

EFT for Relationship Difficulties from Childhood Abuse

Parent Category: English

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EFT for Relationship Difficulties from Childhood Abuse

Dear EFT Community,

In this article, Pastoral Therapist, Roberta Leah Moon shares an in-depth case study detailing the work she did with a client who was experiencing relationship difficulties. She gently leads the client from a vague sensation to specific traumatic events, where she found that her real Core Issue was childhood abuse.

-Catherine

By: R Leah Moon

Client, we will call her Marianne, is married, 64, and wants to improve the quality of her life both emotionally and physically. She is physically active, enjoys walking and is interested in numerous activities such as Yoga and nature studies. Marianne has several degrees in the health related occupations. She has 4 children that she raised in an alternative health setting. She comes from a background that includes a difficult childhood with relationship difficulties following her into adulthood.

Marianne experienced a particularly devastating divorce ten years ago. She had difficulty reconstructing her life afterwards. She has had panic attacks in the past but not for a while since starting EFT. She is a previous EFT client. She would like to spend a session working with a sensation she has in her chest. The sensation is most apparent in the early morning hours upon waking until late morning, occasionally following her into the day. She has no knowledge of the cause of this sensation except it has become worse recently. She first attributed it to her current lifestyle and situation but she is unclear if that is the real reason. She has been unable to sort this out any further by herself.

Session

We chose an early morning session when this feeling would still be activated. Client provided "this feeling in my chest" with the three descriptors below. Then, we began tapping right away on the sensation. Very Brief Discussion about "This Feeling in my chest" I can't figure it out. What is all of that feeling? It's seems impossible to be able to find.

Beginning SUDS: 13 (Client felt it was greater than 10) Round #1: Chasing the Pain, Mirroring Even though I have this feeling in my chest I am open to the possibility that there is a way for me to figure it out- even though I don't see how. "This chest feeling."

SUDS: 10 minus but not a 9. While the "feeling in her chest" is still fully there, she says the sensation has definitely lifted to a lighter level and better than the starting 13. Round #2 Even though I am not sure I can ever figure this out, I choose to go on with life at the best and highest level ever. (client's choice to use words "highest level ever") Pointed Questions, Mirroring and Tell the Story: KC tapping throughout conversation with other points added. (Steve Wells) What does this feeling look like in you? (Paraphrased) It feels like a claw in my chest, a huge claw, cold and seeping all over my chest. It is deep and penetrating. I wake up with it crawling all over me in the morning...this sense of hopeless/helplessness/stuck in my life. I have to ride it down with activity with balancing my body and activities. It is an undercurrent flowing beneath me all day. If I get up and immediately absorb myself in an activity I can slide by the feeling and direct my energy toward the activity.

Note: Client moves to describing emotions and away from sensations:

Why do you think you have it (this feeling)? Reaching back exploring how I came to feel so frozen, tamped down and locked in hopelessly with a sense of no way out. As we paused she appeared to be sliding on time across space intuitively engaging - looking... Where did it come from? (Paraphrased content to incorporate and express client's emotions.)

Flash of a picture in distance that is unfocused and blobby without distinction with muted colours swirling like they look in an old glass marble. This picture IS my "feeling in the chest." Mirroring repeating her words, "an old glass marble". Marianne said she moved in closer to the picture because it is or it represented the feeling in her chest. This muted swirling marble is at student housing at University. Oh, of course this feeling in my chest makes sense. My parents married me off against my will to a violent man and I was forced to quit my beloved studies and to go to work to support him while he went to school. I was in danger with his threats on my life and regular attacks and beatings. That's what it is about. You know, there were no safe houses or laws to protect battered spouses in the 1960's. There was no safe haven. The word, "Safe House" had not yet come to our cultural vocabulary.

Domestic violence was a "kept secret" in our society. Practitioner eye contact to let client know they are being listened to. My Mother said "you can't come home" when I told her of the beatings. She made it quite clear she wanted to not be bothered with me. Shortly into the marriage and after a particularly violent incident coupled with my husband's promises of ending my life, I made my way to work, quit my job, and took a taxi to the Police Station. I talked to a detective. He said he could do nothing. He said I would need a viewable injury such as a broken arm or leg or gashes and maybe not even then did they have a definitive power to intervene. I asked if I could just sit in the lobby of the police station until I felt better and he shrugged indicating it was probably okay. As I reached for the door to leave his office he called to me to ask me for my name.

Practitioner watching and nodding: Why I asked as I turned toward him? In case you find me dead in the gutter? He shook his head up and down saying yes as he pulled out a scrap of paper to scribble my name down. As I again turned to reach for the doorknob to leave, I saw him put the scrap into his desk drawer. Nothing else about me such as address, phone number, just my name scribbled on back of a paper to sit in his desk drawer along with his pens and pencils. No help or hope of support. I was relegated to a barely decipherable name on a scrap of paper that could be matched to a dead body. No Legal Help.

