

**Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) Detoxification: Transforming Stress to Strength**Asokan, Neethu<sup>1</sup> and Ullagaddi, Rajeshwari<sup>2</sup><sup>1&2</sup>Department of Life Sciences, Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence, Kalaburagi, Karnataka**Abstract**

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) is an integrative mind-body approach fusing cognitive elements with acupressure tapping to address emotional distress and physiological disturbance. Growing evidence suggests that EFT affects major biochemical pathways involved in inflammation and oxidative stress, which are fundamental to chronic illnesses and impaired detoxification processes, in addition to improving psychological well-being. This review examines the ways EFT affects the body's biochemical environment to promote detoxification and healing. Chronic psychological stress turns on the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which results in high cortisol levels and pro-inflammatory cytokines. The inflammation and oxidative stress cause cellular damage and compromised activity of endogenous antioxidant systems including superoxide dismutase (SOD) and glutathione. EFT could down-regulate inflammatory responses and oxidative load by controlling autonomic nervous system activity and lowering stress indicators thus normalizing the body and mind. Emerging clinical studies show drops in cortisol, C-reactive protein (CRP), and subjective stress indicators post EFT treatments, therefore pointing to a boost in systemic detoxification ability that might improve hepatic biotransformation and immune system. Using EFT, the mind-body connection provides a whole approach for encouraging biochemical resilience and supporting the body's natural detoxification channels. Ultimately, EFT may be an easy-to-use, non-invasive addition to traditional detoxification techniques helping to achieve sustainable health and well-being. More extensive, biomarker-based study is needed to clarify molecular paths and improve EFT treatments for environmental and clinical health uses.

**Keywords:** Biochemical Detoxification, Emotional Freedom Techniques, Inflammation, Mind-Body Healing, Oxidative Stress, Stress Regulation.

## 1. Introduction

The increasing global burden of chronic diseases—such as cardiovascular disorders, autoimmune conditions, metabolic syndromes, and mental health issues—has drawn attention to underlying systemic factors like chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, and psychological distress. Growing evidence shows that these different conditions often share a common set of underlying systemic dysfunctions: chronic low-grade inflammation, persistent oxidative stress, and prolonged psychological distress. For example, psychological stress can trigger the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, producing increased cortisol levels, which in turn promote inflammatory cytokine release and oxidative imbalance. These biological stressors are deeply related. Over time, these disturbances compromise the body's own detoxification systems—especially hepatic biotransformation, antioxidant defence mechanisms, and lymphatic drainage—hence starting a vicious cycle that promotes cellular damage and disease progression. Considering this complicated relationship between

psychological and physical health, integrative mind-body therapies that target both dimensions simultaneously are drawing increasing attention (Feinstein, 2012).

One such promising modality developed in the 1990s, EFT merges elements of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)—such as exposure, cognitive restructuring, and affirmations—with somatic stimulation via acupressure tapping on specific meridian points. The simplified and effective EFT procedure was introduced by Gary Craig. First known for their effectiveness in treating phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety disorders, EFT is now drawing scientific interest for its demonstrable impacts on a variety of systemic biochemical indicators that helps to calm the nervous system, lower the emotional intensity connected with traumatic or upsetting ideas, and restore bodily physiological balance. Emerging research have shown that EFT might affect hormonal levels (e.g., cortisol), immunological markers (e.g., C-reactive protein, immunoglobulins), and oxidative stress indicators (e.g., glutathione, superoxide dismutase), therefore implying its

capacity to lessen the inner stress load that promotes chronic illness and compromised detoxification (Feinstein, 2012).

The Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) protocol is usually implemented in a scripted procedure which integrates cognitive concentration with physical activation by tapping acupressure pathways. It involves an initial step of selecting a particular emotional or physical symptom like stress, anxiety, pain or trauma followed by subjective measure of the severity of this symptom on a scale between 0-10 which is referred to as a Subjective Units of Distress Scale (SUDS). One is then to come up with a setup statement which accepts the problem but offers self-acceptance. As the person repeats this setup statement mentally, they tap slowly 3 times at the point of the karate chop (the fleshy outer edge of the palm) to kick start the balancing of energy. That is followed by tapping about 7-folds each, a kind of a sequence of points at the end of particular meridians, with 2-3 fingertips. The standard tapping sequence has the eyebrow (EB), side of the eye (SE), under the eye (UE), and under the nose (UN), chin (CH), collarbone (CB), under the arm (UA) and top of the head (TH). In tapping round, the person continues to mentally think of the target

