

Using EFT with Children

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This paper will outline the key strategies I have for using EFT with children with severe emotional problems. Many of these children are unwilling or unable to talk about their emotional states – and can't imagine why you want them to.

Let's pretend you met me in the elevator and asked me what is the secret to working with children with multiple layers of problems? I would say the secret lies in you. It is not so much about them but about you. You must be able to respect them no matter how difficult their behavior and you must admire their courage for managing their lives the best way they can. You must learn to let go of the outcome of the session and learn to just 'be' with the child, totally focused in the here and now. You must be creative in how you establish rapport and in your approaches.

Much of what is effective with children (and probably adults as well) is to just 'be' with them, to 'be' totally in the here and now - to 'be' who you are - to attune to what is happening in the relationship in the moment between the two of you. Mindfulness is the newest buzz word in therapeutic circles and for good reason: Mindfulness is about learning to live 100% in the present moment. Mindfulness in my opinion is about maturity. Maturity is accepting what is right now in this moment. Mindfulness (and maturity) is recognizing that NOW is all there is.

In my presentation on stage in Flagstaff I stated that I had been concerned about the presentation. I showed them my detailed notes. I told them I wanted to make sure I got in all the points I wanted to make. But, I said, I wanted the audience to see the difference in what happens to their sense of connectedness as I spoke to them extemporaneously in the moment and how they felt when I had to go back to my notes. I reminded them that they may see the going back to the notes as lecturing and that lecturing is the least effective method of learning!

In a therapy situation the 'point' is for you to 'get yourself out of the way', to be in the here and now, to let go of the outcome, to just 'be' with that child and to trust that the knowledge you have will come to you. It is not about technique or knowing the right set up statement it is about being congruently who you are.

My purpose for that talk was to show that getting thru to these challenging kids is doable. My purpose was – and still is - for each person to leave thinking: I can do this, too. As I share the approaches I have used, I want you to be picturing YOU using EFT with children in your environment. Think about how you can actually put these ideas in practice.

Let me give you an example to show you the very simple way I use EFT with kids:

Teddy is one of too many kids in our world who are victims of child abuse and neglect. Teddy had spent two and a half years in our intermediate level residential treatment facility. He had made a lot of progress. He was scheduled to leave on Friday to a therapeutic foster home. He was anxious. Not unusual, most of our children are anxious about their discharge. But to say Teddy was anxious is a grave understatement.

On Wednesday morning, for the third day in a row, he was refusing to go to school. His therapist, and other staff who had special relationships with him, had tried reassuring him about his upcoming move. He would not be comforted. So on Wednesday morning he threw things and threatened and screamed and cursed. He had trashed his room several times. He appeared to be doing everything possible to sabotage his upcoming discharge.

Teddy is a cute eleven year old, but he did not look particularly 'cute' when I saw him through the door of the behavior control room at 9 a.m. that Wednesday morning. He was agitated, angry and cursing loudly. He had been disrupting the unit for over 2 hours. Staff had called 20 minutes earlier for a seclusion order after he had been restrained for physically tackling a staff. Still cursing, he stared at me as I peered at him through the plastic bubble on the door of the seclusion room. I asked, "Think you have been in seclusion long enough?" He glared at me but nodded. I told him I knew a way that helped kids calm down quickly so that maybe he could get out sooner. You want to try it? He nodded again, still glaring and hostile. I told him to move to the back wall and I would unlock the door. He did, and I did, and I sat down in the doorway.

I went straight to it. "First you tap the side of your hand," showing him as I spoke. When upset, Teddy was not known for his cooperative nature or his willingness to follow instructions! I knew I couldn't push too hard and that I had a limited window of opportunity. But he wanted out of seclusion, so he tapped. He glared at me as I said, "Even though you did something really foolish today, you are still a good kid." His eyes got large and he nodded and tapped the side of his hand. "Even though you trashed your room, you are still a good kid." He tapped and nodded. "Even though you got really mad at staff, you are still a good kid." He tapped and nodded.

Following my lead, he tapped the points. When we were through the points, I held my arms apart as far as they would go and asked, "If you were this upset when I first came in, and, this is not upset at all (hands in prayer position), how upset are you now?" I had not asked this question at first, as it was pretty obvious he was a 10! He just stared. I stretched my hands out again all the way and told him to tell me when I get to the right place. I moved my hands in slowly. At about the half-way point, he nodded. He was beginning to look 'cute' again!

I said, "Great, this is working really well for you, let's try it again." I started tapping again: "Even though you are really upset, you are still a neat kid." He nodded and tapped. "Even though you are really scared about leaving here on Friday, you are still a wonderful kid." His eyes widened further and he nodded vigorously and tapped. "Even

though you are worried about moving to a new place with new people, you are still a super terrific kid." His brown eyes widened even further and he nodded even more vigorously and tapped. He again followed me as we tapped the points.

When finished I moved my hands in slowly. He nodded when I got to about 6 inches apart. "This works great." I said, "Let's do it again." I repeated the setup as above adding in a few more adjectives such as marvelous and fantastic kid. As before, when I said each statement his eyes would widen and he would nod vigorously. He really seemed to be taking in each word. We completed the third tapping sequence.

"So how upset are you now?" But before I could get my hands out to take a measure, this child, who had wreaked havoc on the unit for over two days put his hands together in the prayer position and smiled at me. He had not said a word through the entire process.

"Wow!" I said, "Cool stuff. This works really good for you." He nodded, still smiling. "Staff tells me you are refusing to go to school." The smile left his face for a truly visible sign of another aspect! "Can you tell me what the problem is at school?" I figured that even if he would not answer me, I could create some possible set up phrases. But he did! "They tease me," he said. We talked a minute, and I mean probably less than a minute, about the kids at school. This was a child of few words!

I then conducted setup phrases based on the problems he shared. Each time he nodded at the 'super kid' part. After three sets, he put his hands together in the prayer position and said, "I want to go to ISS." ISS is in-school suspension. He processed with the staff who had secluded him and we left the unit hand in hand to the on-campus school. Teddy served his 'time' in ISS, completed the remainder of the week in school and was no further problem on the unit. He left on Friday all excited about his new 'family.'

Teddy is a classic example of a no talk kid. Many of these kids won't talk. Or at least talk about feelings and their painful experiences. And many have good reason. They have experienced life as one failure after the other most of their young lives. You, as therapist, or helper are not the first person the child has refused to talk to. The child has been lectured to and talked to about his failures long before he ever hit your office. So many of these kids won't talk about anything meaningful and often refuse to do anything any adult requests.

By the time they reach your office there have experienced a long line of people telling them about all their failings and wrong doings and giving lectures about what they should do and shouldn't do. They see you as one more. Not wanting to talk is last ditch effort to preserve his or her sense of self esteem. Children's therapy is supposed to help kids feel better, but it is often so uncomfortable for them. They don't usually want to talk about bad things that have happened. They have often been given a long list of negatives, lectures, and lengthy lists of their many 'sins'. Given their experience why would they want to trust you or share anything with you?

I was the campus director of a 45 bed intermediate level residential program for severely emotionally disturbed children. Part of the staff training program was to increase the sensitivity of the staff to accepting the child where he or she is. The children in our intermediate residential program are one step away from being hospitalized. Indeed, half of our residents were step downs from more intensive care facilities. These children are very disturbed. They had multiple layers of trauma. They usually have two or three DSM code diagnoses. They are usually on medications - some of them on a lot of medication. Most are unable to be maintained in the public school setting.

Rarely did our children have involved concerned parents. These were not the kids who were brought by their parents because they were worried the child had no friends in school, or was failing geometry, or just hated school. We got no nice simple ADD children whose parents want them to learn to adjust better to school. We got no involved parents suffering from poor parenting skills. We usually get no parents – or parents with NO skills.

Our kids were the multi traumatized, multi diagnosed, multi medicated, multi problematic behavior kids. They often had had multiple placements in as many as 22 foster homes before they reach us. These kids needed multi agency support and multi approaches to therapy to help resolve their many issues. If you can use EFT to help resolve even one issue on their long list you have helped.

EFT is a wonderful additional gift for quickly resolving one issue or upset at a time. But these kids have so many issues and are rarely patient and trusting. For EFT to impact their complex life it must be repetitive and daily

RESPECT AND DIGNITY – ADMIRE THEIR COURAGE

Not all these multi problem children came to residential such as ours. Many children with only slightly less problems were still, somehow, being maintained in the community and school settings.

Respecting the child's world view and respecting their choices is critical. You want the child to get the message that she likes me so I am likable. You want them to think: She knows about my behavior AND still wants to spend time with me. You come across as kind, accepting, understanding and respectful.

Meeting kids on their own terms is difficult for many adults. You have to LIKE the kid – no matter what! And some of these children work very hard at being unlikable. In addition, we have our own childhood issues to compound our reaction.

