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APPLICATION OF EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUE IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

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Abstract:

The article deals with the topic of energy psychology, which is not yet well researched and allows for the possibility of further study and scientific substantiation. It shows the use of one of the methods of energy psychology, the technique of emotional relaxation - EFT, in psychotherapy in terms of combining and complementing to achieve more effective results. The outline of theoretical starting points complements the attempt to scientifically substantiate the method on the basis of several relevant studies and works that show the effective use of the method in psychotherapy. In conclusion, the article presents a case study, an illustration of the use of the EFT method in combination with the psychotherapy approach on a specific case from practice. In conclusion of the article, in addition to a summary of the contents, a conclusion is given dealing with the feasibility of further research in this field.

Key words: psychotherapy, energy psychology, EFT method, case study

Introduction

The technique of achieving emotional relaxation, Emotional Freedom Technique, hereinafter referred to as EFT, belongs to the field of energy medicine. Eden and Feinstein (2008) define EFT as an approach that combines verbal and physical processes to achieve therapeutic change. They define the method as "the art and science of promoting physical, psychological and spiritual health and vitality." (Eden and Feinstein 2008) Also Benesch (2005) defines EFT as "a technique for dealing with different emotional and physical problems based on an emotional disturbance caused by a disturbance in the flow of energy."

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EFT is also placed in the field of energy psychology or meridian therapy, as EFT is intertwining with other healing techniques, such as acupuncture, acupressure, shiatsu, and kinesiology, which belong to the family of energy therapies.

The EFT method originates from the belief that the mind and body need to be healed at the same time in order to cure the disease. Many diseases that are part of our society are caused by stress and trauma of everyday life. Trauma is resolved with EFT, and the effects are also reflected on the body. (Dawson and Allenby 2010)

There is a chemical connection between the physical structure of cells and emotional experiences. Receptors responsible for controlling emotions are in every cell in the body, not just in the brain, describes an acclaimed biologist and psychoneuroimmunologist Candace Pert in the book *Molecules of Emotion* (1999). She researched the role of the mind and body in relation to emotions and health problems, and she found out that emotions represent the connection between the material body and the immaterial states of consciousness. She has done research on the structure of cells that connect the whole body and respond to the various vibrations that cause our feelings and emotions. She found that biochemicals are physiological extracts of emotions, molecular building blocks of what we experience as thoughts, emotions, feelings.

EFT is thus one of the energy techniques that deals with a person as a whole being. It stems from the fact that we humans are also energetic beings, and that the well-being of a person depends on the energy flow in the body.

Based on the basic assumption that the cause of all negative emotions is a disorder in the energy system of a person, when a certain stimulus triggers neurophysiological changes in the body and a typical, threat-based dysfunctional emotional response, the disorder is neutralised by EFT and in that way, we exceed the target problem or achieve the goal by changing chemical substances in the amygdala and other parts of the brain. (Feinstein, Eden and Craig 2008)

Theoretical baseline

Energy psychology is based on psychotherapy and operates within established psychological principles, such as "the crucial role of the conditioned response to human actions and the impact of early experience on the formation of current emotional and behavioural patterns." (Feinstein 2005)

Feinstein (20005) recognises the advantage of energy psychology in the promotion of energy points along with certain mental activities, which can immediately change the electrochemistry of the brain and help us overcome unwanted feelings, strong negative emotions such as fear, guilt, shame, jealousy, anger, resentment, sadness, it helps to stop unwanted habits and behaviours, change perceptions, limiting beliefs, internalised harmful beliefs, and reduce or eliminate physical pain.

EFT is one of the more researched techniques of energy psychology (Craig 2011), which combines elements of cognitive therapy and somatic stimulation of acupressure points on the face and body. (Bach et al. 2019) As already mentioned, it uses the knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine and uses tapping with fingertips in a certain sequence on selected meridian points of the body, in that way we connect ourselves to the existing problem by uttering appropriate affirmations related to it. The security signal is sent to the emotional part of the brain, which acts as a counterbalance to the signal of stress coming from traumatic memory. Magnetic resonance studies suggest that acupuncture shuts down the brain centre for fear and regulates the pre-stimulated amygdala. It addresses the parts of the brain that respond to touch and other sensory inputs and not to the neocortex where our rational part is located. (Church 2015) Tapping helps to re-establish a fundamental sense of security that we cannot always establish through rational perception, within the psychotherapy. "Although we don't yet know why tapping shuts down the amygdala alarm - it deactivates the brain's excitatory pathways. Tapping on the endpoints of the meridians sends a calming response to the body, which the amygdala perceives as a sign that we are safe. Tapping during the stressful event itself - or even just discussing it - eliminates stress and reprograms the hippocampus, which compares past threats to current signals and tells the amygdala whether the current signal is a real threat or not." (Ortner 2013) Tapping not only stops the stress response, but the combination of stimulating acupressure points while thinking about an unpleasant event or problem also alters the response of the limbic system. (Ortner 2013)

