White paper: Chronic physical pain resolves with EFT
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Introduction

Chronic pain has reached epidemic levels in America and a new approach to its treatment is urgently needed. Scientific research is increasingly finding that there is a strong emotional component to chronic pain conditions, which traditional treatment options do not address. Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) offers a highly effective solution to resolving deep-seated emotional issues and strengthening overall emotional health. This non-invasive technique works with the mind, body and nervous system simultaneously and provides an almost immediate reduction in pain. With consistent application EFT can bring long-term relief of physical pain and a less adverse response to stress.
America is suffering

Chronic pain has reached epidemic proportions in the United States with more than half of Americans living with some form of chronic or reoccurring pain (IOM, 2011). Research conducted by the American Academy of Pain Medicine found that chronic pain affects about 100 million Americans, more than the combined total of those affected by diabetes, heart disease and cancer (“AAPM Facts and Figures on Pain”, n.d.).

The most reported causes of recurrent or persistent pain affecting Americans are headaches, back and neck pain. A common misconception is that chronic pain is an inevitable part of the aging process, however, back pain is the leading cause of disability in Americans under 45 years old (“Health, United States, 2006”, 2006). Reported migraine pain occurs most in people between 18-44 years old, with 21% of that group reporting migraine/severe headaches at least once in three-month period (Pleis, Ward & Lucas, 2010).

Many people experiencing chronic pain suffer in silence, experiencing disappointment, sadness and shame along with their physical pain. When traditional courses of treatment have not been effective, they worry that they will never return to a life before pain.

Chronic pain affects more than the person afflicted. The burden of chronic pain is felt by families, businesses and communities.
What is pain?

The International Association of The Study of Pain recently updated its definition of pain to include an emotional component. Pain is defined as “an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience” (Merskey & Bogduk, 1994).

Dr. Susanne Babbel, a psychologist specializing in trauma and depression, writes “Studies have shown that chronic pain might not only be caused by physical injury but also by stress and emotional issues.” She goes on, “Often, physical pain functions to warn a person that there is still emotional work to be done.” (Babbel, 2010).

Emotions do not only occur in the mind and are more than just thoughts. The body is another mechanism through which emotions are expressed. When faced with unexpected, scary or adverse situations, people report bodily reactions such as tightness in the neck and upper back, a sensation of blockage in the throat, weight on the chest, stomach clenching or tingling and numbness in the extremities. When the root causes of adverse emotions are not addressed, the body releases prolonged distress signals. Failure to manage stress effectively, engaging in toxic relationships, and not healing and processing grief or trauma can all manifest in chronic long-term pain in the body.
Chronic pain may be caused by poor emotional health

Physical pain is commonly understood to be the result of purely physical causes: disease, and muscular and skeletal malfunctions. For many, lasting relief from pain can be gained via treatments such as surgery, physical therapy and anti-inflammatory drugs.

In cases where pain persists despite courses of traditional treatment and where there is no obvious physiological cause or trigger event, such as after an accident, we must look to emotional health as another possible source of chronic pain.

The mind body connection is a physiological event rooted in science. Perceptions created in the mind, including the interpretation of situations as safe or threatening, cause the brain to release stress hormones and neurotransmitters into the bloodstream, raising blood pressure, shutting down some organ systems and constricting blood flow to vital organs in favor of the heart, muscles and brain. This is the body’s response to stress, known as the "fight or flight" response.

When elevated stress is an everyday state, tension occurs in the body. Tension, or the expression of stress in the body, is a restriction of blood flow to that area of the body. Without adequate blood flow, pain occurs, and over time can lead to disease and disease.

In addition to on-going stress states, an acute incident can cause physical pain. As humans, we have a biological capacity for healing and restoration. The human body is designed to heal quickly, with even the largest bone in the body, the femur, taking only six weeks to heal after a fracture. The body's innate ability can be supported by many traditional treatments that can provide long lasting relief. When pain persists, however, it is likely that an emotional cause is at play and needs to be resolved to provide effective and lasting relief. As Dr. Mark Hyman, Medical Director at Cleveland Clinic's Center for Functional Medicine and New York Times best-selling author, says, “When patients don’t get better, there’s something deeper going on. Trauma is buried in the cells and tissues of the body. EFT is essential for healing." (The Tapping Solution, 2010).