Respect and dignity is about **Acceptance** - accepting the child as he or she is. Even though statements are the ultimate in acceptance and therefore work really well in coming across with respect and dignity. "Even though you trashed your room, you are

still a good kid.” In an attempt to reinforce the concept of acceptance both from me and from the child himself I introduce the Karate Chop as the friendly spot instead. I started this when I realized that the Karate Chop spot hits the hand just about the spot where your fingers touched when you shake hands.

When I have the luxury of more time with a child or at a later time I'd talk about the why of setup statements. I'd shake hands with the child pointing out where the fingers touch when we shake. I explained the setup as similar to shaking hands. It is the spot we touch during shaking hands to show we are friendly. I explained that the set up is like a handshake when you are introducing yourself. Tapping the side of the hand is like introducing you to another part of you. The setup says: “Hello, part of me. I see you. You are a part of me, I accept you AND I am still OK.” We all have good and bad parts of us: all parts are still ‘us.’ The setup keeps us from having to fight with any of our parts. Once this was explained to a child they had much less problems with using and developing setups. I was able to tie the setup to something they recognized and related to. “This is the friendly spot.” I'd say. Set up statements are how we get friendly with our problems and bad feelings. It is a way of saying: I am aware of this feeling; I accept that this bad feeling is a part of me AND I am still a good kid.

Setups have both Awareness and Acceptance. Can't get much more therapeutic than that! I have this problem AND I am still OK.

You have to link EFT into their life. Give them some way to tie it in. Let them know quickly what's in it for them. I tell the child something as simple as: “I know a way that can fix being upset very quickly. It's kinda' different. Bet you never saw it before.” If the kid is a no talk type I emphasize that he doesn't even have to tell me what he is upset about for EFT to work. I don't have to know anything about his problem to teach it to him. The child looks at me with a ‘say what?’ expression. Older kids in particular like not having to tell you about their issue.

Indeed, many times they don't even know how to talk about their internal experiences - even older children. We expect the bright and oppositional adolescents to have abstract reasoning abilities and logical thoughts but this is rarely so. Many have traumatic experiences that occurred way before they were able to label their emotions. Not talking does little for developing social skills or for developing negotiating skills. These adolescents rarely use formal operational thought and many have only concrete operational strategies. They live very egocentrically in the present. Their attempts at adapting to their world are through their aggressive repetitive negative behaviors. Behaviors that tend to wear staff and parents and therapists down.

These children are totally in the here and now. Their decision making revolves around what they want or feel RIGHT NOW. They have no ability to delay gratification. Part of our job is to help them to plan something to look forward to, something that has steps toward accomplishing it. We are looking for small steps toward success. We want to reinforce any step in the right direction however small.

These are not children whose behavior is going to turn around with one right set up phrase. These children need EFT over and over. They need EFT along with acceptance, caring and opportunities to experience success in their day to day life.

If there is not a relationship, i.e. they respect you and trust you, they are not going to do anything you want them to including EFT. With some children that may take some time. Be persistent and consistent. Some children you may not reach for a very long time.

With Mark, we had not - YET - found something he likes. Some strength. Something that is still important. For some children that is not very much. In many ways they have given up caring. Caring hurts too much. Caring comes with too much disappointment.

Mark had schizophrenic parents who threw him against the wall, who broke both his legs and covered his body with cigarette burns. They loaned him out for sexual favors to get money for drugs. God only knows the torture this child endured. Add a low IQ, zilch trust in adults, almost no social and problem solving skills, and you have an enormous challenge. Our persistent, caring, consistent presence in his life may be the first step to reaching him. We are still trying.

Fortunately this is an extreme case. But these are not children who have had the experience of a caring adult labeling their inner emotional world. They have not learned to describe or even recognize the feelings. They feel; they act.

NORDRINA is a textbook case of a here and now child. Totally egocentric, she displays the extreme of classic spoiled brat behaviors. But she came from a ghetto in Atlanta and only knew neglect and abuse. She saw repeated violence from an early age. I have tapped with Nordrina many times successfully only for her to get upset about something else 10 minutes later. It will take daily repetitive EFT to impact her rage and hyper arousal. And Nordrina is not exactly what you would call a cooperative child.

Little Kris is a fetal alcohol child. He is capable of screaming for hours. He will not be consoled. He attacks you if you come close. When he calms a little he is very cooperative using EFT. Maybe as time goes on he will learn to use it for himself.

Often in our quest to have a child to "open up" and talk to us we may overlook the possibility they really do not know how. Kids may not recognize their feelings; they may not be able to put their feelings into words and may not be able to understand the meaning of their emotions. For disturbed kids their emotional world is even more complicated because of the complexity and cruelty of the world they have experienced. They may experience several strong conflicting emotions at the same time. They simply can't figure it out.

They are unable to make sense of their internal experience. Children have to have the ability for formal cognitive operations to understand and make sense of contradictory emotions directed at the same event. (For instance, a normal child may

be upset at the coach yelling at him but glad the coach was concerned enough to be honest with them.)

The severely challenged child has for the most part not reached the level of formal operations. They are, therefore, unable to appropriately label their internal experience. Labeling your internal experience is considered a critical part of therapy, certainly for adults.

The child's inability to talk about the problems and feelings seems to compound their cognitive delays. One important task for the therapist is to assess what cognitive level the child is actually operating from versus his or her actual age.

The apparent cognitive delays of these children make it imperative to use simple language – short words and sentences. Given this you can see the challenge in using metaphors or other abstract concepts.

Forget abstract concepts, these children are into using 'four letter' words. Try using three letter words in dealing with these often obnoxious and rebellious children:
I admire your spirit AND we can work on your style.
Or, That is true AND you can still have ...
Or, Life sucks AND you can learn more skills to deal with your problems.
Or, You don't know how to do that ---- YET
Make frequent use of three letter words – especially AND and YET.

One of the questions I have been asked was about using EFT with children who appear to have psychotic behaviors. One teacher told me about a child she had worked with who appeared to disassociate after using EFT. I do not think the child actually disassociated. He could not describe his emotional state so he used the strategy he knew. He retreated into silence. He protected himself from any attempt to explain what he did not understand. He could not make sense of the experience.

Little Kris, our fetal alcohol child, a small 8 year old had just seen the psychiatrist and looked really upset. I passed him in the hall and put my arm around him. "That is one big sad look." He barely nodded. I told him the tapping stuff had helped him feel better last time would he like to come to my office and try it for the sad feeling. He shrugged. I asked what the doctor said that made him sad. He said he talked about dead people. Asked who he knew that was dead. My momma.

(Sometimes fools rush in where angels fear to tread!) And this was my time. Here is mostly a non-verbal kid 8 year old kid, dumping a situation with more aspects than you can shake a stick at. And as out of touch with feelings and using language to discuss it as a child can get. But I said: "Well, that is a tough one. That will probably take more tapping than we can do today but let's see if we can make you feel a little less sad." I was attempting to lay the ground work of expectations.

So we start, with me saying the setups for him: “Even though the doctor talked about dead people, I am still alive. Even though the doctor talked about dead people, I have people who take care of me. Even though the doctor talked about dead people, I am still a good kid.” We tapped together. He looked a little less sad. We then worked on “Even though my momma is not with me any more and I still miss her, I am in a safe place. Even though my momma is not with me, I have people who take care of me. Even though my momma is not with me, I am a good kid.” He followed and seemed to have a little more life in him. But he just still stared at his feet. Then he froze. Disassociated? I don’t think so. While he did not appear to be in any distress, indeed his facial express was no longer pained, he was just no longer available to me. Maybe I came too close or tried to do too much too soon. Or maybe I was nowhere near what he needed.

I chose not to push further. I keep a gold Slinky on my desk. I let Kris sit quietly for a minute. We were just there together. Then I picked up the Gold Slinky and in front of Kris rocked it back and forth for another minute with him still staring at the floor. When I offered it to him he took it and began to play with it. I made no attempt to get him to talk. I would have failed.

Kris would have had no idea why I would want to ask him about his misery. These children’s life has given them the expectation of the worst. But what happened? My theory is that these children have no vocabulary to make sense of the internal experience. Adults with who I have worked have occasionally talked about the physical sensations during or after using EFT. Children often don’t have the vocabulary.

You are not always going to know what happened. That is why you have to relax and get yourself out of the way and be able to listen to your inner guidance. Just be there. Let go of having to control the process and what happens. Child therapists sometimes have even less knowledge of the emotional state of the child and what is going on than a vet does! Child therapists deal with much, much more ambiguity than adult therapists.

EFT is wonderful for these kids. They don’t have to talk EFT can take the pressure off them. I sometimes use hand puppets as another way to help the child feel safe and still teach social skills and label feelings. A key goal in therapy is to help the child develop sufficient language and social skills and to teach them ways to calm themselves. EFT is a perfect self calming tool. Use every chance you are given. When a child is anxious is the easiest time. Anxiety is a great motivator. They will then usually try most anything.

Kelly, age 13, was terrified of going to court. He had reason to be scared. He had hit another child in school with a 2 by 4 and the parents had filed a complaint in the juvenile court. He was getting very little sympathy, as he was claiming no responsibility for his actions. The general feeling was that he deserved to feel bad. True. On the other hand, he was feeling bad AND he was NOT feeling responsible.