Namely, when a negative memory is triggered, the brain adds a strong negative emotion, such as fear, anger, sadness, resentment, shame. Bad memories send a warning to the brain and at the same time create a negative emotion. Blockage or imbalance occurs, a disorder that causes emotional and physical problems. If these blockages are not released, they begin to manifest over time in the

form of symptoms such as anger, fear, low self-esteem, addiction, or anxiety. However, with the EFT method, the stressful traumatic experience loses power, and as the energy in the system has been re-balanced, there is no more negative response in the mind or body. An important part of the energy body are the meridians that Eden and Feinstein (2008) define as "energy pathways which are connecting dots, hundreds of tiny collectors of heat, electromagnetic and subtle energies along the surface of the skin." In the part of the skin where the acupuncture point is located, there is significantly lower electrical resistance compared to other parts of the skin. There is also a higher concentration of receptors on the points that are sensitive to mechanical stimulation. When the points are stimulated, they send signals directly to the brain, where the emotion centres are. The electromagnetic property of points is activated by tapping, massaging, needle pricking, or electrical stimulation. In total, there are at least three hundred and sixty acupuncture points distributed within the network of energy pathways - meridians. (Feinstein, Eden and Craig 2005)

By mentally activating memories that are the basis of negative patterns, while stimulating specific acupuncture points or other energy centres, we reduce nerve connections in the amygdala and other brain centres that trigger problematic responses. Activating positive perceptions or affirmations while stimulating acupuncture points or energy centres allows the formation of new connections that give these perceptions and affirmations even more power. (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2005)

Electroencephalogram (EEG) imaging presents visual recordings of brain electrical activity in the EFT literature, showing variations in the frequency, amplitude, and voltage of pulses known as alpha, beta, theta, and delta rhythms. Colours indicate the ratios of brain frequencies (especially alpha, beta and theta waves) and sub-frequencies in individual areas of the brain. These recordings show how the ratio of the brain frequencies of a person with generalised anxiety disorder changed after twelve sessions. Treatment involved tapping electrochemically sensitive areas on the skin while thinking of frightening images. As the frequencies of the brain waves in the central and anterior parts of the brain switched to the normal level (from red to blue), both the intensity and frequency of anxiety symptoms decreased. Similar image sequences and reduction of symptoms were also typical for other patients with generalised anxiety disorder who were receiving energy therapy. (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2008)

Stimulation of certain points on the skin not only changes brain activity but also deactivates areas in the brain that are involved in the experience of fear and pain, according to Feinstein, Eden, and Craig. (2008) When a certain stimulus triggers neurophysiological changes in the body and a typical, threat-based, dysfunctional emotional response, the amygdala (the area in the brain that stores intense emotional impressions and memories we are never fully aware of) recognises harmless sound, image, smell, feeling or thought (triggers or stimuli) as a threat, due to the connection with past experiences that we had experienced as a physical or mental threat and contained similar circumstances. The amygdala sends impulses to the autonomic nervous system, which triggers a "fight, flight, freeze" reaction. Stress hormones such as adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol are released into the blood circulation and cause increased heart rate, blood pressure and other bodily responses that go through a series of dramatic changes. At the same time, perception and thought are formed in the primitive parts of the brain that are created to respond to danger. Reason has little influence on this process. The physical and emotional sensations we experience in an alarm reaction can be experienced as angry feelings (fight), threatening feelings (flight), or an inability to react (freeze). (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2008)

In the process of neutralising negative emotions, we consciously recall a stressful event while physically stimulating a series of acupuncture points that send impulses directly to the amygdala and inhibit the alarm reaction. These impulses reduce the strength of the emotions created by the connections between the image of painful memory and the alarm reaction. After repeated stimulation of acupuncture points, the image can be transferred to the mind or the situation can be experienced directly, without a triggered alarm reaction. Stimulating acupuncture points to reduce the emotional charge around past memory only requires that the person knows what they are focusing on. Clinical experience has shown that it is not necessary nor useful for the user of the method to indulge in traumatic memories or to retraumatise himself in any way in order for the energetic psychological methods to achieve the desired result. (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2008)

Dawson and Allenby (2010) emphasise that EFT is not a placebo and therefore works even if we do not believe in it. It is also not a distraction therapy, as the EFT method focuses on the problem. We say what we really perceive, experience, feel, and not what we would like. Nor is it exposure therapy that forces someone to face their

fears but relaxes the person and alleviates the problem. It is not a symptom substitution therapy that eliminates one problem and replaces it with another. And EFT is not conversational therapy, as it works with consciousness and subconscious.

