

A Critique of EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) – Derek P. Scott

In recent years I have come across a few clients who use the [Emotional Freedom Technique](#) to deal with troublesome feelings or parts. The technique involves simultaneously tapping on the end points of various meridians on the body while repeating a series of affirmations.

According to [one](#) practioner EFT promises to bring healing in the realms of:

Physical pain*	Fears and phobias*	Athletic performance*
Headaches*	Claustrophobia*	Getting unstuck*
Diabetes	Cancer	Concentration*
Anxiety and panic*	Agoraphobia*	Optimism*
Fear of flying*	Trauma*	Intimate relationships*
PTSD*	Self-confidence*	Relaxation*
Fear of needles*	Adult Child issues*	Mental clarity*
Physical effects of emotional issues*		Depression*
Blood pressure	Anger*	Confidence in public*
Asthma*	Fibromyalgia*	Social confidence*
Addictions*	Degenerative diseases*	Negative life history*
MS*	Fear of water*	Weight control*

(the asterisk indicates issues and situations where s/he claims to have had success in applying EFT as a therapist)

Now on the surface it looks like this could be just another quick-fix fad that some gullible people have bought into. Yet if you look at who is doing it (here's one site's practitioner's [list](#)) and who appears to be [endorsing](#) it we notice a lot of interest in this technique. When your supporters include [Deepak Chopra](#), [Candace Pert](#), [Bruce Lipton](#) and [Donna Eden](#), all best selling authors and well-known in the field of energy psychology, it behooves us to take a look at what is going on here.

One of the apparent and dramatic successes that this technique claims to facilitate is in the area of phobias. Typically someone with an intense fear of water will be invited to tap the meridians in sequence whist repeating: “Even though I have this part that is afraid of water I deeply and completely love myself.” As they repeat the sequence and affirmation they can gradual tolerate greater proximity to water; possibly to the extent of being immersed in a pool within a short period of time.

When using this technique you can pretty much substitute any condition for “fear of water”. Hence the long list above (“even though I have this part that eats too much...”, “even though I have this part that lacks confidence...”). What accounts for this techniques apparent success and large following?

When we look at this technique through an IFS lens I think we can gain some insight into what is going on in the system. EFT is a technique that appeals very much to the manager

parts of the protective system. Remember: the manager parts want to control everything so that you will never experience anything hurtful again. They want to ensure that you both are and are seen to be a nice person. They blame vulnerable parts for being too needy or demanding. They are often horrified by the reactive firefighter protectors that do bad things like drinking or gambling, sex bingeing or losing their temper. It is very hard for a manger part to be able to do its job to perfection (otherwise why do it?) when those pesky exiled parts insisted on getting triggered and those awful firefighters take over to distract from the exiles.

“But wait!” Says the manager part, “Here’s a technique that can help me be rid of those others for ever!” And so our manger parts embrace EFT like the proverbial duck in the pond. Just like a kid with a great new toy the manager taps away; and boy does s/he have a list! The fat/thin part can go, the shy/overbearing one can get tapped away too. That drinking part that refuses the label of alcoholic? A few taps and it’s gone. And... well you get the picture.

Now clearly in order to be using EFT one must have an understanding of the multiplicity of the personality system. But I suspect that the folks using this may not know how it is organised; nor that they are operating from a blended manager part when using this technique. Here’s the clue. Look at the language: “*Even though I have this part...*” It sounds to me like a shameful confession, or like a 14 year old boy going off to do something cool with his friends dragging his embarrassing 7 year old brother with him. Later “*I deeply and completely love myself.*” Sounds like self-love but not quite... because of that irritating part that basically gets in the way of unconditional love. The subtext here is really, “If it wasn’t for that other part I’d be loveable.”

I suspect that what is going on when someone uses this technique is that they are temporarily strengthening the manager part and helping it to exile or further exile other parts. This can only ever work for a short period of time since exiles will get our attention (they are motivated to return to the system) and firefighters will respond to their activation. When that happens the manager parts face the misery of believing they are failures, or of having to redouble their efforts (advanced techniques include: “Even though I still have *some* of this part...”)

From an IFS perspective we can relieve the manager parts of some of their burden. When we acknowledge how hard they work to make us look good, and how difficult it is for them to be vigilant and in control all of the time, they will feel appreciated and respected. They may accept our sincere offer to help them out if they will allow us access to the exiled parts. They may even allow us to become curious about the firefighter parts. Instead of our managers trying to eliminate what they see as the troublesome parts in our system, we can then bring our compassion to the parts seen as somehow unwelcome, let them know we welcome them, and help them to be relieved of whatever thoughts and feelings are burdensome for them. EFT – some parts are welcome; IFS – ALL parts are welcome.