He was angry that other people were “doing this” to him. Kelly is your basic North Georgia redneck. Grew up in a rough and tumble family where the greatest pass time was to sit with the men folks and brag about their fights.

He had a very poor attitude toward women and believed they were inherently inferior to him. It was a girl at school he had hit. He loved shooting, hunting and chewing tobacco. None of which he could do in the school setting, our treatment facility or his foster home and he frequently told us of his displeasure about it! Hitting people was not an unusual act for Kelly; there had been a lot of aggression. But, he had pushed the boundary too far this time and the child’s parents filed charges.

He was also unattractive kid with few intellectual abilities. He was one of the kids we have been describing who have a very poor ability to connect with others, poor problem solving skills, definitely an absence of the ability for any thoughtful conversation and, significant difficulty with any new learning.

In short this was one of those kids who worked at being unlovable and unreachable. It was the day before court. He had not been sleeping much for the last 3 nights. He would get up and pace in his room. He was sitting alone at a table when I saw him.

“Hi, ”I said, using my usual highly skilled comment. “Staff tell me you going to court tomorrow.” I sat down across from him putting my hands on the table like he had his hands. Knowing he would not admit to being afraid I took a different tact. “The judge can send you back to Detention.”

“Yeah,” he nodded, “and I don’t want to go back.” I nodded like he had: “Yeah, I can see how you’d be worried about that a little. Tell me on a scale of 0 –10 how bad you’d hate having to go back.” He took the bait. “A 10, I hate that place.”

“Well, I know a trick that works to help you make a better impression on the judge, maybe if you make a good impression he’ll treat you better. This is what you do. First think about how bad you don’t want to go back.” I skipped the setup; I was afraid I’d lose him. Otherwise, it was a classic EFT experience. I used the 9 gamut which I often left off but since I was skipping the setup figured it couldn’t hurt. And; it worked like a charm. At the end he said. “I dun wrong. I don’t want to go but if they send me, I’ll be real good and get out soon.” The next day before court. I asked him if he was still worried.

“Maybe a little,” he said. “I don’t know what the judge is going to do. But it’ll be ok, I really am sorry and I know I was wrong to hit her. I understand why everybody is upset and I won’t do it again.” Quite a speech from this child. He repeated that speech to the judge and was given probation. And for the next 5 months until I lost track of him, he did not hit anyone again.

Don’t be afraid you will take their appropriate guilt away. Don’t assume he or she deserves to feel bad for what they did. EFT does not make you stupid or irresponsible.

It balances the energy system. As the bad feelings are eliminated I see over and over people taking MORE responsibility for what they did. It is as if peace and calm and good judgment roll in to fill the gap left by the negative emotions. Always, always grab the chance when they are really worried about something. Respect where they are, respect their defenses but go for it. Besides, what is to be gained by attacking their defenses? Accept them; respect them. Walk a mile in their shoes and figure out a way around their defensiveness.

We all too often assume these children have the cognitive abilities of normal children their age. They don't. These kids have missed out on the experience of having someone who cares for and about them to help them interpret their emotional world. Children who have missed out on that experience have a great deal of trouble with self calming.

Kids live so much in the present. It is rare to find a child who wants to get involved in a discussion of negative feelings. They have endured traumatic events that are too painful to talk about. Experiences of violence and fear can delay and distort normal development. Such events can throw a monkey wrench into Piaget's developmental timelines.

Positive regard is communicated more in what you do than what you say. Remember that little rule about that only 7% of message is in the words. That is not to say the words are not important. You can lose the kid with judgmental words, however they are stated. These kids have critical antenna for criticism and rejection. They KNOW what it looks like.

They don't always know how to read warmth, empathy, acceptance. Rapport is more who you are, than what you know or what you say. If you have a lot of problems of your own and are preoccupied, that will show through. We bring our own childhood into the child's therapy - another real good reason to work out your own stuff! But having your own act together is not enough. Kids are limited in how they use language and they behave unpredictably. Seemingly out of nowhere they can start acting out.

We have to be in touch with the child in us. Memories guide us more than we realize. Keep in mind that intimate family moments rarely had a LOT of talk in them. A lot can happen when you are fully THERE with the child. Much is communicated non-verbally.

Being a child therapist is a tough calling. You have to distinguish yourself from the rest of the negative, lecturing adults in their life. EFT would fit right in. Everybody else is forcing him or her to talk. Everyone else is pointing out their bad feelings or their self-destructive behaviors. These children see themselves as always wrong and feel they have nothing to offer.

The low frustration tolerance of these children requires that we have a very HIGH frustration tolerance. They are managing their lives the best way they know how.

Amanda worked with me with EFT for a while then just stopped. She was actually making good progress on lots of issues. Something must have scared her. She came home from a difficult home visit and she not only wouldn't work with me any longer, she said she was lying when she said it helped. I shrugged my shoulders saying fine if she changed her mind let me know. She gave me the silent treatment. Fortunately we had a captive audience at the residential program. I had the luxury of time. Every time I would see her I greeted her but she would turn her head away. One day on cottage as I was leaving she could not avoid me and we were forced to be face to face. So I said to her frowning face: I LIKE that smile, that's the best upside down smile I ever saw. She had to catch herself to keep from smiling back at me.

The next time I saw her she actually initiated a: Hi! I said, "I thought you didn't like me anymore?" "I never said that," said Amanda. "Oh," I said being sure the relief showed in my voice, "You mean I made a mistake?"

When I started a weight loss group at the center another resident told me Amanda said she wasn't coming because she wasn't doing that tapping stuff. I told her to tell Amanda that if she didn't want to come that was OK. I would still like her if she never comes. I will still like her if she never wants to lose weight.

Guess who comes to the group. She complained the entire meeting about everything. But when I taught a breathing exercise she really got into it. When I told the class they could touch and breathe rather than tap, Amanda was cooperative. I gave her a way out of saying I'm not going to do that tapping stuff.

In my EFT workshops I teach the touch and breathe technique as an alternative to tapping. For some kids they are willing to touch and breathe but not tap. The more ways we know to modify these techniques to be acceptable to a particular child the better chance we have in having the child participate.

USE FUN. Make a lot of jokes. Part of teaching EFT to younger children I'll use terms like the Monkey move for the underarm points. Or play a game like: Simon Says using EFT points. FUN is such a critical element. These kids have serious problems that deserve to be taken seriously and it is important to do so. The fact that we are paying serious attention and taking serious measures to help them is very important.

But therapy with kids is not so much about work as it is about play. FUN is a real intervention. Straus describes the most successful child therapists as those who are "generous with witticisms and irony, incredulity and amusement, willing to see the absurdity of a position or a situation and be able to laugh at ourselves, too." Trust me, when working with the severely disturbed child you have lots of opportunities to laugh at yourself.

ATTEND TO THE CHILD

The high majority of these children crave attention. They will say what they think you want to hear to get you to stay with them. Some have an extreme high need to please. Others feel that nothing they have done gets the goodies so they are angry and hurt. They wouldn't tell you they felt better if they did. Others just want to be left alone in their misery. Many kids in our program, after they realize it is OK to ask for attention, ask out right for hugs or other forms of attention. And teaching EFT is one way to give it to them.

Kris was very small 8 year old with a huge temper and had been known to scream for 4 to 6 hours at the time. He is a child of few words, much trauma and zilch insight. He is probably a traumatized bi-polar child. He appears to exist totally in an egocentric present time. He is not one who is going to chat about his problems in therapy. When he was new to the program he heard about the EFT from the other children. I often remind children to use EFT. I reminding a couple of kids in the lunch room about using EFT and little Kris overheard me reminding them it was a good way to get rid of bad feelings. He came up to me and shyly asked if I would teach him. Naturally, I said sure. That evening I came up to introduce myself to him and another child. "You are here to teach me to tap." he said matter of factly. I smiled and nodded. Did this socially inept child understand EFT could help him feel better? I didn't know; I doubted it. He wanted what most of these kids want, individual attention.

But I am always delighted to teach EFT. I started with explaining this was a new way to calm him down and feel better quickly. That I could show him how it works if he could think of something that upset them that day. I use a current upset initially to show them how it works. I do not want to open up a can of worms the first time we use it. I have sometimes gotten into the difficult issues with the child because that is where they went. But I want the first time usually to be as successful as possible. He picked a situation and told me that Jerry had made him mad. That was it. These children have such poor vocabulary to describe their pain.

It is important to teaching feeling words and give a safe place to use them. I went through the EFT process until he placed his hands together in the prayer position and smiled. His cottage was lining up for activities and I walked him to the line, telling him I would come back and we would write down what to do.

I turned to talk to staff and when I turned back around Kris was out of line with his arms outstretched. Something just upset you again? Yes. Want to try the tapping again for it? Yes. We walked back to his room for privacy. What happened? Lisa hit me? How mad are you? Arms way out. Well let's see if we can use a short cut tapping to help. Twice we went through the points and he put his hands together and smiled and jumped up to go back in line for the activity. As he left me standing there, shaking my head, I said a small prayer of gratitude one more time for this wonderful gift.

