

## EFT Helps Cancer Survivor Manage Stress

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By Carmel Tobin and Gwyneth Moss

**GWYNETH'S COMMENT:** Carmel Tobin came on my EFT Practitioner weekend workshop and sent me this excellent case study of her work with "Sally" a woman who had come through the trauma of cancer diagnosis and treatment and was therefore sensitive about the level of stress in her life. Carmel shows great sensitivity and ability with EFT in this case and so I would like to offer Carmel's write up and my comments as a helpful learning tool for EFT newbie's everywhere.

**CARMEL:** I would like to keep the person's real name confidential, so I will call her Sally. Sally and I had arranged to have an EFT session about an incident at her work, which she felt anxious about. Sally was keen to reduce the stress she was feeling about this incident because, having had throat cancer, she knew that stress was a big factor with cancer. About ten minutes before our session, she had received a phone call telling her that an old friend with whom she had worked for some years had died. Sally seemed quite shaken by this news, so I asked her if she wanted to do the session on this instead and she said "Oh, yes please".

**GWYNETH'S COMMENT:** Very often someone comes to us having made an appointment for help with something specific and then when they arrive their first few sentences are about the distress caused by something else. We have to use our therapeutic instincts and judgement to decide do we work on whatever they first indicated or do we start with the greater and immediate distress of what is present there and then. If we jump in to work on the current issue and ignore what they made the appointment for we may get "well yes I feel better but that's not what I came for" so Carmel shows great presence of mind in asking Sally if she would like to use the session for the news that has so shaken her. We as therapists may know what is best for our client but without their consent to proceed we will lose rapport and more.

**CARMEL:** I asked Sally to describe how she felt at that moment about the phone call. Her first reaction was that she was "gob smacked" about the news that her friend had died. So much so that it felt like someone had hit her in the chest. I did not want to ask her intensity level, as I did not think there was time to, as it was all very fresh in her mind and I felt we needed to get on and tap. So I decided to start by tapping on the feeling in her chest with 'Even though I feel as though I have been hit in the chest, I feel so gob smacked, I deeply and completely love and accept myself'

**GWYNETH'S COMMENT:** Carmel asks a simple question to get to Sally's subjective experience (what it feels like) and then without delay reflects Sally's words back to her through the EFT process and starts her tapping.

When the emotion is obviously strongly present we do not need to ask for a 0-10 intensity number. We can always ask after tapping; "if that emotion had been a 10 out of 10 what number would you give it now?" For the benefit of international readers "gob" is an impolite word for mouth so "gob smacked" means slapped across the mouth and unable to speak. Carmel takes Sally's exact words and gives them back to her. This is so simple and so important. Sally's deeper mind chose "gob smacked" to describe her emotional experience and that is what we need to use to keep the emotion tuned in. If Carmel had changed the words to something more polite then it would not have had the same effect for Sally.

CARMEL: After two rounds of this, the feeling moved up to her throat but I could see her breathing was calming down a little. We tapped some more on the feeling in her throat and it went down to zero.

GWYNETH'S COMMENT: When an issue has the potential to be deeply upsetting it is more indirect and gentle to tap on the body sensations to which the emotion gives rise. Carmel does not ask Sally about the meaning or significance of her friend's death but keeps her tapping directed to the expression of emotion in her body and is observant of changes in her breathing that indicate that the emotion is subsiding.

CARMEL: After this, after each round of tapping, a new feeling came up immediately, so I kept on tapping and following whatever came up. Sally first said she felt guilty. Her friend had died and she felt really bad because she hadn't been in touch with her. She felt kind of lost because they used to work together and she felt she had lost a level of support. So, we tapped on the guilt of not being in touch with her friend. This went down to zero after two rounds. I asked Sally how intense the loss of support felt but she said she now felt frustrated. We tapped on frustration, which went down to zero in one round. Then anger came up because the friend's husband didn't used to help her even though she had been ill for some time. We tapped on anger at the friend's husband, which half way round became anger at herself, because she (Sally) hadn't helped her friend during her illness. After one round, Sally said her friend hadn't wanted her help, so we tapped on: 'even though I wanted to help my friend, she was not ready to accept my help and I deeply and completely love us both'

GWYNETH'S COMMENT: Carmel is now simply reflecting back each feeling aspect as it arises. Sally goes from guilty to lost to frustrated to anger and Carmel simply follows her and reflects back. In this mode I think of the therapist as being like a guide dog and walking alongside the client supportively with the gentle intention of helpfulness.

CARMEL: As we tapped through this, the anger changed to sadness – so we tapped on the sadness – the intensity of sadness went up from a 6 to an 8. After one more round of tapping on the sadness, I introduced some different phrases, like 'It's okay to feel sad', 'it is understandable I would feel sad' & 'it's natural to feel sad' I then checked Sally's level of intensity

on feeling sad and it had gone down to a 2 – one more round on 'remaining sadness' brought it to a 0 but gave way to feeling worried about going to the funeral.

GWYNETH'S COMMENT: Generally underneath anger there is hurt or sadness. Sometimes when we hit the root of a problem that has been well hidden (or hidden from) the emotion can get more intense before it calms and clears. Carmel helps this process by introducing gentle normalising reframes like "its OK" and "it's natural".

CARMEL: Sally did not get on with the woman's husband and she didn't know how she would be received and also she didn't want to 'have a go at him' at the funeral. So we tapped on her anticipation of what would happen. I said to her that I would use some of the words she had used in our discussion and if any of the words didn't feel right, then she could choose her own words that fitted better for her. I asked her to repeat as we tapped 'Even though I feel some anticipation about the funeral, I'm open to the possibility that the day will go as I would like it to go – that I can pay my respects to my friend – that I'll have the time to say goodbye to her in my own way and that everything will be fine with her husband' Sally then continued "I know I carry lots of good memories about her and I can have a good feeling about all those times we spent together."

GWYNETH'S COMMENT: The simplest way to start with EFT is to reflect back the person's exact words through the tapping process and that is how Carmel started the session with Sally. As Sally became calmer she began to introduce a new possibility of a new way of seeing and checked in with her that her additions were acceptable and told her that if the words didn't feel right she could change them. This is so important. As the guide dog we start by walking alongside and then when we begin to set a direction towards safety we have to be sure that the person is with us. EFT should never be imposed and should always be collaboration between two people (or within one person).

CARMEL: Sally then told me she had a feeling of lightness – she said she felt warm about some of the times she had been with her friend. She remembered some times when they had had a good laugh and she felt okay about going to the funeral. I checked with Sally to see if she had any remaining intensity about the telephone call she had received and she told me that it seemed very distant and she didn't know why she felt so bad about it.

GWYNETH'S COMMENT: Once Sally has an experience of change, of feeling lighter, Carmel tests the work by checking back to the initial trigger of the telephone call. When Sally responds that the call seems distant (a significant change in sub-modalities for those who have studied NLP) Carmel is clear that the work is complete. Carmel later reported:

CARMEL: She has been fine since our session; she went to the funeral and it was obviously upsetting, as funerals are, but she got on fine with the

husband (not best pals but civil without tail enders) and she was pleased with how she conducted herself.

GWYNETH'S COMMENT: I am so delighted to receive so many write ups like this one from those who have come to me for EFT training. Carmel did an excellent job by keeping it simple and sticking with whatever emerged without attachment or thinking about what she "should" do. It makes me so proud to be part of EFT that after just a few days of training someone can do something so simple and so helpful for someone in need. I absolutely delight in training and delight even more in hearing what my trainees do with EFT.

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