Mirroring: No Legal Help I called my parents and demanded they come down to see me. Probably the first and only time I stood up for myself and asked them to do something for me. They lived 125 miles away and I sat for several hours in that Police Station until they arrived. My husband's uncle was the Superintendent and the M.D. at a local State school. Surely he must be presented with my situation and would have insight or could help me. He looked down his glasses at me as he sat in his large, heavily paneled room behind an equally big desk telling me there was no such violence in his family's history. And at twenty-one years of age I was covered over with a dangerous situation and no one to help. The apparent disinterest of my parents led them to drop me off back at student housing and they drove away never to speak of it to their grave. No Family Help.

Mirroring: No Family Help to confirm I was listening. I next engaged a credentialed Psychiatrist, M.D. and asked him to evaluate my husband to see how dangerous he was under the guise of couple counseling. Of course there were mandatory tests for us both. I was always interested to know more about myself and enjoyed that part of the visits. I felt good about myself when his assessments revealed nothing significant about me— he felt I was balanced and coping well. He said my husband would have to be willing to continue which would have brought me more harm. I had already risked and endured enough to get this far. The Psychiatrist said he was not able to predict my husband's level of potential violence. And, of course I wanted some kind of relative guarantee about the safety of my life. The Psychiatrist said he could in no way, guarantee my safety. No Medical or Mental Health Help.

Mirroring: No Medical or Mental Health Help. I went to the ecclesiastical community for help with no better results. A minister put me up at his house for two nights in his daughter's room since she was away at college. He told me I was welcome to stay. The stern look on his wife's face let me know I was not welcome there, empty room or not. This scene repeated itself twenty plus times over the next three years as I slowly made my way toward my bachelor's degree. I was always forced to return back to escalated violence after a night or two away. I kept working, I kept searching, I kept studying and I kept hope in my heart. No help from the church. I also learned middle-aged women of the house did not want a young girl around.

Mirroring: No help from the church and the women didn't want you around. Pre-frame found and saved for later: It is possible that a quiet scared young girl threatened the women of the house. No family, no legal recourse, no community, mental health or medical facility or church would/could help me. I was on my own. When a culture chooses to ignore obvious issues, those laboring under these ignored issued are on their own. I had a relatively high civil servant ranking at the university with a secure job for a young girl. I could support myself and take free classes, but the threat of him hunting me down and killing me along with his size, weight and willingness were awesome in my life. He was a hunter and owned guns. I spent the next three years enduring, picking up classes on my lunch hour, and making regular escapes.

Mirroring: Three years My strongest memory so deeply imprinted is the countless times I stood next to a policeman in a store, on the sidewalk, in public and I had no way of getting help. My life was in danger as my husband stood next to me in public. The beatings, the threats, the guns – I never knew what was going to happen to me when we got home. How I wanted to ask the policeman for help but I dare not. If the policeman had chosen not to believe me and left me with my husband, I would have been dead by nightfall. Entrenched in my being is the metallic smell of the policeman's holstered gun on his hip. Over the years I stood twelve inches behind them in a line, or to their side, or passed by them brushing their uniform on the sidewalks and could not ask for help. I can still taste the impossibility and conflict of the policeman being there to protect – but who were they protecting? I could feel their body heat, their authority, the smell of the leather casings they wore to hold their guns, night sticks, mace...and no way to get the help they were so representative of.

Acknowledgement about difficult situation: There was no help except by my own desire to survive, my resilience, my resourcefulness and determination. It was a hard won miracle to eventually escape.

SUDS: 9 Round #3 Movie Technique started but not finished – wrong timing.

Round #4 Even though there's an awful lot here I deeply and completely respect myself for being that "ABLE".

SUDS: 6 – feeling chest, claws etc...not as deep-lighter...maybe it is possible. Conversation: The women didn't want me-none of them. Aspect Shift – Client focused on women not welcoming her in their homes.

Reframe: Women were possibly responding to their own insecurity seeing husband care about another female.

Round #5 Maybe I still don't fully understand their fear; but I am open to that possibility.

"Don't understand" SUDS: on Women Round: 3 Round #6: "This remaining 3" This remaining Women's 3, as tapped ... they were scared... maybe threatened...I might even feel that way now that I am older....maybe...maybe not if I knew the whole story. Reframe: The women may not have known the whole story and the severity of your situation. Client: (Paraphrased) I think I always gave the outward appearance of calmness, I certainly was tense and wired – but hysteria would not have served anything. My lack of hysteria may have left them thinking I was okay and asking themselves what I was doing in their house. I was not hysterical and weeping.

