



How Tapping on Acupuncture Points Can Help Couples

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The organs of emotion—such as the heart, lungs, spleen, kidneys and liver—are energetically connected to acupuncture points (acupoints) that are on the surface of the skin. Simplistic as it may seem, tapping on selected acupoints while focusing on a problem or goal has been shown, in more than 40 clinical trials, to be effective in helping to rapidly overcome PTSD, anxiety and depression.

Can this technique be used with couples? In our experience, acupoint tapping protocols can be a powerful tool in helping couples not only calm themselves and re-engage when things heat up, they also can be used to change deep emotional patterns that trace to childhood and are interfering with the current relationship.

Jeremy and Melissa

Jeremy was thirty-six when he married Melissa. He was eager to help raise her sons, ages seven and nine. He had gotten to know them quite well during the year prior to the marriage. He had brought them to baseball games, zoos, parks and other local attractions, and had participated in their hobbies. The boys liked their stepdad and the attention he was giving them, and the new family was blossoming within an atmosphere of affection and promise. Melissa's ex-husband, Steve, the boys' biological father, had not been particularly eager to spend time with his sons

during the marriage, but he also loved them. After the divorce he had moved to another town several hours away but had reliably taken the boys for the afternoon every other Sunday.

Shadows from the Past Enter a Happy Home

During his courtship with Melissa, Jeremy had never met Steve. But now that Jeremy had moved in with the family, the twice-monthly visits became a fixture in his life. He was civil enough toward his new wife's ex, but he avoided having much contact with him when the boys were being picked up or dropped off. During the first Christmas vacation after the marriage, Steve arranged to take the boys for a week to Orlando for a Disney marathon. The boys were so excited about it that they seemed to talk of little else for the week before and the week after the trip. When Steve came for the next Sunday visitation, Jeremy could hardly look at him. He began to criticize Steve's parenting style to Melissa, point out his culpability in the divorce and generally paint an ugly picture of the man who had fathered her children. At first Melissa acknowledged the truth in some of the observations, but over time Jeremy became increasingly vehement in his criticisms. Their interactions on the weekends that Steve arrived became increasingly problematic and Jeremy began questioning the boys about their visits with their father, as if looking for more fodder for his rants. Eventually, he was unable to hide his



disdain toward their father from the boys.

Jeremy's jealousy toward Steve continued to escalate and the acrimony was seeping into other areas of the family. As Steve's visits approached, tension would descend on the household. The boys were confused. Melissa began to judge Jeremy harshly. She had more than once called him a "spoiled brat." This was the state of things when they scheduled a couple's counseling session with David. Jeremy knew at some level that his reactions were not rational, but this knowledge could not compete with the strength of his emotions. When Jeremy was triggered, Steve was an evil man sabotaging all of Jeremy's fine efforts with

David asked, "How do you know it is a seven?" Jeremy said that he felt pressure in his chest and tightness in his throat. David asked him to explore the feelings in his throat. Jeremy said it was almost as if he were trying to hold back tears. David asked if he could recall one of the first times he had that feeling. (Frequently when acupoint tapping is used to reduce the emotional charge of an issue, new insights about the situation become available.) Jeremy immediately recalled being ten when his parents brought a foster boy into the family. It was to be a temporary arrangement until a permanent placement could be found, a favor for a relative of the boy, but it changed everything for Jeremy.

Each round of tapping takes only a few minutes.

the boys and the family and there was no other reality to consider. After hearing both of their renditions of the problem, David spoke to the part of Jeremy that knew his reactions to Steve were extreme. David explained that when intense emotions are triggered, they are very real, whether rational or irrational. He suggested tapping to take the edge off the intensity of Jeremy's responses to Steve.

Neither Jeremy nor Melissa had any experience with energy psychology techniques such as acupoint tapping. But the couple who referred them had worked with David and described the method, so they were open to anything that could help, however strange it might look. While Jeremy was not open to considering that his assessment of Steve might be wrong, he was interested in feeling less consumed by his reactions.

They proceeded. The scene that Jeremy chose for what is called a "subjective units of distress" (SUD) rating was from the previous Sunday, watching as Steve's car pulled into the driveway. It was a ten on a 0-to-10 scale. After four rounds of tapping, it had gone down to a seven, but even after further tapping, it seemed to be stuck there.

Healing Old Wounds

As an only child, Jeremy had enjoyed his parents' full attention and affection. Suddenly that was history. The foster boy had many problems, both of Jeremy's parents held full-time jobs and the limited time and resources they had available shifted from Jeremy to the new boy. Jeremy, at ten, did not have words or concepts that could help him come to grips with the loss. He felt emotionally abandoned by both of his parents, he could not fathom why they had brought this troublesome person into their home and he hated the foster boy. He began starting fights and creating acrimony wherever he could. This strategy seemed to eventually work. After about a year, the agency found a permanent placement for the boy and Jeremy never saw him again. All of this was buried in the recesses of Jeremy's psyche. He had not thought about it for years and no other circumstance in his adult life had triggered his unprocessed feelings around that chapter from his childhood. He had never thought to mention it to Melissa, but the parallels between the foster boy and the situation with Steve became immediately obvious to everyone.

Jeremy tapped on every aspect of the memory he could identify, staying with each until it was down



to a zero: Jeremy's loss of his parents' attention; his many times having held back his tears when he felt lonely and abandoned; his confusion and puzzlement about what he had done wrong to deserve having all the attention withdrawn from him; the invasion into his family; his hatred for the new boy; the fights they had; his being punished for starting them and feeling like a bad boy after ten years of being a good boy; and even his confusion when the new boy suddenly disappeared.