ADVOCACY

It is very important to advocate for these kids. They have to believe you are in their corner. Part of my role in my agency was to process what we call Child Advocate Forms. If the child has a problem or complaint they write it up much like a letter to the editor. So for me much of going on unit is: Miss Ann I need to talk to you. Part, of course, is the extra attention. Part is that they know I will help them work it out if there is a problem. They know I will work to empower them to deal with their life.

They love to complain about staff, or their room or the food, or the activities. We have great staff and we train them well. It is not that these children are in any way mistreated. But we are mandated by the state to have a patient advocacy process. We use ours as another way to let the children know they have some control over their life. I understand that in actuality, children have little control over their life. Many of their disruptive behaviors are last ditch efforts to preserve what remaining self esteem and control possible. We work at showing them how to use the maximum amount of available control for their best interest.

One way I do this is to tell the kids my five 'secrets' about staff:

- Some staff are better than others. (This gives me instant credibility!)
- Even the best staff are better at sometimes, than at other times.
- You can learn something from every staff, even if it is just about a way you do not want to act toward people.
- It is your choice what good advice to take from the staff and what advice just doesn't fit for you.
- Because, there are no perfect people. Not me, not you, not staff.

This is basic REALITY to them and they love it. They expect me to defend the staff and tell the child what they should have done. They have been told the error of their ways too many times. They have felt they had to defend their position. So I don't give them anything to get defensive about. I've never had a kid, or staff for that matter, not act surprised when I told my secrets. They pretty much just can't believe I have said that.

The message is that I am somebody different. The five secrets are outrageous to the kids. But, it is about REAL life and real stuff and respecting that they have the good sense and judgment to tell the difference. If you listened carefully, I didn't say anything negative about anybody.

I don't give them platitudes that we care about them and want the best for them blah, blah, blah. That we just want them to behave well. Blah, blah blah. These children have heard enough blah, blah blah in their lives. You have to get real and get creative. Give messages in ways they can hear them. Christina was one of those:

Christina was a very overweight needy 15 year old. In the weight loss class she described her body image as that of an overfed baby. Great choice of words, and for Christina a lot of insight. She drives every staff nuts after a while and some staff are particularly sensitive to her draining character. Ms. B was a no nonsense, get things done sort of person. She is actually an excellent staff person who cares deeply about

the children. Christina is particularly sensitive to Ms. B and complains about Ms. B being ugly and rude to her for about the fifth time.

So we tap for her issues using her words: "Even though Ms. B spoke ugly to me this morning, I am still a good kid. Even though what Ms. Brown said sounded rude to me, I am worth being listened to, Even though Ms. Brown gets on my last nerve, I am still a worthwhile person." Getting to 0 was easy. I then helped Christina imagine the future as to how she would follow directions with Ms. B and not let her upset Christina's day. For the next two weeks, I asked about how it was going with Ms. B, Christina would smile and say she was practicing what we role played.

EFT will not eliminate the need to teach new skills or to practice problem solving. We practice dealing with their problem staff. We tap for Even though, Ms. Brown drives me nuts . . . or Miss Amy was unfair... then we problem solve. When the intensity is 0, I ask if they can think of any ideas on how to deal with the staff so the staff won't 'bug' them.

Usually the intensity of the feeling goes down quickly. But in the cases where it does not I ask the famous question: Who does that staff remind you of? Or who else in your life treated you like that? Then we tap for the other person in their history. And when it is finished we role play and practice dealing with the staff and visualize responding in a new way. This process is very empowering for the child. It has been very gratifying to watch a kid be able to let an inappropriate staff comment just roll off and not over react.

In Christina's case I forgot about it for a while and I guess a couple of months later when we were talking and I remembered about Ms. B and asked if she still got on Christina's nerves. Christina says no; Ms. B doesn't bother her. "When she sounds rude, I just figure she's having a bad day. I do what she asks and get out of her way."

In most cases it is not the staff or therapist or teacher who dislikes the child. It's that some children work hard at being unlovable and unlikable. In these cases, you really have to work at the get yourself out of the way. The trick is to live totally in the present moment, not worrying about what happens next or even evaluating each move as you go. Just relax and be aware only of what it is like to be with this particular child in this particular moment in time. Such was the case when I worked with Tanya.

"Tanya" is twelve years old. She is big for her age. At 315 pounds, she is VERY big for her age. She came to us from the Juvenile Justice system after being expelled from school for beating up a boy. Tanya had been molested at an early age when she could not control the situation. She was determined not to be helpless again. More recently, Tanya's mother called to tell her daughter she was planning to marry again. Tanya thought the man was "worthless" and told her mother not to marry him. They got into a verbal argument on the phone. Tanya hung up on her mother and became very upset. Later when she threatened to kill herself she was placed on suicide precautions. When I came on the cottage staff told me she was taking a nap after cursing out staff and stomping around the unit. I walk in her room: My heart went out to her. Here was this

unattractive, 315 pound 'little' girl, supposedly cruel, obnoxious and considered dangerous, sleeping curled up with a teddy bear!

I started off with my deeply therapeutic, highly skilled comment I frequently make with an upset child, "Hi!" I said. She turned over and glared at me. "I sleep with my teddy bear too," I said. Which IS true - sort of! "Teddy bears are very comforting when you are upset," I added. Tanya sat up in the bed, her face softened. I grabbed at my chance. "How did you get yourself on suicide precautions?" I asked. She told me she had been talking to her mother and got mad. Well what part of that conversation upset you the most? When my mother told me, that I just had to "deal with it." (Could we have here another example of where she was not in control?)

"Ya know, I have this really great way to stop being upset." This sort of comment always gets an upset child's attention. "What is it?" Tanya asked. I did a half smile and replied. "I usually use it with adults, but sometimes I teach it to kids too. I guess you are old enough." THAT almost always gets children her age. "Are you game to try it; it is sort of strange? It is like a relaxation exercise. I didn't wait for an answer. I just start tapping on the side of my hand. She follows my lead but looks at me questioningly.

"How much less trouble would you get into if you could calm yourself down whenever you wanted to?" She gets an oh-wow-a-lot look on her face. "You game?" I asked again. Tie into what is important to her. She shrugged her shoulders in agreement. We continue tapping for a few seconds on the side of the hand. I always tap, or rub the sore spot, for several seconds before I go any further. If there is any situation in which you should assume psychological reversal, it is with our emotionally 'challenged' children. This also gives me time to assess their level of cooperation. Most kids will at least tap the side of their hand with me. I watch their reaction closely. If they are cooperative I have no problem with the setup and going through the process. If they are resistant I go a different route.

When I asked her how upset she was with having to deal with her mother's choice, she said a 10 on a 0 to 10 point scale. OK repeat after me:

"Even though I have to 'deal with it', I am a good person."

"Even though I do not have control of my mother, I deeply and completely accept myself."

"Even though I have to deal with my mother's choices, I deeply and completely accept myself."

I try to reframe the problem with different words to keep it interesting and to increase the chances that one will really hit home. We then tapped through the points three times. I said the reminder phrase "have to deal with it" for her.

When conducting EFT, especially for the first time, I frequently say the se up and the reminder phrase for them. The number of times I go through the setup and tapping sequence without stopping varies on my assessment of how they are doing. I go for success, not perfection of the process and I watch for subtle signs of improvement.

She appeared calmer so I asked her to think about "having to deal with it" and asked how upset about it she was now. She said a one. "Great! Let's do it one more time and get rid of it." We tapped to "Even though I can not control my mother's behavior, I deeply and completely accept myself."

Tanya then reported that it didn't bother her anymore. She started to talk about things she wanted to do when she "got out". I love watching the cognitive shifts EFT can bring. She was now feeling useful to others and planning for the future. Such thoughts were certainly not how she described the situation in the first part of our conversation. Or how she had been reacting on the unit.

We talked about how she was adapting on the unit – only been here 2 months. I helped her write down the EFT process in her journal. We talked about ways she could use the tapping.

On my post about Tanya on the emofree.com site I closed it with: Did I cure her of all her many issues forever? No way. Did she resolve one issue about her mother? Absolutely. This is important to remember. These children don't just have one onion to peel they have a bushel full.

Another idea to help reach these children is to ask their advice - how can we help and what do they recommend to help other kids we know. We have to be creativity in our approaches.

I loved the suggestion in the book No Talk Therapy by Straus where she suggests asking another professional to consult with you and the child about how therapy is going. The child who has, up to that point, been unwilling to discuss anything of importance with you appears very happy to discuss your shortcomings with the consultant.

Teenagers particularly like this. If your ego can stand it, this process can provide you with unexpected leads and insights. It could also help the child take ownership of therapy.