Six second eye roll used during round toward end. SUDS: 0 Testing: Review of previous round #6 with client gave rise to a new aspect.

New Aspect: My calmness cost me a safe place to stay. SUDS: 6/7 Round #7 Even though remaining calm may have cost me a safe place to stay; I choose to honor my ability to remain calm. Even though I may never know exactly the reason I still honor myself for the ability to keep trying and moving forward. Even though, even though- I am proud of myself. People have their reasons in life and I don't know them all and there are certainly a lot of reasons people act like they do.

"Even though" SUDS: 2- then SUDS went back up to 8. The round #7 SUDS may have gone to zero and another aspect took its place.

Conversation & Cognitive Shift: Society had no space to acknowledge battered women. It was the times. I was the victim of the times- it wasn't my fault.

New Aspect: "Society's bad spot" Round # 8 Even though society was in a bad spot-I am not responsible and I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

"Society's bad spot" SUDS: 0 Test by Telling Story: SUDS: 8 - up at "beloved studies" "stalled education".

Round #9 Even though my beloved studies were stalled - I'm really a good person for "hanging in there" and I got my degree eventually.

"Stalled Studies" SUDS: 2/3

Conversation: Client said, "Hanging in there was really hard – it wasn't a very nice thing my parents did to me"

New Aspect: Not a nice thing my parents did to me. SUDS 10 Round #10 Even though it wasn't a very nice thing my parents did to me I can still love and accept myself and I must be a good person –maybe (client's "maybe"). Even though it wasn't a very nice thing my parents did to me, I can still love and accept myself and I must be a good person. (client left out "maybe") Even though my parents did this to me, I'm a really good person anyway. (Client: I AM a really good person.)

Note: Client had not changed previous round of "I deeply and completely love and accept myself until it was coupled with her parents in round 10. SUDS: 0 on "I am a good person" without finishing round.

Note: The PR setup landed just right and served as a round as client's face opened and the realization came that they really were a good person. Cognitive Shift: Client truly understood they were not responsible and could feel like a REALLY GOOD PERSON and it wasn't their fault. We did not discuss her feeling responsible but it was obvious from comments that had been cleared in the setup.

SUDS: 9/10 on "what parents did to me." Round 11 Even though my parents weren't nice I can still go on in life. Even though my parents weren't nice to me I can still be happy in life. Even though my parents did some awful things, it's all in the past. Even though they did some awful things I can choose to have a good life now. Even though I had this awful experience and other awful experiences there is a way out. "These Awful Experiences" Boy there's a lot in there, a lot of them in there. But I am here now, not then. Those Awful Experiences, they were hard on me. They're over a long time ago.

SUDS: 7 on parent's awful things Round 12 -Remaining Even though I still have some of this parent's 7 thing, I'll find a way to get over it. This parent's 7 thing SUDS: 5 Round 13-Remaining Remaining parent's 5 Aspect Jump SUDS 8 and back to feeling in chest Conversation: Client returned to the clawing feeling in chest. She said there was more in there than that incident. Round 14 This 8 feeling in my chest. SUDS 3 Even though I have a lot more in there I deeply and completely love and accept myself. Even though there is a lot more in there to do, I got a lot done today and I'm proud of finding out what that sensation is. Even though I wish I could get it all done today, I know we can go on working another day.

Positives: Top of Head starting. This feeling in my chest, I didn't know what it was, NOW I know. I really did want to know what this feeling was. (Checked with client to see if that is true.) It was a mystery before to me. NOW I know what this feeling is. It's nice to know what is inside your chest. There are other things there too, and maybe they're not all bad. Maybe some of them are but some of them are good. I like letting go of the bad ones and I can't wait to find the good ones. Life is not all bad or all good. Today I found the feeling in my chest and I like that. I am growing and healing and today was a wonderful start.

Round 14 – and Closing for the Day. We tapped a circle around the thymus 3"out while slowly and gently "closing" around the feeling in her chest. We reviewed how far we had come from: a vague sensation to specific events, her forced marriage and physical violence that included guns. The women that turned her away and her understanding about why it may have happened, and even the acceptance that we may never understand fully all their reasons. society, accepting herself in relation to her parent, the unkind act of her parents and the awareness of the "other things" we still had to work on. finally back to the chest feeling but now knowing she knew what it was and we could work on it in the future.

Client's last statement of the day that provided a segue for a next session: *"You know he (husband) always bought me roses after each incident and now I don't like getting flowers."*

Summary

How rapport was established at the beginning of the session: Client, Marianne was already familiar with the procedure. Generally, I welcome my clients and we have informal conversations and time prior to entering a session. This is a good natural time for us to relax, laugh and enjoy some moments of light heartedness. It is a time for them to transition from the outside world and to feel the room's calmness. My enthusiasm for sessions is contagious and I find it readily transfers to them.