issue at the same time uttering a short repetitive statement (e.g., this anxiety). Following one round, the SUDS rating is then re-measured. This movement is continued in repetitions as much as there is a need to continue often 2 4 rounds, until there is a noticeable alleviation of distress. Multiple rounds, which may include the variations of the language, emotional reframing, or the confrontation with related memories, may also be added to the process of addressing sophisticated or chronic problems. It is a self-administered technique and usually requires 5-15 minutes per sessions, based on the severity and range of problem. Tapping is the second component part and this involves physical tapping, whereas the combination of mindful attention to distress and physical tapping constitutes the psychophysiological basis of EFT, and is postulated to down-regulated stress-related neural pathways, and up-regulate activity in the parasympathetic system.

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) is based on the conceptual framework defined by Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), including the theory of energy flow in the body through so-called meridians that help Qi (vital energy) circulate in the body. These are the 12 main meridians connected with particular

organ system and bilaterally symmetrical circulation. These are the Lung, Large Intestine, Stomach, Spleen, Heart, Small intestine, Bladder, Kidney, Pericardium, Triple Burner (San Jiao), Gallbladder and Liver meridian. All these pathways are supposed to govern the physiological, emotional and energetic performances of the respective organ and emotional or somatic disorders, as well, are linked to disorders or blockages to the said flows. Acupressure tapping in EFT is usually done at remote points of such meridians, especially those found in the face, the hands, and upper torso, which make it easy to achieve energy balancing and normalize emotions (Flint *et al.*, 2006).

Besides, in TCM, 8 extraordinary meridians (e.g., the Governing Vessel, Conception Vessel, Penetrating Vessel, Girdle Vessel, etc.) are acknowledged directly related to the 12 main meridians; they are defined, however, as energy reserves and main energy generators of the regular meridian system. In particular, EFT is related to the Governing Vessel (Du Mai) and Conception Vessel (Ren Mai), in which several of the most frequently utilized tapping points follow these meridians, such as the under the nose (UN) and chin (CH) points (Ren Mai), and the top of the head (TH) point (Du

Mai). These are the extraordinary channels considered to stabilize the energetic architecture of the body and are contributing to deeper psycho-emotional integration. Psychophysiological, the activation of these points has the potential to transmit relaxation messages via mechanoreceptors and afferent nerve circuits, a reason why there can be emergence of the parasympathetic dominance during EFT practice. Although the meridian system is still considered in my conventional biomedical practice to be a metaphysical system, it provides us with a strong somatic roadmap to follow in the order of the treatment and forms the basis of the holistic success of energy psychology modality treatment approaches such as EFT (Flint *et al.*, 2006).

## **2. Theoretical Background: Stress, Inflammation, and Detoxification**

A strong trigger of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, a core neuroendocrine system governing the body's response to seen threats, chronic psychological stress activates it. Continuous stimulation of the HPA axis causes the ongoing release of cortisol, the main stress hormone. Though cortisol has adaptive, short-term advantages in acute stress responses—such as boosting glucose availability and inhibiting non-essential

processes—prolonged elevation becomes maladaptive. Chronic hypercortisolemia causes notable physiological dysregulation including impairment of immune surveillance, dysregulation of cytokine signaling, and disturbance of metabolic equilibrium. Raised cortisol levels have been linked with an upregulation of pro-inflammatory cytokines like tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF- $\alpha$ ) and interleukin-6 (IL-6), therefore aggravating systemic inflammation (Church et al., 2012).

Chronic stress, together with hormonal dysregulation, worsens oxidative stress, a disease marked by an imbalance between the generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) and the body's antioxidant defenses. Damage to lipids, proteins, and DNA from ROS overproduction compromises typical cellular activity and speeds biological aging. Significantly, oxidative stress also inhibits enzymic detoxification systems, especially those in hepatocytes. The liver's two-phase biotransformation mechanism is central to detoxification; Phase I reactions include cytochrome P450 enzymes transforming lipophilic poisons into reactive intermediates, whereas Phase II processes include conjugation reactions (such as glucuronidation, sulfation, methylation)

rendering these intermediates water-soluble for elimination. The abundance of antioxidant molecules and enzymes—chief among them is glutathione, catalase, and superoxide dismutase (SOD)—is crucial for effective detoxification. While SOD catalyzes the dismutation of superoxide radicals into oxygen and hydrogen peroxide, glutathione functions as a critical electron donor in neutralizing reactive intermediates. Under continuous oxidative stress, however, the levels and activity of these antioxidants become depleted, therefore compromising detoxification capacity. The un metabolized toxins and inflammatory mediators that result not only overload the kidneys and liver but also feed back into the vicious cycle of inflammation, oxidative stress, and immunological malfunction. Many chronic, multisystemic diseases now have this self-reinforcing loop as a key component, therefore highlighting the need for treatments aimed at both psychological stress and biochemical resiliency to restore physiological balance (Tung et al., 2019).