Scientific justification of the eft method

Until now, the EFT method has been studied by more than fifty researchers in seven countries. The results are published in about fifteen reviewed journals, the most important of which are: Journal of Clinical Psychology, APA Journals Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training and Review of General Psychology. Researchers from various institutions are involved in research about the EFT method (in the USA), mostly from domestic and a few foreign universities. There is also ongoing pioneering research in the field of physiological changes that occur in the body when using this method, with tools such as: DNA microarrays (gene chips), hormone tests, MEG (magnetoencephalogram), f MRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) and neurotransmitters, which will further explore important questions about the function of the method (e.g. which part of the method protocol most significantly contributes to the effectiveness or efficiency of the EFT method and where and how changes in the body are manifested). (EFT Universe)

The official website about the EFT method contains systematically collected online reports on the use of the EFT method in the field of self-help, assistance to others and professional assistance. The database includes many cases for depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, weight loss, athletic performance, and physical pain. Although these reports are unreliable and have a low level of scientific credibility, they provide insight into the diverse, individual-specific uses of the EFT method. (EFT Universe)

The official website also provides access to all scientific research, evaluations, presentations, clinical reports, research into the mechanisms of action of the EFT method, as well as unpublished studies. (EFT Universe) These research is carried out for the purpose of scientific research of the operation and application of the EFT method and to verify or prove the effectiveness and efficiency of this method on a wider range of psychological problems.

Numerous meta-analyses have been published that combine the results of the entire scientific literature to measure the effectiveness of treatment. In doing so, a measure called Cohen's d or a slightly different calculation called Hedges' g is used. This scale ranges from

a small treatment effect, $d = 0.2$, to a moderate effect, $d = 0.5$, to a large effect, $d = 0.8$. Meta-analyses show that EFT has a large effect on the treatment of anxiety, depression, and PTSD: for anxiety $d = 1.23$ (Clond 2016), for depression $d = 1.31$ (Nelms and Castel 2016) and for PTSD $d = 2.96$. (Sebastian and Nelms 2016)

Pulos and Swingle (2001) studied the effects of the EFT method on negative emotions in participants and victims of car accidents suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Significant positive changes were demonstrated using the EFT method. Changes in brain waves seen by electroencephalogram measurements were noted. Participant status reports also show positive effects on the manifestation of symptoms after three months of using the EFT method.

Wells et al (2003) conducted a study measuring electroencephalograms in children diagnosed with epilepsy. The study showed significant improvement with a lower number of epileptic seizures in the study group. After two weeks of using the EFT method at home, there were also other clinical improvements. The limitations of these studies were that none of these studies had a comparison group and included a small number of patients.

Research on reducing fear of small animals using the EFT method has shown that fear can be controlled within the observed environment. Randomly selected individuals, who were divided into two groups, were treated individually using the EFT method. The EFT method was performed on a sample of 18 people for thirty minutes. In the second group, the method of diaphragmatic breathing was used on a sample of 17 people. This is a method that is known for its calming effects and improvements and is based on a proper way of breathing. The use of the EFT method caused greater improvements compared to the use of the other method. The EFT method led to an improvement in well-being that lasted at least six to eight months compared to the previous situation, and some study participants reported a lasting improvement in well-being. (Wells et al. 2003)

Feinstein (2008) states that energy psychology methods are the most effective approach to treat anxiety, panic attacks, and phobias in adult victims of sexual abuse.

Feinstein (2010) cites a study by Craig and Fowlie on the use of the EFT technique in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder in war veterans. Standardised pre- and post-therapy tests were used in the studies. The results showed that tapping on certain acupuncture points during an imaginary performance quickly and permanently

reduces the fear response to traumatic events and shocking memories.

A study (Church and Brooks 2010) on the use of the EFT method as a form of self-help in health professionals in the event of psychological symptoms of emotional distress involved 216 participants. The research was conducted at five professional conferences over a period of one year. To determine psychological distress, they used a measuring instrument to assess symptoms, self-assess pain, emotional stress, and the need to use psychoactive substances. They used the EFT method and assessed internal emotions before and two hours after using the EFT method. Statistically significant differences were found, as improvements were shown in all areas of assessment: distress and pain assessment, emotional stress assessments, and desire to use psychoactive substances. The incidence of psychological symptoms in healthcare professionals was statistically significantly reduced by 45% using the EFT method.

Ornter states (2013) that acupuncture and acupressure, which is also a form of tapping, increase the level of endorphins in the body, nerve transmitters of "well-being".

A study (Church and Brooks 2014) which involved 218 veterans and their spouses with post-traumatic stress disorder proved the applicability of the EFT method after six weeks. They were assessed using the PTSD scale. Confirmation of PTSD required the presence of clinical symptoms and more than 49 points on their scoring scale. Male veterans scored an average of 61.1 points on the PTSD scale, while women scored an average of 42.6 points. The results of the study showed that 83% of veterans and 29% of their spouses had clinical signs of PTSD. They proved that the EFT method reduced psychological and physiological symptoms, psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and pain perception.