One of our resident bad attitude teenagers, Sarah, kept complaining to me about her therapist. I am the administrator, not the therapist; I work hard at respecting the role of the therapists and encouraging the child to bring up the issues in therapy setting. I tried working it out but talked to no avail and she refused to tap about it. She would not even consider role-playing. So I scheduled a time when the three of us could get together. The therapist is excellent and skillfully fed back to Sarah her issues. She asks questions as how she could change her approach to best help Sarah. They then set goals and next steps for implementing Sarah's suggestions and Sarah quit complaining to me about the therapist.

Another child, angry Amanda, said she hated her therapist and couldn't talk to her. The creative therapist told her she appreciated her ability to tell her how she feels about her. So they start off every session with: I hate you because... It took months of the poor therapist listening to all sorts of abuse before Amanda could tell her she really didn't hate her. Now her therapist has all sorts of insights into how Amanda sees the world and how the world had treated Amanda.

What we mental health professionals need to focus on is to help the child reinforce small steps toward learning. Learning new social skills to form and maintain relationships. Helping them practice problem-solving skills. We need to give them an opportunity to have a conversation in a safe accepting environment, to feel safe enough to develop new connections with others.

EFT fits beautifully for the child with such poor social and communication skills. They don't have to talk. And they love it.

David was my first EFT teenager – the child of a friend. He was bright, shy and reserved. He walked with his head down. In the years I had known him I had never seen his eyes. He only agreed to see me because his mother told him that this was a new way to get rid of negative feelings AND that you didn't have to talk about the problem to work on it. David saw me for 5 sessions, two more than we contracted for. I don't have a clue what he worked on. He talked very little about his life.

I told him to make a list of the problems he wanted to resolve. I explained about aspects and asked him to write down each aspect as it occurred to him. I gave him a sheet on how to do EFT and encouraged him to work on his list at home. In our sessions the setup was always the same: Even though I have this problem ... I deeply and completely accept myself. After a while we skipped the setup and just tapped. I told him he didn't even have to tell me how much it bothered him. I bet I could guess using his arm to assess the intensity. He was fascinated with the muscle testing.

The third visit when David got out of the car I had to look twice to know it was him. He had his head up! He has wonderful gray green eyes. Five years, never saw his eyes. He no longer looked like a scared rabbit.

The Davids of the world are probably going to stay somewhat shy and reserved. That is his basic way of being in the world. But David is luckier than many children. He has caring concerned parents to help him over humps in his life.

EFT is a great resource to give kids who have darn few resources for taking charge of their lives. Many of these kids have lived in a no win situation their whole life. They're in trouble if they talk; they're in trouble if they don't.

Many of these children perceive going to therapy as a punishment. Demanding they talk can shut them down more. Many of these teenagers feel disconnected from their own lives. That don't believe they have anything to contribute. They feel their life

doesn't matter. These kids can be drowning in their inadequate ways of dealing with their pain and hopelessness. They have experienced so little success in their life. They have known only pain and hopelessness.

These kids don't want to be the way they are; they are not choosing to be obnoxious. They don't have the skill or self-confidence to develop better strategies. They rarely admit it. Their "I don't care" remarks are designed to push us away. But it is the very rare child who really doesn't care.

They do want to behave well, win approval of adults and generally fit in. But they are doing the best they can. However, obnoxious it appears to you. Respect who they are. Work to find something that interests them and advocate in their world to help them get it. Small steps. Maybe volunteer work or a small job around a career they like. Or a mentor in a field they are interested in.

You are not always going to get a rebellious teenager to TAP or TAB. Respect how difficult life is for him, respect his struggle, advocate for his needs, find his interests. Help him find some small way to experience success in the world.

ESTABLISH RAPPORT – a critical piece

Rapport is different than a relationship. Relationships involve trust. Trust is a time thing. Nobody with any sense immediately trusts someone else totally. And many children have good reasons not to trust. But rapport is simply showing the child in some way you are like them, that on some level you care about them. It is about them accepting that you have respect for them.

You don't have long. The average person's attention span is about 30 seconds. With these kids you get maybe 10! They can stare through you and fade out. They just aren't there!

In an EMDR training I attended on using EMDR with children the instructor showed a video of her work with a reluctant child. She knew the EMDR would help him. But after just a few times, he wasn't having any more of it. In the tape she literally drug the kid off the back of the couch back to the chair for more EMDR. The child naturally then refused any more. What does that say to the child about respect? What is that teaching the child about relationships? How much was the therapist accepting this child?

Sometimes we helping professionals assume that because we are caring people and want the best for the child that the child has the ability to immediately know and accept your caring. They don't. You cannot assume that such a child even believes you have their best interest at heart or that he or she even knows how to respond to you if he does believe you.

Establishing rapport with the severely damaged child is the hardest of the hard. Their autopilot is set on rejection. Their antenna is finally tuned to criticism. Their fears of reaching outside of themselves are huge.

I've used EFT with a 6'6" construction guy on an airplane concerning his 'dislike' of flying. No problem. Used it with normal teenager who would barely admit he was letting anything get to him. No problem. I just didn't ask him what it was. I just taught him the process. Cool, he said. I've used it with college students, my favorite as they seem more open to innovative ideas. No problem. I've used it with women in their 70's on issues that have bothered them for 50 or more years. No problem. I used it with a very important African American in charge of a national organization in the airport in New York City. No problem.

If we tie EFT into briefly into the person's existing belief system (i.e. a new relaxation technique), if we have established rapport, if we are congruent people will follow. People are curious. Once rapport is established they are willing to try something. I have literally never had an adult I introduced EFT to that was not at least willing to touch the points and go along with the process.

But the severely damaged child is MUCH harder in part because they have such a low level of trust. Establishing rapport is much more difficult. Maintaining rapport is even harder. These kids do not give you the benefit of the doubt. One wrong move and they shut you out. Remember the EMDR therapist.

But they are also very hungry for attention and very needy. Unless they have no ability at all for connection - and unfortunately some don't - they crave your attention and acceptance. Even if they would rather die before they admitted it. Underneath all the huffing and puffing, they are scared children, unsure about how to proceed in the world.

Most simply have never had their needs met and are literally starving for attention and kindness. But they don't trust anyone to give it to them. You have to be learn to be able to just "be" with the child at times.

There is a chorus in a rock Christian music song that says:

Don't worry about your life.
If you hold it too close you'll lose it.
Don't worry about your life.
Let go before it is too late.

This is great advice for child therapists. Don't worry about the outcome, just practice "being" with the child. Just BEING with the child sets you apart. You are congruently there in the here and now with the child. You let go of the outcome. And, you follow all those instincts and intuitions we like to believe we all have!

Giving them an opportunity to succeed at anything – no matter how small – will also set you apart. These kids are more sensitive to making mistakes, some MUCH more so.

Nordrina, our violent temper tantrum child is 10. Most of her tantrums occur when she makes a mistake or even thinks she made a mistake. She can interpret an innocent action by a staff as criticism and BLAM she is literally off and running. It is an uphill battle to help this child. She wears everyone out. Afterwards she won't 'process'. We have found she will draw pictures about what happened. Art is another great therapeutic intervention. Sometimes, too, she will process using a puppet.

As one of our staff says: These kids go from 0 to 60 in 3 seconds. These children see their recurring mess-ups as indisputable proof of their unworthiness. They have not learned to self calm, to stop and think, to interpret the world in any other way than negative. They do not feel they have any control over what happens in their life. And some have real reasons for feeling that way. They do not have the ability to control themselves – YET. They need to be helped to see those small places where they do have some control over their lives. They need to feel involved in solutions. They need opportunities to make choices.

The child who is unable to label or process feelings or a totally non verbal child can be given an opportunity to draw a picture, play it out with puppets or use stuffed animals. Throw EFT into it as much as possible. It is fun to watch a child use EFT on his stuffed animal!

These children's experiences with social learning and developing trust are very limited. We learn all skills through practice and these children have not had much opportunity to practice appropriate positive social interactions.

They fall either under the neglected and ignored category or the shut down and out category. One of my favorite expressions is: Whether someone is unable, or unwilling, to do something the result to you is the same. You, as the therapist or helper, are locked out. You have an unavailable child.

Your ability to quickly establish rapport, to 'be' fully with the child, to have that child feel your respect is constantly tested. If you are unable to get rapport you will be unable to practice EFT with a child. You are reading this article because you want to improve your knowledge and skills. That sets you apart. Believe it or not, not every therapist is interested in expanding his or her skills. Unfortunately, I have known too many therapists who never read another book once they escaped graduate school!

I encourage you to continue your exploration into energy work. EFT is a beautiful simple process. Gary's email list is full of new ideas and modifications in using it. The DVD of the Month Club with a different EFT Master each month demonstrating rich new ideas for using EFT: www.EFTWorkshopsWorldWide.com is another great resource.

Muscle testing is an interesting skill to learn as teenagers in particular are blown away fascinated with it. You can tell them to think about something they really like doing and then to think about the problem they don't want to talk about. You then point out that: I

can show you a way to make your arm be strong when you think about that problem. Or, a relevant statement like: Surely, you don't want to let your teacher (or whoever) make your arm stay weak?