### 3. Mechanisms of EFT: Bridging Mind and Biochemistry

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) is a psychophysiological intervention that

integrates cognitive reframing with somatic stimulation, offering a unique dual-action mechanism to regulate emotional and physiological responses. The technique involves gently tapping on specific acupressure points—commonly referred to as meridian endpoints—primarily located on the face, chest, and hands, while the individual simultaneously brings attention to distressing thoughts, emotions, or traumatic memories and recites self-affirming statements. This structured protocol facilitates the simultaneous engagement of cognitive-emotional processing and physical somatic input, thereby initiating a multi-level calming response. Neuroscientific studies suggest that this combined approach affects both central and peripheral regulatory systems. Cognitively focusing on emotionally charged issues activates brain regions involved in emotional memory and threat detection—most notably the amygdala, hippocampus, and medial prefrontal cortex. The amygdala, in particular, plays a crucial role in assigning emotional valence to memories and initiating the fight-or-flight response. When traumatic or stressful content is consciously accessed during EFT, the neural circuits associated with that memory become temporarily reactivated—a necessary condition for

emotional reprocessing and reconsolidation (Feinstein, 2012).

Meanwhile, the process of tapping on acupoints is thought to transmit relaxing messages via peripheral nervous system indicated by the main use of skin and fascia mechanoreceptors. These signals pass on to the brainstem and limbic structures, and alter activity in the autonomic nervous system (ANS). It has been hypothesized that EFT mainly activates the parasympathetic division of the ANS, which mediates the processes of the rest-and-digest type, thus reversing sympathetic hyperactivity that is typical of stress responses and trauma. This spillover in the parasympathetic system is evident on physiological measures, i.e., a decrease in heart rate, lower blood pressure, enhanced state of heart rate variability (HRV) and salivary cortisol level (Church et al., 2012).

Cognitive exposure and somatic calming are two sides of this integrative mechanism that makes EFT a very effective intervention in decreasing emotional reactivity and in normalizing the nervous system. It is possible that with time and repeated sessions neuroplastic changes will enable people to reprocess inappropriate emotional programming, decondition stress-conditioned

reactions, and recover homeostatic equilibrium. In such a way, EFT can be considered more than merely psychological intervention but a kind of physiological control with the ability to be implemented in stress reduction, trauma healing, and systemic detoxification support (Feinstein, 2012).

### 3.1 Autonomic Nervous System Modulation

According to clinical research, the EFT sessions have measurable effects, where heart rate, blood pressure, and galvanic skin response show lower values, reflecting stimulation of the parasympathetic nervous system. A decrease in the heart rate, systolic blood pressure, and diastolic blood pressure as well as a significant decrease in galvanic skin response after EFT sessions is reported in research that suggests the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system (Church et al., 2012; Stapleton et al., 2019). This shift in autonomic proportions in sympathetic (fight-or-flight) and parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) pre-eminence aids in producing a relaxation-feeling response thus, reducing chronic stress. EFT also contributes to reducing this sympathetic overdrive without increasing the allostatic load, or the body strain produced by the chronic exposure of stress (McEwen and Wingfield, 2003). Hence, EFT

provides a somatic gateway to psychological and physical recovery establishing autonomic homeostasis and lessening the responsiveness of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, the fundamental overwhelming reaction. Chronic dysregulation of HPA axis has been associated with a variety of health issues or challenges such as metabolic issues, immune suppression, and mood disorders (Church et al., 2012).

### 3.2 Reduction in Cortisol and Inflammatory Biomarkers

A pivotal randomized controlled trial demonstrated a 24% reduction in salivary cortisol after a single EFT session, significantly more than talk therapy or rest. This drop in cortisol—a major stress hormone controlled by the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis—underscores EFT's ability to quickly lessen the physical stress response. Apart from its psychological advantages, EFT might also provide anti-inflammatory benefits, as new research indicates. For instance, later research has shown significant decreases in C-reactive protein (CRP), a clinically significant indicator of systemic inflammation (Bach et al., 2019; Groesbeck et al., 2017). These results highlight the greater psychoneuroimmunological effect



of EFT, showing that its effects include biochemical regulation of both inflammatory and endocrine pathways. Consequently, EFT helps to restore physical equilibrium in addition to providing emotional relief. (Stapleton et al., 2020).