In a study (Babamahmoodi, et al. 2015, p. 37–47 in Kusnanto, et al. 2018, p. 95) on the effect of the EFT method on the psycho-immunological factors of chemically damaged lungs in veterans, when studying the effect of the EFT method on immunological factors, it was found that the method has positive effects on physiological and psychological symptoms and quality of life. The study lasted eight weeks for 90 minutes and included a control group. The study focused on respiratory, psychological, and immune problems. The study involved 28 people, namely 14 people in the group that performed the EFT method and 14 people in the control group. Male veterans between the ages of 43 and 49 were studied.

The results of the study showed statistically significant differences in health improvement using the EFT method. They found that in 79.24% it improves mental health and health related to quality of life. Statistically significant application of the method reduces somatic symptoms, reduces anxiety and insomnia, and social dysfunction. They also found that the severity of respiratory problems is reduced. The study's findings were that the use of the EFT method may be a new therapeutic approach to improve psychological and immunological factors.

Church and colleagues conducted research in California in 2012 involving eighty-three participants. The effects of the EFT technique on stress hormone cortisol in blood were measured. Elevated cortisol level can cause a weakening of the immune system, cardiovascular disease, mental illness. Participants were divided into three groups. The first group had a conversation with a psychologist about establishing relationships, compassion, negative knowledge. In the second group, participants used the EFT technique. In the third group, they read magazines, talked, and had no special activities. The results showed that cortisol levels in the EFT group fell by 24%. In the other two groups, the level of stress hormone decreased by 14%. Authors concluded that tapping on acupuncture points lowers cortisol levels in blood. (Church, Yount and Brooks 2012)

The study of Church and colleagues was repeated in 2020 with renowned psychologist Peta Stapleton from Bond University in Australia. The results of the study were published in the APA Journal of the American Psychological Association. The difference in performance compared to the original research is that this time Stapleton performed the EFT method on a group and not on individual participants. When re-examining the effect of the EFT method on biochemical stress in the body the research team focused on changes in cortisol levels and physiological symptoms of stress. Fifty-three participants in the study were divided into three separate groups: the first tapped for one hour - using the EFT method (EFT) under the guidance, the second listened to a psycho-educational lecture (PE), and the third, control group, performed no activity (NT). The researchers measured the level of cortisol in the saliva sample taken from the volunteers 30 minutes before and after using the EFT method. The results of this research in the EFT group showed higher decline in cortisol levels than in the original study (-43.24%, $p < .05$), this time they were not given subjective assessments of changes in physiological symptoms of stress. The decrease in cortisol in the EFT group after tapping was significantly higher than that measured in the

PE group (-19.67%), and that in the control group (NT), where cortisol levels even rose slightly (2.02%). The results of the research in 2020 thus fully confirm the results of the original research. (Stapleton, Crighton, Sabot and O'Neill 2020)

Eft method in psychotherapy

According to Feinstein, Eden, and Craig (2005) the EFT method complements but does not replace psychotherapy in the case of mental health problems. EFT is defined as an effective tool that, in combination with psychotherapy, helps in cases of depression, anxiety, personality disorder, bipolarity, dissociative disorder, severe trauma, bodily injury, substance abuse and psychotic disorder. EFT helps to change self-destructive thought or behavioural patterns, overcome emotions, intrusive or unreasonable such as unexplained anger, depression, guilt, jealousy, fear, excessive attachment, self-condemnation, anxiety, sadness, or shame, achieve healthier habits and personal goals.

Negative and limiting beliefs often originate from early experiences that have marked us emotionally. In this case, classical psychotherapy focuses on memory when explaining negative emotions, and energy psychology assumes that there is an intermediate step between memory and emotion, called a disorder in the energy system in the body (Feinstein, Eden and Craig 2008) that according to Craig (2011) is "the cause of all negative emotions."

When a traumatic event occurs, a person can respond to it with numbness, which is a biological response that helps them survive when fighting or escape is not possible. When the threat is over, the body relaxes and begins to shake. If this relaxation does not occur, a blockage, energy stagnation, occurs in the body. Church (2015) calls this the traumatic capsule, where the event is captured with all the information of the sensory channels that were present during the event. Everything that is seen, heard, smelled, all the sensations of this moment continue to exist in this capsule. Trauma can thus remain for a long time as unprocessed energy in the system, which then manifests itself in the form of disease, dysfunction, destructive forms of behaviour. With the EFT method, you can penetrate the event itself, where there was no release of the freeze response. (Church 2015) It is therefore important to name and locate feelings and emotions at the beginning and during the process using the EFT method, while tapping on acupuncture points.

