is happening have a glass of water.

This can be a fascinating, and at times almost fun, way of dealing with problems; the beauty of it is that it takes us out of the mind and into the source of the problem itself, which is why it works so rapidly. It is, for instance, a kinder way to deal with trauma as someone can be led through the changing felt sense of the whole trauma rather than all the painful details.

The Positive Felt Sense

A rather wonderful way of using this type of work is with positive thoughts, memories and compliments from another person. Instead of interacting with where we sense distress we interact with the lovely feelings instead and take them through our whole body. It feels as if we are imbedding a positive affirmation into every cell of our body in full Technicolor detail!

Chapter Six

Positive Focus

We have mainly focussed on the unpleasant symptoms of stress but once you have begun to alleviate this it is valuable to place your focus on what you would like to experience instead. Without a positive alternative to the stressful feelings we tend to slip back into what is familiar, even if the familiar is unpleasant, or we can end up drifting or existing in neutral. The alternative focus does not have to be anything dramatic or life changing merely pleasant; if more people focussed on feeling calm imagine how different the world would be!

So take a moment to ask yourself how you would like to feel on a daily basis or perhaps how you would like to respond to or deal with certain events and people. Perhaps you have specific goals or dreams you want to achieve whether this is in the area of personal growth and health, relationships or work and business.

Whatever our goal is we can start with a look at how stress may be preventing our achievement in that area. When we view life from a position of inner peace, and the strength that flows from that, the genuine desire for health and happiness overtakes the need to sabotage our well being. A form of stress I am including is what is at the core of most peoples psyche and that is the belief that we are not worthy or deserving or perhaps that we need to be a certain way before we can have what we want. These thoughts and beliefs are so deeply ingrained that they are rarely questioned, but they do exist

For instance we may wish to lose weight or increase health and fitness levels, we know what to do, there is after all no shortage of information on these subjects but we cannot sustain any effort put into our goal and end up in a place that's often worse than where we started.

Or perhaps there's a work/business goal we have been thinking about for a long time but we keep finding excuses for not actually doing anything or get caught up in busy work.

Or our goal could be inner peace but we feel anxious and overwhelmed most of the time.

What is going on here?

It's not because of weakness or that there is something wrong with us it's just that there is a deeper need within the unconscious propelling the undesirable behaviour, what that is takes a little digging but suffice to say that will power will rarely win out over unconscious emotional drivers. Amongst the most powerful drivers are our unconscious beliefs about others, the world and ourselves.

We all go through life with deeply engrained self-limiting beliefs (and a lot of very positive ones or we wouldn't make it down a flight of stairs alive!) and one step towards a self empowered life, that is having a sense of peaceful control and responsibility over and for ones life, is to begin examining our beliefs.

When we examine our beliefs in specific ways we can unravel incredible and often quite complex webs of thoughts, feelings and memories in a way that will shift energy in the body and give us a new perspective on life.

Perhaps having a new perspective on life will lead to an increasing absence of strain and it's symptoms. So, what is the absence of strain?

It is being able to connect with our sense of peace, with our joy and happiness. To connect with love – a sense of compassion and deep affection that needs nothing in return – and to have clarity – clear, flowing creative thought.

I also like the definition of well-being according to Buddhist monk, Matthieu Ricard, “Well-being is not just a mere pleasurable sensation; it is a deep sense of serenity and fulfilment. A state that actually pervades and underlies all emotional states and all the joys and sorrows that can come ones way.”

It is healthy and completely normal to experience a wide variety of emotion as we go through our daily life – it's part of being human and is unavoidable. What we can strive towards however is accepting whatever arises in the moment and allow it to flow with unconditional acceptance. Also to allow for old buried pain to be released and cleared in ways that are as kind as possible, energy psychology (such as EFT and EmoTrance) and any healing or therapy that deals with balancing and clearing the energy body hold the key to making this possible

This act of viewing our self and our emotional body in increasingly loving ways will gradually dissolve old fears, diminish present ones and I hope will lead to a life that is more peaceful for you.

So to go back to the beginning of this chapter, what would you like to focus on?