#### 4. EFT and Oxidative Stress Regulation

Oxidative stress results from the generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) overpowering the body's natural antioxidant defenses, which causes molecular and cellular damage. Central pathogenic element in several chronic illnesses, it causes mitochondrial dysfunction, DNA fragmentation, lipid peroxidation, and deficient tissue regeneration (Pham-Huy et al., 2008). Pilot studies have started to investigate in recent years how Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) can regulate oxidative stress through psychophysiological routes. By reducing ROS-inducing psychological stress and boosting activity of enzymatic defense systems like superoxide dismutase (SOD) and glutathione peroxidase, Tung *et al.*, (2019) reported that EFT could improve antioxidant capacity. Regular EFT sessions spanning several weeks were linked to notable rises in circulating glutathione levels and SOD activity, indicators important for redox homeostasis (Stapleton et al., 2020), in a

particular intervention study including people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). While the exact molecular mechanisms remain to be completely understood, EFT-induced stress reduction is thought to support mitochondrial stability and gene expression profiles connected to antioxidant responses. These preliminary findings point to EFT's potential role in restoring oxidative balance and promoting systemic resilience in stress-related disorders.

#### 5. Implications for Detoxification and Immune Function

Effective detoxification depends on a well-controlled liver, strong enzymatic processes, and effective trash removal mechanisms. By reducing stress-induced suppression of hepatic enzymes and therefore helping to restore systemic equilibrium, EFT can improve both Phase I and Phase II detoxification processes (Feinstein, 2012). Psychological stress not only compromises liver function but also disturbs gut microbiota and lymphatic drainage. Additionally, cortisol-induced immunosuppression usually steers immune responses toward autoimmunity or chronic inflammation. Pilot studies have shown that EFT helps to balance Th1/Th2 cytokine ratios and normalize immunoglobulin levels,



therefore suggesting improved immune surveillance and decreased inflammatory overdrive (Church et al., 2012; Tung *et al.*, 2019).

## **6. Clinical Evidence and Case Studies**

Many clinical trials have shown how well Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) helps to reduce the psychological symptoms related with anxiety, sadness, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and chronic pain. Clond (2016) found large and statistically significant effect sizes in a thorough meta-analysis assessing psychological effects of EFT, comparable to those seen in traditional cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). These results support EFT as a reliable mind-body therapy with evidence-based advantages for emotional control. More recently, studies have investigated the physiological and biochemical consequences of EFT in long-term medical problems. For instance, an Australian clinical trial showed notable decreases in fibromyalgia symptoms following an 8-week EFT program along with reductions in vital inflammatory indicators including C-reactive protein (CRP) and interleukin-6 (IL-6) (Stapleton et al., 2020). Likewise, a U. S. military veterans' study with PTSD showed big decreases in both psychological anguish and salivary cortisol

levels after EFT sessions, indicating a restoration of HPA axis balance and stress physiology (Church et al., 2012). Together these results show EFT's systematic effect outside of symptomatic relief; EFT seems to help psychophysiological equilibrium by regulating neuroendocrine, immunological, and inflammatory pathways and may function as a non-pharmacological supplement for integrative healthcare strategies.

## **7. Self-Experimentation and Observational Findings from Field Practice**

In an effort to add to the body of knowledge on the topic as well as theoretically informed understanding, the authors and a key group of 12 participants (the faculty, and the research scholars) designed a small-scale, observational self-design involving voluntary practice of EFT protocols in multiple stress-related conditions. This was to investigate subjective (and real-time) changes in stress levels, fatigue, sleep, somatic pain, exam related stress and overall well-being secondary to EFT as a short-term repeated intervention. The perceived psychological burdens of the participants were mental fatigue, stress at work, anxiety, and somatic signs such as headache, shoulders stiffness, and general body pain. The average subjective relief

generated by the first Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) session (consisting of setup affirmations and tapping on the standard meridian points) was 20-25 per cent of symptoms.