Among the big traumas Dawson and Allenby (2010) include sexual assault, violent assault on a person, hostage situation, military conflict, terrorist attack, torture, natural or ecological disaster, serious traffic accident and serious illness - in fact any life-threatening situation. For children, this can also be an inappropriate sexual experience without violence. Among the small traumas, the authors classify events, especially from childhood, that shake the sense of security. These events are especially traumatic if they happen unexpectedly, if we are not prepared for them, if we do not have the strength to prevent them, if they recur, or if someone is intentionally cruel to us. Sudden death of a loved one, car accident, fall, sports injury, surgery, end of an important relationship or the discovery of a dangerous disease can also be classified as small traumas. Trauma can also be caused by an unstable or dangerous environment, serious illness, medical procedure, separation from parents, physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse, domestic violence, peer violence and neglect.

When our senses perceive that our lives are in danger, they send a message to the thalamus, which acts as a switching station for messages between the brain and the body, which sends information to various areas of the brain, including the amygdala, a collection of nerve cells, which transforms memories and emotional responses and adds an emotional meaning to the information. This information is sent to the hippocampus, the centre of conscious memory processing that forms the conscious structure for threat information. The information then travels to the orbitofrontal cortex, which assesses the severity of the threat and appropriately mitigates or enhances survival behaviour. If it detects a threat, it activates the hypothalamus, which triggers a stress axis, and therefore, levels of adrenaline and cortisol rise. If we experience trauma, we will detect any new threat distorted and the stress axis (hypothalamus-pituitary gland-adrenal gland) will be triggered again and again, which will affect our health as cortisol levels will rise permanently, DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone) levels, as with stress (Dawson and Allenby 2010) Psychoneuroimmunology reveals the connection between the brain and the immune system and proves that stress and anxiety cause health problems and diseases. (Dawson and Allenby 2010)

Inappropriate responses that are harmful for health emanate from triggers in the subconscious that are related to life experiences when the subconscious is not able to distinguish whether it is an event in the present or in the past. The chemical response is the same in both cases and on a small scale this happens every day. (Dawson and

Allenby 2010) In such situations, the EFT method can be used to evoke negative emotions, physical problems, thought patterns and/or behaviours and resolve them through a process of neutralisation. In this way we get rid of harmful, unhealthy responses, but keep the desired, genuine ones.

The placement of the EFT method in psychotherapy demonstrates effective integration. It is crucial to first define the contents of the thinking component of holistic behaviour, perception, interpretation of the experience, which in interaction with other components affects the client's behaviour and emotional and physical well-being. (Glasser 2000) Shaping self-image, developing self-confidence, confidence in oneself and others reflects perception. As part of psychotherapy, the client becomes aware of internalised and limiting beliefs, inner speech, especially in connection with the perception of self, self in relation to others, in given situations. (Podgornik Pulec 2019) In accordance with the scheme of holistic behaviour Glasser (2000) explains the individual's actions and well-being by their perception, the destructive creativity of their system, harmful behaviours, and a variety of symptoms as a reflection of frustration.

In this context, the clarity of the situation is the basis for working with the EFT method. As part of psychotherapy, it defines behaviours, unfortunate choices with which the client does not achieve the right purpose, because they do not bring him closer to the desired goal, they may even distance him or are destructive for him and he wants to abandon them. Often, these are different harmful habits and forms of addiction that can be very persistent and cannot be eliminated completely effectively despite all the good intentions and attempts to change perceptions. We can also include the EFT method in psychotherapy when we want to introduce certain habits into everyday life, that would be useful for us, but we do not practice them for various reasons.

The advantages of using the EFT method can undoubtedly be recognised in the other two components of holistic behaviour, on which we have no direct influence: emotions and physiology. Changes on these two levels occur in psychotherapy indirectly, through the thinking and activity component, which is not always the simplest. In the process of change, we may encounter obstacles that prolong or even make it impossible to achieve the desired goal. The intensity of the emotional response and physical symptoms can

impair focus and the ability to make changes on the first two components. The internalised beliefs, although recognised as ineffective beliefs, often even harmful, are not always easy to change, nor is it to abandon destructive behaviours. Therefore, in psychotherapy, the combination with the EFT method is an effective choice.

Limiting beliefs do not allow the client to switch to the activity component, but he rather opts for passive posture, reserved and insecure behaviour, or withdraws altogether. The characteristics of both components are then reflected in well-being. On the emotional component often with fear and shame and with sadness and anger at failure, and on the level of physiology with anxiety, rapid heartbeat, sweating, tremors, redness, irritable bowel syndrome and more.