From Healing the Past to Changing the Present

Fortunately, each round of tapping takes only a few minutes, so all of this was accomplished within that first session. (We generally schedule two hours for initial sessions with couples). Jeremy was by then able to talk lucidly and calmly about the foster boy and the boy's invasion into his young life. In addition, he could reflect on how Steve's visits with the boys were bringing up feelings that could be traced to his experiences with the foster boy. He was entertaining the possibility that his sense of Steve purposefully trying to destroy the family Jeremy was building had something to do with this earlier scenario. Focusing again on watching Steve's car pull into the driveway, Jeremy gave it a SUD rating of three. A couple more rounds of tapping and it was down to a zero.

We then briefly focused on Melissa's horror and sense of betrayal about Jeremy's shift over the recent months from an apparently ideal stepfather to an angry, jealous, irrational force in her home. Witnessing Jeremy's work had already put all of this into a welcome new light, and by the end of the session, she was able to review the strange course of their young marriage with no emotional charge.

On a follow-up session two weeks later, the issue had vanished. Jeremy was not triggered by Steve's next visit, the strong relationship Jeremy had established with the boys and with Melissa was back on track, and David was able to discharge clients who could have easily spent a year or two in counseling. Such are the risks a therapist takes when bringing an energy approach into the consulting room.

Nature's Trick

As people develop into adulthood, an uncanny tendency can be seen for choosing partners and situations that correspond with and reinforce early psychological patterns. You have probably witnessed this in your own life or with others you know. Jeremy was not consciously looking for a situation that would bring up his childhood wounds, but there was enough emotional similarity between his boyhood experience and Steve's intrusion into his happy family that his psyche glued itself to the scenario. It is as if nature insists that we heal what is unhealed or be periodically and painfully reminded that something is deeply amiss. In this sense, the past predicts the future. What people receive in childhood sets into motion deep patterns they often bring to their marriages. Fortunately for Jeremy, Melissa and the boys, Jeremy was able to heal the roots of the pattern rather than being doomed to endlessly repeat it.

What was nature up to in arranging things so those we love most bring out the parts of us that are most difficult to love? The impulse is strong for our emotional wounds to be played out again and again in our deepest relationships. Perhaps this strange twist of nature's plan is designed to make us catalysts for one another's growth and healing? Old patterns repeat themselves—again and again—until they are brought to a new resolution.

While this new resolution is not automatic or guaranteed, healing old wounds that are at the basis of ongoing difficulties opens new vistas. Painful as it may be to enter this territory—even when you are mindful and armed with tools for healing—the outcome can transform you as well as your relationship in many-splendored ways. Your partnership provides not only the context in which old wounds are revealed—but also can be a container for healing them.

What Can Tapping Protocols Do for a Couple?

The hopeful and encouraging news about acupoint tapping protocols is that the possibility of repairing wounds and compensating for damages relating



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to fallible parenting and unfavorable circumstances are now open to anyone willing to invest the time and effort. Childhood experiences are coded in your body's energies and these energies act as a template that imposes the same essential pattern—again and again—on the unfolding panorama of your life, even as the characters and circumstances change.


Acupoint tapping addresses problems at this level, impacting the energy fields that maintain outdated psychological habits. When you bring to mind an emotional problem—such as a situation with your partner that triggers irrational hurt or anger—you activate the energy field involved with that problem. Simultaneously, tapping on selected acupoints which produce a sense of calm shifts the internal landscape around the problem.

Acupoints are gateways into the body's energy system, acting like switches that can increase or decrease the flow of energy to specific areas of the body. The traditional use of acupuncture needles is not necessary. Energy psychology teaches you how to tap on or massage about a dozen points that influence your emotions while you think about specific scenes that are associated with a problem or a goal. The process shifts the psychological atmosphere that surrounds the situation being focused upon. It reduces anxiety, increases confidence, heals old wounds and generally enhances your freedom to move through the situation more effectively and more joyfully. It also changes your brain chemistry. With acupoint tapping, you can quickly shift outdated emotional patterns by altering the neural pathways that maintain them.

Acupoint tapping protocols are the most direct and potent route we know for involving the body in the psychotherapeutic process. They initiate a reprocessing of unresolved emotional experiences, allowing current patterns to rapidly shift. Here are seven ways acupoint tapping protocols can help improve a relationship:

1. Navigate through emotional intensity without escalating.

2. Change how the partners respond to triggers that evoked anger, hurt or resentment.
3. Trace emotional challenges to formative childhood experiences.
4. Heal emotional wounds that can be traced to those experiences.
5. Transform the patterns that grew out of those wounds.
6. Complete any other “unfinished business,” including “baggage” from earlier relationships or from an earlier time in the current relationship.
7. Establish a strong mental vision of how the partners want the relationship to change and establish neural pathways which support that vision.

Extraordinary promises? Yes! But we can say that over the course of our long careers, acupoint tapping is the most powerful single tool we have found for helping couples change unwanted patterns in their interactions. We invite you to set aside your probable disbelief if you have never seen it in action and give it a try. We are making a brief, amusing 5-minute video on “How to Stop an Argument from Escalating” available to Energy Magazine readers at More.EnergiesofLove.com. 



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