An emotional component to physical pain can also develop over the long-term. It has been observed that over time pain can shift from having an underlying physical or event-driven cause, to an emotional cause. In the 2013 study published in the journal
Brain, researchers followed a group of patients with acute pain over the course of a year, and saw their acute pain develop into chronic pain. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), the researchers observed the representation of pain in the brains of the study's subjects shifting over time from areas in the brain associated with pain, to those associated with the processing of emotion (Hashmi et al., 2013).
**EFT is the solution to chronic pain caused by emotional distress**

EFT is a holistic healing modality that addresses the whole person: mind, body and energy systems, making it more effective than most traditional courses of treatment for chronic physical pain that has its root in emotional distress, or dis-ease.

Evidence from emerging fields such as epigenetics, neural plasticity, psychoneuroimmunology, and evolutionary biology confirms the link between emotion and physiology, and points to somatic stimulation as the element common to emerging psychotherapeutic methods (Church, 2013).

This suggests that a multi-disciplinary approach to treating pain that addresses physical, emotional and energetic health should be adopted to provide the greatest chance of gaining relief.

EFT uses acupressure, or gentle tapping on certain points on the body to lower the body’s stress response by sending calming signals to the nervous system. When paired with the right words to target stress and negative emotions, new awareness is gained and unhealthy or unhelpful behaviors can be modified. With consistent use, EFT facilitates a better relationship with stress, which in turn increases performance and productivity, enhances creativity and the ability to solve problems, and boosts emotional intelligence.

“Nothing comes closer to 'magic' than the positive results I have personally witnessed using EFT on thousands of my patients who suffered from physical and emotional pain and illness. EFT can lead you to incredible breakthroughs on your healing journey.” - Dr. Joseph Mercola, founder of world’s largest alternative medicine website (Mercola, 2018).
EFT’s effectiveness on chronic pain caused by emotional distress

Millions of people around the world have experienced lasting relief from pain by using EFT. There are over 100 published studies, including 48 randomized control studies that consistently show significant clinical benefits to patients suffering from a wide range of issues, including chronic pain (Leskowitz, 2018).

EFT has been proven to provide relief for many forms of pain: back pain, headache/migraines, joint pain, chronic widespread pain, such as fibromyalgia, and pain associated with autoimmune diseases (Solomon, 2015). Wherever physical pain is felt in the body, it is processed the same way in the brain but multiple factors can influence how pain is interpreted by the body's physiological system. These include emotional and psychological state, memories of previous pain, upbringing, expectations and attitudes towards pain, beliefs and values. Psychological, attitudes and belief systems must be addressed to provide lasting relief, with research showing that psychological issues are particularly prominent in chronic pain (Hansen & Stretzer, 2005).

When targeted at physical pain, EFT resulted in study participants reporting a 68% reduction in pain levels after 20 minutes (Church, 2013).
EFT’s effectiveness for emotional issues

Since it has been established that physical pain often has an emotional component or is the result of emotional state, it is worth noting EFT’s effectiveness on the most commonly recognized emotional health challenges.

Anxiety is the most prevalent class of mental disorders in the United States, with 31% of adults experiencing an anxiety disorder at some time in their lives ("Any Anxiety Disorder", 2017).

In a study comparing EFT with cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for anxiety, complete remission was reported by 76% of subjects using EFT, compared with 51% of the group using CBT. Furthermore, those using EFT improved in an average of three sessions compared to 15 sessions for CBT patients (Clond, 2016). The efficiency of EFT allows clients to feel better faster, decrease treatment expense and investment of time and other resources.

Depression is another common mental disorder in the US. EFT is very effective in the treatment of depression and has been proven to be more effective than standard course of treatment, including prescription medications. In research studies where $d$ = the standard deviation, or change, between the control group and the treated group, small effect size is defined as less than 0.2 and large effect size is 0.8 or greater. Meta analyses of 20 studies of the use of EFT on depression resulted in $d = 1.23$ (Nelms & Castel, 2016), meaning the results were so dramatic they were observable by the naked eye.