For the most common personality types that trigger anxiety through negative internal dialogue, psychologist Bourne (2000) characterised a fighter, a critic, a victim, and a perfectionist. The “what if” thinking is often present, creating possible scenarios that overestimate the possibility of a negative outcome, or “catastrophizing”, which means overestimating the consequences of a possible negative outcome, and “pessimistic self-assessment”, which represents an underestimation of one's skills to cope with problems.

A phenomenon called the nocebo effect occurs, the so-called “placebo's evil twin brother” (Reid), a self-fulfilling prophecy in psychology or the “expectation effect”. Every feeling, emotion or current thought triggers the response of millions of neurons at the same time and these shape our next response to any challenge. An example is a study in which a group of students were informed that releasing a small amount of electricity through their head might cause a headache. Although not a single volt would have been used, two-thirds of the participants in the group experienced a headache. (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2005)

The created expectations therefore have an immediate effect at a given moment, and beliefs contain an expectation that affects neurochemistry, the body's neurochemical system affects other biochemical systems, including the hormonal and immune systems, just as they affect it. However, no matter how harmful our internal dialogue can be, it is difficult to achieve it completely and only on a rational level to eliminate or change it in a way that is acceptable to

us, plausible and allows us new behaviours and better well-being. In this case, in addition to the psychotherapeutic approach, the EFT method can also be included when effectively changing the internal dialogue.

By reshaping beliefs, we achieve changes in self-image and program deep beliefs into thought. The main beliefs and images are neurochemically coded, and provide a basis for coding new experiences. Perception that does not correspond to deep beliefs is eliminated, and that which is consistent with them is regulated. Deep belief also mobilises biochemistry in the most tangible physical way, as it sends chemical messages to the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems. (Cousins 1989, p. 20–29 in Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2005)

Also the authors Feinstein, Eden and Craig (2005) talk about the effectiveness of the method in the case of obsessive-compulsive disorder, which manifests itself in the form of intrusive, forced thoughts and/or actions - compulsions, as well as in the case of habits and addictions. “In addition to the fact that we can use the basic recipe for all psychological addictive habits, energy therapies also have the power to balance dopamine (which is excreted in the case of addiction) and serotonin, (which is characterised by low levels in case of people with predisposition to addiction), substances on which addictions are based. (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2005)

In the case of addiction or deep-rooted pattern, the complexity is too strong to be eliminated only with a basic recipe. (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2005) Thus, an integrated approach is necessary, which also requires clarification of the background of a certain addiction, harmful beliefs, acquired patterns that are the subject of psychotherapy, so in this case, for effective change, it is necessary to combine.

In combination with psychotherapy, the EFT method can be used to alleviate or eliminate physical pain, especially in connection with possible hidden emotional reasons, we can achieve the regulation of the balance of meridian energies. (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2005)

The EFT method eliminates negative emotions, which are usually stronger than rational interpretation and the possibility of transforming perceptions. When practising psychotherapy with

clients, we often tap fear, sadness, anger, resentment, shame, guilt. We change negative beliefs, internalised and limiting. We transform sad, traumatic, painful events from the past that in some ways still have an impact on the present, often as post-traumatic distress, intense emotions, painful experiences. Such events are, for example, any form of abuse, neglect, deception, punishment, criticism, accusation, humiliation, rejection, quarrels, often alcoholism in the family ... As frustration occurs and our system tries to reduce it in various creative ways, this is reflected in various forms such as physical illness, anxiety, depression, fears and phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, addiction, bad habits, procrastination, self-sabotage, perfectionism, indecision and similar.

Due to traumatic experiences, damaged self-image, which can lead to, among other things, avoidance, denial, or contempt of oneself, is reflected in various forms, in painful and destructive ways. Resolving such frustrations requires systematic and continuous psychotherapy, which tries to change views of past events, reshape beliefs, and unwanted emotional responses. With the help of tools such as the basic recipe of the EFT method, we process an event, destructive feeling, thought or behaviour that limits us.

Dawson Church in his work *Genie in Your Genes* even believes that every experience triggers genetic changes in cells. Each thought or emotion releases a certain cascade of biochemical substances in the organs (2009) If we believe that components of holistic behaviour are in interaction, our beliefs, perceptions, and thought patterns affect both mental well-being and physiological health. Psychotherapy is also based on this belief, at least as far as more modern, existential humanistic approaches are concerned.

With the help of EFT, we work on the development of emotional intelligence. We can recognise, understand, regulate, and control emotions, activate emotions in a way that they will help us achieve a goal, and we will be able to respond as appropriately as possible to the emotions of others with compassion and understanding. (Feinstein, Eden and Craig 2005) "By mentally activating mental or emotional problems and by stimulating a range of energy points, the neural connections that control the problem can be introduced again. The tool that allows neurochemistry to change is incredibly easy to use, but somehow unique to both psychotherapy and education." (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2005) Therefore, the EFT method is already being introduced in schools and is widely used when working with children. In practice, the EFT method often proves to be a

valuable aid when working with younger children who, despite the distress, they are unable to fully articulate and process emotions at a rational level of perception, for example in the case of parental separation.