Lets take as an example a presentation that you have to give and feel very anxious about. Start by clearing the worst of your feelings about it in any way you choose. Now instead of focussing on “I feel so anxious about ...” say to yourself “How do I feel calm and confident about this presentation? What has happened for that to occur?”

Several occurrences may take place when we make the above statement, first, if there are still some buried negative thoughts and feelings then this will bring them up quite acutely! The buried feelings pop out because our mind may object to the new positive thoughts.

Second, posing the above statement as a question once most of the negative feelings have cleared will provoke the mind into answering the question. Our mind doesn't rest until a loop has been closed, in this case an open question.

You can sit quietly with the question until answers surface. Alternatively, use EFT and tap slowly as you make the above positive statements; this can clear surface thoughts and allow solutions to bubble up.

The mind will perhaps search for memories associated with the positive words, when it finds something then the associated feeling will occur as well. You can use this feeling by tying it with thoughts of the presentation. Or perhaps posing the question will not yield immediate results, however you may over the next day or two “come across” something that will help you. This is because you have tuned

your “antennae”, so to speak, to look for solutions; the result is that you will notice something you may previously have overlooked.

Our unconscious mind in some ways is like an obedient dog and we can use this to our detriment or to our advantage. If we constantly use the affirmation of “I’m so stressed/tired/overwhelmed/angry” etc our unconscious mind will seek out ways to maintain this as it perceives these thoughts as instructions! How can our unconscious affect our outer world? Remember that we perceive everything through our “filters”, in other words our antennae are tuned into what we expect, feel, think and believe. If what we are seeing is not part of our inner world it will go unregistered or will not last as our habitual way of seeing the world reasserts itself.

For all of you out there interested in The Law of Attraction this is part of The Law of Attraction in operation! It is not just our *thoughts* that attract the circumstances of our lives but our deeper feelings and beliefs.

What is the balancing act we have to follow with this? First notice your thoughts and begin to question them, and then begin to change them. Where this is difficult and causes distress is where clearing work can come in. When it is hard to maintain a positive focus this is because there are some very real feelings underneath. Be kind to yourself about this and give yourself time to deal with whatever is there.

Last of all is the emphasis, not only on positive words but also on bringing our language into the now. Words do have energy all on their own and this resonates through the body. As an experiment say the word “anxiety” or “dread” to yourself. Close your eyes and repeat the word you have chosen slowly and notice your reaction. Notice how you feel, the pictures that form in your mind and what happens to your physical body as you say a particular word.

Now do the same with “peace” or “joy” and notice how you react to these words.

Now say “I want to be more happy” notice how positive or close you feel to the energy of happiness. Not much I would imagine! The “want” word pushes it away and reminds us that we do not have happiness right now.

Now say “I *choose my* happiness” notice how immediate and personal this is. It provokes the unconscious to search for the feeling of happiness within you.

A wonderful read that illustrates just how powerful words are would be one of Masuro Emoto's books on water. In these books he explains how the structure of water is affected by the words, or prayers, we say to it and as the human body is about 75% water we affect our well being with our self-talk. To illustrate this he helped develop a form of high-speed photography to photograph frozen water droplets just before they melted; through these photographs it became obvious just how certain words affected the structure of the water. Positive words formed beautiful frozen water crystals while negative words broke up the structure of the water. He also taped negative (hate) and positive (love) words on jars of cooked rice, within a few days the “negative” rice was black and mouldy and the “positive” rice stayed fresh!

A couple of years ago I read an article about a children’s book club in which one of the boys conducted an experiment from a children’s book Emoto had written. In

this experiment the boy - called Jack, believe it or not! - planted some beans in different pots, he then watered some of the beans with water from a jar with a positive word taped to it and the other beans with negatively charged water.

When the negative beans grew they grew very fast but quickly became spindly and unhealthy looking. The positive beans grew more slowly but appeared strong and healthy, more amazing than this was that the healthy beans leaned towards and entwined themselves around each other!

Perhaps you can place a clear glass water jug over a positive word everyday and make a habit of drinking this positively charged water.

I have come to the end of this little book but if you stay tuned for the newsletters I will be emailing to you I will include articles that give more tips and advice on increasing well being and goes a bit deeper into some of the topics I have mentioned.

In the meantime I wish you love and good health on your journey towards peace.