Seven studies showed that the use of EFT on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) resulted in $d = 2.96$ (Sebastian & Nelms, 2017). An estimated 60% of adults in the United States have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their lives, and up to 20% of these people go on to develop PTSD. Traumatic events can include witnessing or experiencing accidents, the sudden loss of a loved one, divorce, physical or emotional abuse, natural disasters or a life threatening diagnosis (Sidran, 2018). The most commonly recognized experience of PTSD is that of veterans; EFT is part of the treatment program offered to veterans by the US Veteran’s Administration.
The effectiveness of EFT as compared to other treatments

EFT's ability to work with the conscious, cognitive and subconscious mind, the body and the nervous system, means that it is highly effective in providing pain relief. Most other treatments for pain do not address all three of these aspects of the body.

Talk therapy focuses mainly on the conscious mind and observing and altering behaviors. It does not typically explore the subconscious mind at a deep level, which makes up the majority of overall cognition (Soon, Brass, Heinze & Haynes, 2008), and is laid down by the age of seven (Lipton, 2010). This means that talk therapy fails to address the unknown or unexplored parts (i.e. blind spots) of individuals that may be driving their thoughts and actions.

EFT sends a calming signal to the nervous system while discussing an adverse emotion, thought or situation and it is often observed that an early or suppressed memory is released, providing deeper insight into current situations. Once known, these memories can be addressed and healed with EFT.

When pain is physical, it is a common course of action to seek relief from physical therapists and chiropractors. If pain is rooted in the physical body, physical treatments are appropriate, although there may also be trauma and an emotional impact from the causation event, EFT should be added to address the emotional components and provide total pain release and relief.

In addition, when it can be determined that the physical pain is solely rooted in emotions, Dr. John Sarno, MD, clinician and retired professor of Rehabilitation Medicine at the New York University of School of Medicine, suggests that patients stop all physical treatments as they may block recovery by psychologically conditioning the patient into thinking they are injured (Sarno, 1991).

Acupuncturists work primarily with the physical body and nervous systems and believe that to achieve good health, the complementary extremes of "yin" and "yang" of the life force or "qi" need to be in harmony. Acupuncture uses needles to stimulate specific points on the body that correspond with channels that circulate qi, increasing blood flow and triggering the activity of the body’s natural painkillers. Treatments address physical and energetic aspects of healing, but the patient’s thoughts, emotions and behaviors are left unaddressed.
Simultaneous gains when EFT is applied to chronic pain

EFT has a profound effect on the nervous system, the production of stress hormones, DNA regulation and brain activation (Stapleton, 2018).

EFT decreases the impact of stress on the body, which in turn lowers cortisol levels. Cortisol, the hormone produced by the body when it is in a stress state, inhibits insulin production and raises blood sugar levels, resulting in increased inflammation in the body and constriction of the arteries.

Studies have shown that after one hour of tapping, cortisol was reduced by 24% (Church, Yount & Brooks, 2012). In addition, when EFT provides awareness around how stress is triggered, stressful situations can be identified and behaviors modified, reducing the overall impact of stress in an individual's life.

A reduction in stress brings the benefits of more effective cognitive performance, and enhanced creativity and problem-solving ability may be achieved because the frontal cortex of the brain is being utilized more than the stress response area of the brain. Better stress management can also lead to increased energy, focus and productivity in the workplace, as well as higher emotional intelligence.

Finally, when EFT is practiced regularly and with a skilled practitioner, a client gains self-awareness and insights into their self-image, patterns of behavior, incidents of self-sabotage, unexplained responses to stress and fears. Empowered with a better understanding of their emotions, clients are able to reduce self-criticism and reactive behaviors, which can relieve internally created stress.
In summary

Where emotional distress is at the root of physical pain, EFT offers an effective treatment that is free of side effects and addresses all components of the body. EFT provides proven results that include a decrease in physical pain, the development of increased resilience to stress and increased cognitive function and productivity.

If you are experiencing physical pain and suspect the underlying cause maybe poor emotional state, schedule a complimentary Strategy Session at www.inspansiontapping.com.
About the author

Jackie Simek had a 15-year career in the intense, high-stakes world of investment banking in New York City before becoming a certified Emotional Freedom Techniques practitioner through the Association of Advanced Meridian Studies. Her EFT practice focuses on pain reduction and performance enhancement by identifying the cause of and eliminating limiting beliefs, self-sabotage and anxiety in driven professionals. If you or your company are interested in working with Jackie, she can be reached at welcome@inspasiontapping.com.
References