The EFT method also eliminates subconscious resistances that can be reached during the psychotherapy. These occur when the body's energy system changes polarity, and most of the time we are not even aware of it. It often occurs in a form that we call "additional benefit or loss" in psychology. So, when we want something, but in a way it would be an obstacle for us, we do not change anything, because in a way it does not seem safe.

The main cause of subconscious resistance is negative thinking. The more self-destructive thoughts are penetrating, the more we begin to subconsciously resist. Subconscious resistances can be recognised in people who often feel like victims and complain a lot. In most people, subconscious resistance is manifested in a certain area, which could also be understood as weakness (unsuccessful weight loss, smoking cessation, etc.), but it is subconscious resistance that can be eliminated by the EFT method in the so-called preparation, states Craig. (2011)

Anxiety disorders respond particularly well to energy interventions, according to Feinstein, Eden, and Craig (2005) who believe that the basic recipe works even if we do not understand the cause of the resulting emotions. "Here we do not have to recognise the object of fear, which is a great advantage, because anxiety is often free-floating, it has no well-defined origin or originates from various variable causes and jumps from one danger to another." (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2005)

4.1 Illustration of the use of the EFT method in a case study from psychotherapy 1

This spring, a client in his late twenties joined the psychotherapy. A successful postgraduate student, satisfied with the development of his own potentials and self-realisation, focused on further goals, with interests and active in sports, communicative and social in relationships within a small circle of peers. He feels loved, accepted in the family, his parents and older sister support, encourage and understand him even in the current situation, when he complains

¹The case is presented with the permission of the client.

about feeling poorly. He also describes the relationship with the girl as loving and belonging.

Despite the successful actualisation and satisfying fulfilment of psychological needs in relationships and activities, there is frustration, which manifests itself in the form of physical pain. The 'lump in the stomach', as the client called the problem, was also the reason why he decided to seek psychological help after medical examinations ruled out a possible organic cause.

The client has been feeling the pressure in the stomach more intensely for the last two years, but it has also been present in the past when he had experienced a stressful situation (for example during the exam period, in the case of a public appearance, travel, etc.). In the last period, it is present every day, usually in the morning and then during the day, late in the afternoon or evening. At that time, the client can also consume food, as he has no appetite before. The client often, even when he feels abdominal pain, also feels soft and tingling feet, emptiness in the head, confusion, and with the escalation of anxiety, also the feeling that he will lose consciousness.

Problems affect the client's daily life; due to fatigue and disturbing 'lump' he began to give up activities (very soon after joining psychotherapy he took up sports activities again) and stopped socialising because he was afraid that the environment would perceive his poor well-being.

In addition to the intense symptomatology at the level of physiology, there is also a variety of feelings on the emotional component: from fear and helplessness of what is happening and what will happen, to anger and sadness because it is happening to him. The activity component includes withdrawal: from situations, relationships, activities, from any form of exposure (going to the store, to a social event, etc.), from making new decisions (doing student holiday work, going on a trip, etc.). There is also a gradual transition from a pronounced active posture and extroverted action to passive behaviour and a closed person. There is considerable discrepancy between how he has acted and wants to act, and his current actions are deepening his frustration and he is losing control of his life.

The client and I also analysed the mental, key component of holistic behaviour and, as part of the psychotherapy, we worked on rationally changing internalised negative beliefs and automatic thoughts that were triggered in the client as soon as he woke up in the morning.

Inner speech included, among other things, "I'm going to have a stomach-ache again," "Everything's going to go wrong," "Something's going to happen along the way," "I'm not going to know anything on the exam.", "Tomorrow I am going to feel as bad as today." "What if I faint?", "When will this be over?", "I feel a lump in my stomach for every situation, even if it's pleasant." "I can't take this anymore."

The psychotherapy was combined with the EFT method in such a way that the client with therapeutically guided tapping (initially only the basic recipe and then always in combination with 9 gamuts) first resolved the distress directly on the symptoms. Initially he was trying to reduce abdominal pressure, describing pain as concretely as possible - in terms of location, expression, experience (also by parable - 'feeling of a lump in the stomach') and intensity. The SUDS scale was used to assess intensity¹. From the original estimated intensity of 8, the pain decreased to 2 after three basic rounds and then, after tapping the 'rest', disappeared. With such tapping the client continued at home, usually in the morning when the pain had already appeared. When we met again after a week, we discussed the results and the client pointed out that the pressure this time lasted for a short time, so not until the afternoon or evening, and that it did not occur every day. Eventually, it completely disappeared.