Phone: I will have previously sent them an email suggesting they find a comfortable quiet place where they will be undisturbed with a bottle of drinking water beside them. When they call I have already placed myself into an attitude of intention, clarity and anchored calmness. Making the client comfortable in the clinical and/or formal setting. We discuss a myriad of local detail such as weather, cars, relatives, kids, and news etc... to create a relaxed environment as well as some deep breaths.

I love doing a quick round of "constrictive breathing" to segue into a session. Clients in our part of the country generally bring their own water into the session and I keep extra bottles in the room. We take water and potty breaks as serves us either for processing time or just body functions. Explaining to client what to expect. Marianne knew what to expect in this session as she had done a previous session. Generally, we briefly re-state and agree on our goals for the session prior to starting. I chose to enter this session quite directly and did not describe the technique I was using of continual tapping on the narration. I find by the time my clients come to a session they have pretty well caught my enthusiasm for EFT.

They are generally interested in the process and sometimes we discuss what is going on during the session and sometimes before and afterward to encourage them to EFT on their own between sessions. There are several clients that do not want "the magic of EFT" explained to them. They just want to use it with me and be there for the experience of healing. Some want it done for them and others want to learn some of the techniques or may ask afterwards about the technique.

Sometimes I suggest what we might address the next session and the technique. Sometimes they are not interested as our emphasis may still be on the closure of the existing session and there is not time or room either physically or emotionally as they may still be processing or out of time. Some clients come on faith. They may have heard from others and want to try EFT out without learning anything first. Some want full explanations.

Sometimes I use the intro DVD sent to me after I passed the Foundational Level.

Confidentiality and Informed Consent: Confidentiality is always confirmed at the beginning as a matter of course. As a Naturopath and multi-modality practitioner, I have an extensive Informed Consent that is read and signed prior to the first session. Also, as a Pastoral Therapist, my clients have signed an agreement that confers "Confessional" status protection in preparation for the first session.

Demonstrating Presence with the Client: Eye contact depends upon the client, their cultural background and what they are most comfortable to work with. Some prefer tight direct one-on-one and others prefer to glance away while they are internalizing or thinking and look back toward me to see my response. Some clients sit quite close and others a full measure of distance is their ideal zone. I feel respecting boundaries and demonstrating presence takes many forms throughout the session, setups, framing, mirroring... Suggesting cognitive shifts are a favorite part of the session.

I like the attention to detail and the active listening it requires. It is rewarding and requires continued creativity to suggest and not lead. Mirroring is essential and reflects active listening. I love to be sensitive to their wording and it moves us along so much quicker when they realize how truly interested their practitioner is in what they are saying. It provides reinforcement to both of us that we are tracking correctly. I am always seeking the opportunity to mirror and check with them the appropriateness. I feel my attention to this is directly apparent in my questions, setups, rounds, framing and re-framing in the case studies and is one of the reasons I so love doing EFT.

New technique introduction/explanation: In this Case, I used continual tapping through the narration and I did not explain this ahead of time. The client's body language fully indicated a natural linking back to me as we tapped. I did explain at the end of the session. Core Issue underneath the presenting issue: The presenting issue was a sensation in the chest which lent itself to chasing the pain technique. The real Core Issue was childhood abuse with a wide open door to work with in future sessions.

How I discover and handle core issues: Core issues continue to surprise me. Just when I think it may be one thing it becomes obvious it is another I felt (intuited) that given a chance Marianne's symptom's source would be revealed - which it quickly did as a series of childhood abuses sitting behind the forced marriage. The client had no idea the feelings in her chest were related to abuse. She had been unable to find an association with anything specifically on her own.

When the first story came forward using Chasing the Pain, it contained a bounty of aspects. Any one of them would have served as a starting point. I waited for the client to reveal a SUDS and switched to tapping through the story which then turned into a classic EFT Session.

Closure Procedure

We tapped a circle around the thymus 3" out while slowly and gently discussing the feeling in the chest. Client indicated she was tired and done for now. We reviewed: how far we had come from a vague sensation to specific events; her forced marriage with guns and roses; the women that turned her away and her understanding about why it may have happened and even the acceptance that we may never understand fully all their reasons; society's attitude of silence and looking the other way; accepting herself in relation to her parent; the unkind act of her parents and the awareness of the "other things" we still had to work on; finally back to the chest feeling but now knowing she knew what it was and we could work on it in the future.

We discussed another session and our intention to continue the issue of abuse and taking aspects/table legs down. No homework was specifically given but suggested that she might choose to do some tapping on her own to see what comes up. I have aspect galore to work with and trails leading down to many doors that could be opened. This session holds great promise to a bright future of tapping so much away in short order.