NLP or neurolinguistic programming is another extremely skill to use. You need to be at least familiar with the, visual, kinesthetic and auditory terminology and concepts of NLP. Become familiar with NLP. I urge you to read about it, take a class and become knowledgeable of these incredible tools.

Richard Bandler and John Grinder say that the meaning of the communication is in the response you get. How simple. And like many simple things a brilliant summary of a complex truth. NLP has wonderful tools and rationale for establishing rapport quickly and you need all of the tricks available to help you with these complex children. You need all the tools you can get to help you get a connection and an involved response.

Research has been conducted to decipher which therapy is best. The research actually showed that the more connected relationship with the therapist the more successful the therapy – no matter what kind of therapy was used. While the studies were pre- EFT I think that even WITH EFT the practice of therapy is more about who we are than what we do. That's why we have to somehow get across that we are not one more adult who judges them.

TEACH – BE PLAYFUL – GET OUT OF THE WAY – BE CONGRUENT

I am also in favor of being outrageous. They are watching you too. TAD in hallway beside staircase banging a folded table. Hi! I leaned up against the stair rail in front of him. I matched my body movements to about his every third bang of the table. Did you know that table costs \$99? How many weeks allowance is that? I knew that money was important to Tad. I was trying to change his 'state' a NLP concept. He knew the rule about having their allowance cut to pay for any damage they cause. I was trying to hook into his desire to keep his money.

It didn't work this time: "I don't care," he said.

Try something else - shift gears.

"Gee! Who pushed your buttons?"

"Staff."

"So what do you usually do to calm yourself down when you are this upset?"

"Listen to my radio."

"So are you trying to tap out a tune with that table?" I slowed down my movements. He kept banging but was slowing down with me.

"I don't have a radio, but hey, we could sing." I launched into a chorus of Amazing Grace. I slowly stop my arm movements. He stops banging the table and stares at me, incredulous I would do such a thing. I finish the chorus and ask how upset he is now on a scale of 0 to 10, figuring I would get him to tap now that he was calmer.

"I'm not mad anymore he said."

Tad is the first child I taught EFT to in our program. We talked a few minutes about what happened, what he could have done instead and reminded him about using EFT. I sent him back to his activity. It is about establishing rapport. It is about teaching other self soothing skills. It is about being an advocate. It is about teaching new skills and reminding them to use the skills they have. Rapport is about 'Matching' (another NLP concept) the child and just BEING with the child.

What may be as equally effective as anything else we do is that we are a steady presence in their lives – maybe the only steady presence in their life. Even if you feel you are not getting anywhere week after week, you are still are a steady, positive presence in their life.

Talk therapy is tough for them. Few of these kids can conceive of spending an hour with an adult talking about their deep personal feelings. Many have lived very hard lives with very hard adults. They have learned that people are not to be trusted and usually have ulterior motives when they are being kind toward them. Your message always is: I care. You LIVE a modified setup: I see your behavior AND I can find pleasure in being with you,

TAP WITH THE CHILD – KEEP THEM TAPPING – PERMISSION TO TOUCH

Another question is whether I tap with the child. Absolutely. It really helps keep you in the here and now. It helps with the 'being' totally with the child I keep talking about. In some cases I keep the child tapping while I talk with child about the related issues. This is a form of the tearless trauma technique. When he is on a roll I do not interrupt. We keep tapping. Talking is therapeutic to these children, however rarely they do it! They have been ignored and discounted too many times. Don't add to it.

Jennifer' had attempted suicide on the second anniversary of her mother's death. Her mother had died of cancer. Jennifer and her two younger sisters had been taking care of their mother as she was dying. The Family and Children's services learned the mother was very sick and removed the children from the home only days before the mother died. They were sent to foster homes and did not see their mother alive again. [This was certainly one of those cases where what was considered in the best interest of the child was NOT in the best interest of the child.]

Jennifer at 15 looked younger; she was very thin with long 'stringy' brown hair. She'd been at the treatment program about four days. She was pleasant enough but never smiled. She was not admitted on any medication but the staff said she appeared very depressed and were recommending she see the psychiatrist for medication. The appointment was in three days.

I tried to know each new admission and work on teaching them EFT as a calming technique they can use on their own. Most are very receptive. We work on whatever negative emotion they may have at the time to show them how it works. The afternoon

I went on the evaluation unit, Jennifer was sitting quietly, just sort of staring. We talked a few minutes about her experiences since coming to our program. Since she had not yet seen the horses and barn I suggested she and I walk down to see the animals.

I matched my step with hers and asked about her day. She said a boy at school had made her angry. Told her that one of the things I did in the program was teach kids ways to get over bad feelings very quickly. I could teach it to her now using the angry feeling to show her how it works. Thankfully it worked like a charm. At the barn, I told her I wanted to teach her about a breathing technique that could also help her. I ran her through collarbone breathing. She seemed more relaxed with me so I asked her what else she would “like to use this stuff on.”

She brought up her mother! Sometimes these kids really surprise me. She really seemed to want to talk about it. So we talked. I asked her to just keep tapping with me. So she talked and we tapped and tapped and talked. Fifteen minutes worth. That’s a long time for a child! She had to go to supper, so we planned to meet the next day. The next day we talked a good bit more and tapped through out it all. Then she told me she didn’t want to talk about it anymore. When she saw the psychiatrist the staff reported she was much less depressed. She was never placed on medication. She made it successfully through the third anniversary of her mother’s death and a visit to the grave. Her major concern was about how her younger sister was reacting.

You are going to go for what will work. You are going to use all that clinical judgment and intuition, that “getting yourself out of the way” stuff. Do not be concerned about following the points just right or the number of times or worry about making the perfect setup. Establishing rapport or a relationship is MUCH more important than your technique. You want to be able to come back for more. And without rapport or a relationship you won’t get another chance no matter how well your delivery.

If you have an adolescent who says, I don’t know. Accept it – they probably don’t know. Remember these children often do not have the vocabulary to describe their internal experience. And they cannot imagine talking about such stuff if they did.

Ask: OK, if you did know what would it be? Or suggest they take a wild guess or just make up a story. Or you could just tap for: Even though... I don’t know what my problem is I am still a good guy. Or if they are not game for setup statements and many of these adolescents aren’t, skip the setup. You can just tell them to think about what they are confused about and tap for that. Or ask where they feel being upset in their body. Try Cook’s Hook up (or Lock Link). Sometimes in a high resistance situation it may be better to use the touch and breath technique where you just touch each point and slowly take a good deep breath. Let go of the outcome. Go where your intuition and the child takes you.

With some of the more rebellious types you are simply not going to get them to do EFT in your office. Work on the advocacy ideas with the child I mentioned above. Give them a simple handout on EFT and tell them this is a method some teens use to calm

themselves down quickly. Unfortunately, some kids just refuse to do EFT. They see it as one more way adults are trying to control their life.

It is important that you take care of yourself. If whatever you do is not working try tapping for yourself: Even though I am getting nowhere with this child... Tap before a session with a difficult kid. The less anxious you are the better the session will go, whatever happens. Encourage the parents to tap for: Even though my child has this problem, I deeply and profoundly accept him and I love him unconditionally. For those particularly difficult kids you might try this yourself as therapist or teacher. Remember: Tap for everything.

Fortunately, sometimes you luck out and walk up on a situation and using that clinical judgment and intuition you go for it and just DO IT! It works beautifully and reminds you all over again why you are in this business.

Gary is one of our younger residents. He is a lanky 9 year old. One night I walked on the unit and I found him lying on the floor of the Time Out room screaming at the top of his lungs. I walked over to the new staff person who was monitoring Gary in Time Out and asked how long he had been screaming. "Twenty minutes", she said.

About a week before I had taught Gary the short version of EFT. Most children learn it quickly. The goal is for the staff to help the child remember to use the exercise the next time the child STARTS to become upset. It is important that staff intervene early. Once a child 'goes off' there is very little chance for calm interventions. As one of our staff put it; these children have a short circuit between calm and the fight-or-flight response. I usually have very poor luck with getting a child to tap while in the middle of 'going off'. I generally have to wait until they are much calmer.

So there was Gary. On the floor. One leg in the Time Out room--one leg out--screaming at the top of his lungs. I walked within his sight. He glared up at me still screaming. I glared back and tapped on the side of my hand. To my great surprise, he lifted his hand and began tapping, still screaming. I tapped the points and he followed, still screaming. I tapped the side of my hand again and he followed me through a second sequence, still screaming, but not so loud this time. So I dared a little smile and we tapped through the sequence again. The third time is the charm and Gary stopped screaming and smiled back at me. We had not spoken to each other.

The new staff person looked at me and said, "HOW did you do that?"

I am asked if I touch the child or tap the points for them. Usually no. Sometimes a child will ask me to tap for them. Or sometimes, I will ask the child for permission.

Chris had just come back from an outdoor picnic in which a thunderstorm came up unexpectedly. He was scared and hugged me tightly. I said: "I know something that helps kids not feel so scared. Is it ok to touch you under your eye? Seven taps and I

was about to ask if ok to tap his collar bone point when he said. "I'm not scared anymore." Sometimes this stuff is SO miraculously simple.