It is important to note that people with a long-lasting stress or ongoing anxiety needed 3-4 sessions of EFT with 6 hours interval between them so that participants could see the significant changes. Most patients were relieved at the end of the fourth treatment session with a majority attaining relief varying between 90 percent and full remission of symptoms. In the cases of repeat constrictive somatic pains, consecutive EFT sessions within a week result in a total remission of

pains and the reoccurrence of pains not observed, indicating an additive efficacy in the neurosomatic reprogramming. Even though such findings are qualitative and self-reported, they are reproducible across various participants, so they are indicative of an objective psychophysiological change. These findings are consistent with previous knowledge related to modulation of the autonomic nervous system and betterment of stress biomarkers. Yet, the present research points to the significance of a stronger clinical confirmation through the support of EEG, HRV (heart rate variability), and biochemical indicators to aid the neural correlates and sophisticated systemic outcomes of EFT.

**Table no. 1 Outcomes of the EFT session as a result of self-experimentation and observations on small scale**

| Symptom/Condition              | Initial Relief %<br>1 <sup>st</sup> two EFT | Relief after 3-<br>4 sessions % | Recurrence after 1<br>week   |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Stress and Mental fatigue      | 25-30                                       | 90-95                           | Rare                         |
| Generalized Anxiety            | 25  | 85-100                          | Rare/Mild return wrt trigger |
| Headaches/Start stage Migraine | 30-40                                       | 85-100                          | No recurrence                |
| Body pain                      | 40-50                                       | 90-95                           | No recurrence                |
| Sleep Disorders                | 30-40                                       | 95-100                          | Mild                         |

|                                |       |       |   |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|---|
| <b>Exam related Depression</b> | 25-30 | 75-95 | No recurrence in few cases/ Mild// more research required |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|---|

## 8. Limitations and Future Directions

Although the field of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) shows good psychophysiological and biochemical results, it has methodological restrictions. Small sample sizes, restricted demographic variety, and short follow-up periods restrict the generalizability and long-term usefulness of the results of many current investigations. Moreover, the majority of the research to date has been exploratory; only a few studies have included thorough biochemical evaluations like oxidative stress markers or detoxification panels. Future research should give large-scale, randomized controlled trials with clearly defined control groups and extended follow-up durations top priority in order to strengthen the evidence base. Inclusion of verified biomarkers—such as cortisol, CRP, IL-6, and glutathione—as well as genomic studies of stress-related gene expression could provide deeper mechanistic insights. Furthermore, incorporating EFT into structured detoxification and wellness programs, especially among populations with high

exposure to environmental pollutants or chronic stress (e.g., first responders, veterans, or individuals in industrial settings), could provide critical real-world applicability. Such advancements would not only reinforce EFT's credibility as a holistic health intervention but also clarify its potential role in psychoneuroimmunological resilience and systemic detoxification (Feinstein, 2012; Clond, 2016).

## Conclusion

Rising as a strong mind-body technique, emotional freedom techniques (EFT) combine ideas of cognitive therapy, exposure, and acupuncture to solve emotional and physiological dysregulation. As more research shows, EFT affects essential biological systems engaged in detoxification and systemic equilibrium in addition to treating psychological ailments including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and chronic pain. Its shown effects on reducing cortisol levels, lowering pro-inflammatory markers including C-reactive protein (CRP) and interleukin-6 (IL-6), and

improving antioxidant defenses such as glutathione and superoxide dismutase (SOD) indicate its part in supporting the body's natural ability to control stress and remove poisons. By controlling the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and decreasing the sympathetic stress response, EFT supports autonomic nervous system balance and restoration of equilibrium. In chronic stress situations when oxidative stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, and inflammation are frequently exacerbated, this physiological recalibration is especially important. Moreover, early research indicates that EFT may affect gene expression associated with immunity and redox balance; however, genomic and epigenetic investigations are needed to clarify these processes.

EFT seems promising as a supplement approach in integrative health programs including those geared on detoxification, resilience-building, and chronic disease management given its non-invasive nature, small side effects, ease of use, and adaptability across age groups and conditions. By doing large-scale, longitudinal studies with confirmed biomarkers and varied populations, the field has to overcome some research constraints—such as tiny sample sizes, brief

study lengths, and lack of biochemical rigor. Offering a unified framework for emotional healing and physical detoxification, EFT is essentially a new therapeutic route that goes outside of the usual limits of psychological care. Through ongoing study and clinical application, it could turn into a useful tool in personalized and preventative healthcare plans intended to improve mental clarity, immune system, and general well-being.

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