The second aspect of tapping focused on internalised beliefs. I guided the client through the process of tapping by including all the above beliefs, which he found meaningless, even harmful, and which he had already tried to change on a rational level in a way acceptable to him, but they remained and influenced his well-being. With the EFT method, it happens that events and perceptions are eliminated or changed in a way that we do not experience them as before and therefore are no longer frustrating. This is exactly what happened in this case, and the most persistent belief was "I will feel the pressure in my stomach again" and similar beliefs related to this, which were also expressed during tapping and we also presented them in theoretical part of the article. For example: "I don't believe that it can be any different, that I can be without this pain, that I really don't feel

¹SUDS stands for Subjective Units of Distress Scale, authored by Joseph Wolpe. Subjective unit of distress scale is a tool for measuring the intensity of the disorder or feelings such as anxiety, anger, agitation, stress, pain and similar. An individual subjectively self-assesses the intensity on a scale from 0 to 10. (Wolpe 1969).

a lump in my stomach ... that I'm relaxed and completely unconcerned by this pain ... that I can start the day without pain ... how will I function when this lump is gone, what will happen next ... is it safe to 'drop' it at all ... I can't imagine myself without this pressure in my stomach ... etc.«

I could also work directly with the client with the EFT method on activating the activity component, to help him become active again - running, cycling, fitness, socialising, travelling ... but this was not necessary because there was a change in the activity component after a change on mental level and after better physical well-being.

When analysing the background of the problems as part of psychotherapy, the client realised that he has high expectations of himself, and that these are related to the expectations of his parents. They never expressed them directly in the form of demands and pressures, but the client perceived that they put their hopes in him, that he is the one who, according to his parents, is the brightest in the family, as he put it, and "if anyone, then he is the one who will succeed in their family" (that's what his parents say). Expectations also included the weight of responsibility for the whole family.

Fear of failure was reflected in the client's inner speech: "What if I fail?", "What if I disappoint myself, my parents, other relatives?", "What if I don't pass the exam, how will I proceed?", "What if I don't achieve the goals, I set for myself?" And although he has always done everything successfully and without a doubt this realisation can help change existing negative perceptions and strengthen confidence in himself and his abilities, there is an emotion, a fear that is usually stronger than reason. In this context, the EFT method has also been involved in processing the related aspects, with tapping addressed directly to the fear of failure, disappointment, and the weight he feels about his parent's expectations. Regarding his parent's expectations the client also remembered an event from his younger years, when he was criticised by his parents who expected him to behave more responsibly, so we tapped for the event itself and for resolving feelings of guilt and shame he had felt during the event.

Besides tapping for fear of failure we were also tapping for the lack of self-confidence, as this is usually connected and in this case the psychotherapy showed that the client has these feelings.

Subconscious resistance was also recognised when working with the client, as the client tries to maintain control over a stressful situation, even though he is suffering, with pronounced physical and emotional symptoms. Therefore, tapping for safe abandonment of destructive choices was also carried out.

The client realised that the fear was transferred from school to work when he had an interview for student work during our meeting. This job was related to his study and could potentially represent a real later job. The fear of the interview or the fear that he will not prove himself at the interview and not get the job was so strong at the beginning that he did not want to attend it. After the psychotherapeutic and EFT preparation for the job interview, he was very satisfied with the interview, also because he did not have any unpleasant physical feelings, and he was active and concentrated.

During this period, the client still comes to meetings, more in terms of monitoring, joint reflection, and planning, so it is not possible to fully give a final opinion and the results achieved, but his well-being is definitely much better and control over life more effective. In addition to the knowledge he gained in psychotherapy, he has mastered and independently uses the EFT method, which serves as a tool for self-help.

Conclusion

In the search for answers to mental health problems, we repeatedly come to the joint conclusion that holistic treatment of a person, connecting and complementary knowledge, interdisciplinary approach represent a modern paradigm of overcoming vulnerability and achieving efficiency.

The EFT method in collaboration with psychotherapy is therefore one of the choices that can help us gain control over our lives by developing positive perceptions, pleasant emotions, inner peace and overall efficiency and satisfaction in everyday life.

Despite much research, there is no solid scientific evidence about how and on what basis the EFT method works and whether the effectiveness of the results can really be attributed to the protocol of short conscious exposure to unpleasant emotional memory and

simultaneous stimulation of acupuncture points. However, empirical research is expected to show that methods of energy psychology enable neurologically effective interventions that cause desirable personal changes. Empirical research will prove that techniques reinforce mental habits and behaviours that promote psychological well-being and reduce those that impede such progress. (Feinstein, Eden, and Craig 2005)

With quality and repeatable research, the EFT method may in the future achieve the scientific status of a method for successful help and self-help in solving a variety of mental health problems, especially in combination with the findings of psychotherapy and counselling.

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