When teaching the children I explain that this is a relaxation exercise that can help them calm down quickly. None of the children in our intermediate treatment facility come to us knowing how to effectively self-calm. Our residential program also teaches traditional relaxation techniques and uses every behavioral tactic to help the children learn to control and modify their behavior. But, until EFT, too many left our facility still not doing a very good job of self-calming.

MAKE EFT THEIRS

After teaching a child EFT and working through their issue I have them visualize themselves using EFT for themselves. Sometimes we pick a particular issue they need to keep working on. These children don't just have one onion to peel they have a bushel full. We talk about a place (usually their room) and time of day they can practice. I get them to visualize themselves going through EFT.

I don't give it a name. I try to make it as much their special process as possible. Whenever I can I tell them I will teach it to them first and I then I want them to teach it to their 'primary' staff person. I use this as an empowerment exercise, an empathy builder and self esteem expander as with EFT they could then be useful to someone else.)

One of our most self absorbed children, Lisa, (what we call a primitive personality) was working on her primary staff person's problem. I wish I'd had a video of this very disturbed girl leading her primary staff person through the process perfectly. The staff member had a headache and Lisa's job was to teach her EFT and see if EFT would help her headache. We were working (slowly) to help this child develop empathy. When the staff finally put her hands together the girl was delighted. "I did it!" She said. (Meaningful to this story, as in spite of her narcissism, she feels she can't do anything right.) I asked her how it felt to help someone else. She just glowed as she said it felt WONDERFUL!

Several months later Lisa was transferred to a newly opened unit. I was conducting training for the new staff on this unit and asked Lisa to help. "Since you already know the process can you help me show it to the staff." She was delighted. (Back to respect and dignity and helping them to feel they have something to offer too.) We all sat around in the living area of her new cottage as Lisa helped me instruct the staff. Lisa explained about holding your arms out to show how upset you are or you can give your problem a number. Lisa is 11 with a low normal IQ and has always had problem with the 'Even though' words. It is a little high brow for an 11 year old!! We talked about the reasons for the setup: I am aware, I accept this part of me AND I am still OK. I ask Lisa if she had a problem she would be willing to work on to show how it works. She agreed and after showing how upset she was with stretching out her arms she somewhat changed the setup leaving out the even though: "I am upset about leaving my old staff AND I am a good kid. I am uncomfortable with the new staff AND I am a

super kid. I miss some of my old staff AND I am still a good kid". I was impressed with her improvising. I learned one more way to do EFT with kids! AND I like it a lot. I have used it that way ever since.

I let them name the process. Lisa is so full of anger. On her old unit she wrote the steps down in her notebook and called it 'The Anger Solution.' I make it their process. I don't give it a name other than an exercise. I ask them to name it for themselves. Rarely do children want more specific information about EFT. When they do ask I tell them to the limit of their vocabulary.

Another example of letting the children name it is another contribution to Gary's web site:

One little girl who had been very shy and withdrawn, said, "When I pat on the healing buttons, my tummy feels better right away." Another little boy who used to live in fear of being bullied at school found it most helpful too, and called the procedure, "Like having a guardian angel." Interestingly, once he stopped being afraid, the bullies went on to find themselves another target.

Sometimes I give the child a "cheat sheet" of the process. But mostly, I make it more individualized. I sometimes write it down especially for each child. With Lisa she especially liked the collarbone point and under the arm. So I said since these points seem to work so well with you, let's use them more often. So I had her list the CB and UA between every other point.

It is better to have the child write it down for them self.

EXPLAINING EFT TO THE CHILD – ASSIMILATION OR ACCOMMODATION

Attached below is a handout I used in training staff and parents. I use very simple explanations that could in some way hook them by using something of interest to them, some value they hold, something they are already familiar with.

I have tapped now with hundreds of people, children and adults. They are fascinated with the process, readily acknowledge it helped. At times just blown away! Why do they not then continue when we have given them such a wonderful gift? We have shown them successfully that it can relieve painful emotions in their lives? It seems to me that everyone should be so excited about it that they just can't wait to attack all of their problems. But, in my experience by far the majority does not.

I have thought that maybe people miss what is familiar to them. That they don't really want to let go of the problems that seem so much a part of themselves. But that sounds too much like the rationalization of being resistant.

My two pet peeves from staff are when they describe a child as: He or she just wants attention. Or even worse – he is just being resistant, he doesn't want to change.

We ALL want attention and we ALL fear change. The helping profession uses the concept of resistance to compensate for the fact that somehow we have not developed rapport – YET. Or, that we have not tied this process into how they see their world – YET. Or, that we have not realized that being unable, or unwilling, to accept help – YET - is not necessarily a character flaw. We need to let go of outcome. We need to work at BEING with the child in the here and now. It is more about our lack of understanding than the child's 'resistance'.

If you can interest the child enough to generate questions to you about how to use EFT you stand a much higher chance of the child integrating it into their life. Children are very in tuned with learning new things. A child should be given many opportunities to explore, to manipulate, to experiment, to question, and to search out answers for them self – activity is essential. The need for movement and action is another reason not to rely just on talking. Learning is much more meaningful if the child is allowed to experiment on his own rather than listening to another lecture. EFT is by nature an interactive experience.

I often teach several kids together. In one such group was Lelia. She was an extremely anxious child. We easily reduced her current anxiety to a 0 as the other kids tapped along. She had non threatening peer support. What is happening when three or more children are together practicing something? They are all doing the same thing. They all have something in common. It seems a more natural part of their life when they see someone else doing it. Their view of the world is more easily adjusted to include tapping. This is another reason I tap along with the child. I want to increase the chances that the child will assimilate using tapping as a self calming option.

We all take in new knowledge through the process of assimilation and/or accommodation. Until the experience of calming himself with tapping is assimilated into his experiences, until his schema of how he sees the world accommodates tapping he may work with you but he won't integrate it into his own life. As with any new skill it takes several successful experiences before this occurs.

Younger kids rarely have problems with accepting tapping as a calming tool. Adults don't take it in nearly as well, WHY? A paradigm shift. We call it the APEX problem meaning that the brain is not operating at its best. But I believe it is more basic than that. It is not tied into anything familiar. They have neither accommodated nor assimilated the experience. Even older children have the APEX problem. Changes have to fit into their scheme of life, within their value and belief system

Children with emotional problems deserve our respect. They are truly doing the best they can. It is up to the adults to admire their courage, to focus on the child and find a way to connect. We want to show them there are more useful ways to deal with people, more useful ways to deal with their problems and a great new way through use of EFT to calm themselves.

Sarah is 15 years old. Sarah is an outspoken, always complaining, making mountains of molehills, difficult to like, adolescent. So when she came home from school one day angry that a boy at school had touched her breasts, she was not being taken very seriously by staff. But the staff dutifully reported the complaint and I came over to investigate. Before talking with Sarah I talked with another resident that Sarah had said had seen the incident. The other child said that the boy had come down the hall and literally tripped over his own feet and before he recovered accidentally bumped into Sarah. But, in the conversation with Sarah, she insisted that he touched her on purpose.

I asked her if anybody else in her life had done such a thing. She looked down at her feet and said her older cousin. How did you feel when it happened? She said it upset her because she had always liked him and didn't think he would do such a thing. She said she also felt guilty about it. Sarah was in the group of girls I'd taught EFT the day before and I reminded her that this would be a good thing to try it on. She followed my lead. As I tapped the side of the hand I asked her how much it bothered her. A lot. I don't always try for a number on the 0 to 10 scale. A lot - to a little - to none works well too. We tapped for disappointment and hurt. After three rounds when she appeared much calmer I went to the finger points. On the index finger; I forgive myself, I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. I forgive myself; I just wanted to talk to him. I forgive myself; I just wanted him to like me. We moved on to the little finger. And tapped three times for: I forgive my cousin; he was just being a jerk.

NOTE: After leaving the residential program and gaining even more experience with EFT I now rarely add in an 'artificial' forgiveness step. I have learned that if you reduce the emotional impact of the issue and then ask: "What comes up for you now?" Generally now when they think about the situation they automatically have a cognitive shift towards more understanding of the person involved. Indeed, introducing forgiveness into the session too soon results in resistance. Forgiveness does not need to be forced. It appears to be a result of reducing the negative affect around the situation.

I always had the child take a couple of slow deep breaths after the EFT sequences. Sarah balked at using the 9 gamut so I went back through the short cut steps again and then did an eye roll. I asked her about the boy at school. "Oh, he is just being stupid; he is always stumbling over his feet. When I see him coming I need to stay far away from that idiot." Not exactly what she had said earlier when she reported the boy for grabbing at her on purpose.

EFT works great for crisis type upsets with children. After I teach the EFT process in staff training or workshops I give the handout to all staff I train and to parents. I encourage them to review it and use this powerful tool to help them calm their children and themselves. This handout is below. Best wishes in your journey toward using EFT with children and adolescents. □□□□□□□□ . Ann@EFT4PowerPoint.com

NOTE: Ann is the developer of the EFT comprehensive training package. As a bonus to the EFT4PowerPoint program is a PPT workshop for teaching EFT to people working with children. www.EFT4PowerPoint.com.

