

## The EFT Study by Wells, et al.

Published research on EFT's effectiveness commences appropriately enough with a carefully executed study that addresses *irrational fears*. When Australian psychologist, Steve Wells, and his associates decided to investigate the use of EFT they chose to look at its effect on specific phobias of small animals such as rats and mice and insects such as spiders and cockroaches that often cause distress in humans.

The ensuing research, commonly known as "The Wells Study", opened a door to research in energy psychology and I (P. Carrington) am proud to have taken part in the preparation and writing of the journal article on the Wells Study that was eventually published in a leading peer-reviewed journal, *The Journal of Clinical Psychology*. It was a long and at times difficult journey to reach publication but it was one well worth having taken.

Here is how the Wells study was constructed and what it showed.

Because research protocol demands that if possible a method studied be compared with another method so that we have benchmarks against which to measure its effectiveness, Steve Wells and his research team decided to compare the effects of EFT with those of a deep breathing technique which would also address the fears of small animals and insects in their participants. The deep breathing method they designed included identical reminder phrases and almost all the other components of the standard EFT protocol, the only major difference between the two techniques being the fact that during EFT the participants tapped on meridian end points, and in the comparison condition they did not tap at all.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the research suggests that deep breathing is in itself quite beneficial for the treatment of these types of phobias, a fact which, in fact, made it difficult for EFT to come out ahead in this experimental contest (think how easy it would have been to show EFT's superiority if, say, the comparison group had watched a videotape instead!). Despite this handicap, however, EFT surpassed the breathing technique on four of the five measures used (both treatments produced similar results in pulse rate). The differences between the two techniques were striking and statistically highly significant.

How well did this improvement hold up over time? In the crucial test which measured how close a person dared to walk toward their feared object, the EFT participants held onto their gains much better than did the deep breathing subjects when the groups were retested again 6 to 9 months after they had learned their respective techniques. Those people who had become less fearful right after learning EFT, tended to continue to act less afraid of their feared animal even after a long passage of time during which they *had not been using EFT*. In other words, the beneficial effects of EFT turned out to be remarkably lasting.

What is particularly striking about this finding is the fact that all 35 participants in the study had received only *one single 30 minute session* of EFT, or of diaphragmatic breathing.. Because they were not taught to use these techniques during the long waiting interval, it is quite remarkable that the improvement obtained through EFT was maintained and even possibly intensified as long as 9 months later when these subjects were again asked to approach their feared object.

In summary, the Wells study showed that EFT is an effective and long lasting treatment for specific phobias, even when it is administered only once and for only 30 minutes.

## REFERENCE:

Wells, S., Polglase, K., Andrews, H.B., Carrington, P., & Baker, A.H. (2003). Evaluation of a Meridian Based Intervention, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), for Reducing Specific Phobias of Small Animals. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 59(9), 943-966

To download a copy of the full journal article go to:

<http://www.eftdownunder.com/docs/EFTStudy.htm> .

## The Wells Study Replicated

When new research is published, the scientific community tends to be skeptical until another group of researchers in a different laboratory are able to reproduce the results of the first study, showing that it was not just chance alone that produced the original results.

Dr .A. Harvey Baker, Professor of Psychology at Queens College in New York City, set out to accomplish the task of replicating the Wells Study. He decided to design a study which would match as closely as possible the conditions of the Wells study, yet be even more stringent. It is always possible to improve on any piece of research and Dr. Baker and his research associate Linda Siegel did so with their new study.

Since it is preferable in research to have not only a comparison group as Wells did, but also a no-treatment control group against which to compare the results of the method being studied, Baker and Siegel added a third group in which participants were asked to sit in the laboratory for the same duration as that of the EFT condition, either studying or passing the time by reading magazines provided for them, none of which dealt with fears. Adding this control group was designed to show whether the mere passage of time would improve subjects' fears without their having practiced EFT or any other therapeutic technique.

In addition, the researchers chose as their other active condition, a more commonly used method for handling fears than the diaphragmatic breathing technique used in the Wells Study. This method closely approximated Carl Rogers' nondirective counseling approach, and they called it the Supportive Interview.

The 31 people who participated in this new study were randomly assigned to one of these three experimental conditions, and the study added the feature of having the person testing the subjects be "blind" as to whether each subject had been taught EFT or one of the other two conditions. Another important difference between the two studies was the fact that the average interval between the initial testing (before subjects learned EFT) and the final testing, was 1.38 years, almost twice as long as the waiting period in the Wells study.

Just as Wells had done, Baker and Siegel purposely did not instruct their subjects to practice EFT during the waiting interval —they were allowed only one 45 minute treatment session. It is therefore interesting that although the initial effects of EFT did show some shrinkage over time, they did not *disappear* during the lengthy time interval between the original testing and the follow-up one, one and one third years later.

The results of the Baker-Siegel study and the Wells study therefore show that EFT has not only immediate but long-term efficacy. EFT's usefulness for a specific phobia has now been replicated in two independent studies conducted in geographically very distant parts of the world.