Teaching EFT to Kids

Handout for parents, teachers and residential staff

- **“The first step is to THINK ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM.”** If the child is already upset you can skip this part as it is obvious the child is thinking about the issue or feeling. However, explaining this step is important in teaching this exercise to children so that they understand they have to ‘tune in’ to the particular issue they want to work on. Explain that: **“This exercise will calm you down and help you think more clearly about your problem.** If you learn this exercise you can be upset only when YOU chose to be upset.”
- **“Now we want to know how upset you are.”** For younger children use outstretched arms to measure how upset the child is. Use hands in a prayer position indicating no upset. With some children you can use your own arms out to measure and let the child nod when you reach the right amount of upset. Older children have no problem with telling you on a 0 to 10 scale how upset they are, but even some of the older children respond well to your outstretched arms for measurement. It seems to help them ‘get into it’ better with your participation.
- **“OK, the first step is to tap the side of your hand.”** Show them by using your hand as an example to tap on the fatty side of the hand. Be sure to tap the side of the hand rather than banging the hand on something. You can tell the child it is called the Karate Chop spot. This spot can also be introduced as the ‘friendly spot’ as that is where you touch another person’s hand when you shake hands to show you are ‘friendly.’ ☺ Make a ‘set-up’ statement such as: **“Even though I have this problem, I am a super kid,” (or, I am a good person or, I deeply and completely accept myself, etc.)** It does not seem to matter whether the child says the words or you say the words for them. (If a child has a particularly bad self image use a slight variation: I want to accept myself.)

Some kids say that tapping the karate spot is calming all by itself. Use your judgment about using the ‘set up’ statements; it depends on the kid and/or the situation. ‘Set up’ statements are a great help to get in touch with what is really going on, but are not absolutely necessary to significantly calm the child. Suspicious and oppositional children are rarely willing to use the setups.

EFT Short Cut:

- First ‘tapping’ point. – Use three or four fingers and tap between the eyebrows. (Tap about seven times.)
- Second point. – Use two fingers of both hands and tap on the bony part under both eyes. (Tap about seven times.)
- Third point. – Used a closed fist to the chest just below and to the left of the throat for the collarbone spot. (About seven times.) Can cross arms and tap both sides.

- Fourth point. – Tap under both arms. This is like giving a yourself a hug. Wrap arms around your body and pat under both arms about a palm width below the armpit. For younger children you can call this the ‘monkey spot’ and have them tap with each hand under the same arm. They get a kick out of this! (Tap about seven times.)
- Repeat this exercise three times for a particular problem or until the upset goes away. Sometimes when one problem is calmed another related problem comes up and the child must repeat the process for the second problem.

The above exercise using the short cut is very effective (80% +) for anxiety or upsetting situations.

John Diamond, an Australian psychiatrist, proposed that each point was related to a different emotion. Whether that is true or not, kids really seem to like relating a point to a feeling or a part of the body. Incorporating this into EFT adds interest in the process for some children. (E.g. side of hand = sadness/ small intestine; eyebrow = trauma/ bladder; eye = anxiety/stomach; collarbone = insecurity/ kidney; arm = fear of the future/ spleen.)

In doing this exercise with children use varying language and keep it fun and light-hearted. Repetitive rounds of EFT get boring to some children. Add in the finger points for variety after the child is calmer but when more work needs to be done. Also use the nine gamut to vary the exercise. Tap using all of the EFT points. Use the ‘sore spot’ instead of the gamut spot. Tap the thymus with all five fingers. Some children prefer to TAB – Touch and Breathe. Varying how you do the exercise keeps it interesting. When teaching it to a child, have him or her write the steps down themselves to increase their ownership in the process. Let them name the process themselves.

- If the child feels bad about what happened or feels responsible or guilty tell them to: **“Tap on the body side of the fingernail on the index finger. Tell the child: “This is the ‘guilty’ finger. Tapping it helps to make the bad feeling inside go away.”** If the child is willing, try adding the forgiveness exercise. While tapping on the index finger have them say three times: **“I forgive myself; I was doing the best I could.”**
- If the child is angry about what happened tell them: **“Tap on the body side of the fingernail on the little finger. This is the ‘angry’ finger. Tapping it helps make the angry feelings go away.”** If the child is willing continue the forgiveness exercise, have them say three times while tapping: **“I forgive my ‘friend/mother/father/ teacher/staff/etc’. They were doing the best they could.”** If the child won’t buy that or is not ready just have them say: **“I forgive...; they were just being a ‘jerk’ and that is what jerks do.”**
- Explain to the child that EFT can be used any time he/she is upset about anything. The exercise helps the child calm down quickly so that he/she can think more clearly about solutions to the situation. It is sometimes amazing to watch the solutions that

come to the child after tapping or TABbing. Help the child problem solve and plan what to do next to resolve the problem. Encourage the child to teach others. Have him/her practice teaching you.

- Tap or Tab along with the child. It calms YOU down too! Use EFT for any of your own upsets. Try tapping on the way home from work about the aggravations of your day. You will be calm, ready to meet the issues at home and be more emotionally available to your family. And don't forget to tap for any aggravation the child may cause you!!
- Complex problems involving many layers of trauma or behaviors such as temper tantrums require much repetition. Make it a part of the daily routine. Use for "tucking in" at night. Use after school for concerns of the day that may reflect earlier traumas. Use in the morning if nervous about any activity of the day. Use any, and every time, the child starts to become upset.
- **Remember:**
 - IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM TO WORK ON
 - TUNE IN TO THE FEELING OR PROBLEM
 - IDENTIFY ANY NEW ASPECTS
 - USE IT FOR EVERYTHING and be creative in your approaches
 - **PERSISTANCE COUNTS – KEEP AT IT**
 - MAKE IT A ROUTINE PART OF THE DAY
 - **This is just one way to practice EFT. See Gary Craig's web site at www.emofree.com.**

IDEAS FOR INTRODUCING EFT to Emotionally Disturbed Children

Remember to:

- Treat the child with respect and dignity.
- Let them sense your admiration for their courage in keeping on keeping on in the face of at times unbelievable adversity. These children are truly doing the best they can.
- Totally focus on the child. Total focus really draws them. These children are unusually sensitive to inattentiveness. They have known lots of rejection and generally are hungry for total attention from another person.
- Establish rapport. Rapport is about having the child feel comfortable with you. Rapport is not about having a relationship or trust – those take time. Rapport is about having the child feel in some way you are 'like' him or her. Sometimes establishing rapport is as simple and quick as matching their facial expression or body position.

- Take a playful approach. Get creative; think outside the box.
- Let your clinical judgment guide you in what to say – (Use the “Get yourself out of the way” concept). Congruency is critical. What you say and do and feel must match.
- Always tap with the child. Keep tapping as they talk.
- Never touch the child without their permission.
- Make EFT ‘theirs’, when possible have them write down the steps on a card or notebook. If unable to write, draw pictures with/for them. Tie EFT to something familiar to them (i.e. other ways they relax and get comfort.)
- Answer their questions about the process honestly. They don’t usually ask. Only give as much information as they ask for and can understand given their developmental level.
- Take care of yourself.

Phraseology is infinite. Some suggestions:

I know a way to calm you down quickly.

This is a way to calm you down so you can think more clearly about your problem.

I know something that is a little weird that could help your feelings. You look like you can handle weird. Want to try it?

I know a trick to get over being mad – like that (snap fingers)

I know this cool way to stop being upset in a hurry.

I know a way that can fix being upset very quickly. It’s kinda different. I bet you never saw it before.

I can see you are really worried about this; want to try something that could make you less worried?

Ya know, I have this really great way to stop being upset. I usually use it with adults, but sometimes I teach it to kids too. I guess you are old enough.

I have this really great way to stop being upset. Are you game to try it; it is sort of strange? Can you handle strange?

I know a new relaxation exercise that works quickly most all the time. It doesn’t take very long to do. Want to try it for that problem?

This is a new exercise that came out of California. Kind of slow in getting to this area. You’d be one of the first to try it.

Looks like you are all out of energy. If you tap right here we could see if we can bring back your energy.

I have this little relaxation exercise you can use.

You don't have to tell me what is bothering you. I have a way you can get over it and not even tell me what it was. You are totally in control and don't have to say anything.

You can chose to be upset only when YOU want to be upset. I want to teach you something that you can use anytime YOU want to stop being upset.

“Even though...” set up statements are simple: Use their words.

If you have a VERY good idea of what else may be going on, add your guess (and it is a guess), to the second or third time. But you can't go wrong using just what they tell you. Vary the wording of: I deeply and completely accept myself.

Some other ideas:

There is a good person in me.

I am a super kid.

I'm a really good kid.

I want to love and accept myself.

I am a marvelous person.

I am wonderful.

I am generous and kind.

I like myself.

God loves me. Mother/father/etc. loves me (when they do).