

**A Pocket Guide to  
EFT  
(Emotional Freedom  
Techniques)  
for Addiction Treatment,  
Self-Help and Recovery**

**How to use EFT for relief from  
addictive cravings, withdrawal  
symptoms, anxiety, pain and  
upsetting memories**



**Masha Bennett**



*“Addictive behaviour is the mind-body’s normal and natural response to the pathology of sobriety”*  
(Gregory Bateson)

## **What is EFT?**

*The Emotional Freedom Techniques* are a group of brief therapeutic interventions and self-help tools, sometimes known as “acupuncture without needles” or “tapping therapy”. EFT brings together the principles of traditional Chinese medicine, neuroscience and cognitive-behavioural therapy by combining stimulation of a series of acupressure points with cognitive restructuring (specially worded affirmations), typically leading to shifts in thought patterns and relief from both physical tension and excess negative emotions.

## **Table 1. Uses of EFT in addiction recovery**

<i>Reducing / eliminating addictive cravings</i>	✓
<i>Alleviating withdrawal symptoms</i>	✓
<i>Managing anxiety, fear, grief, anger</i>	✓
<i>Relieving physical pain and tension</i>	✓
<i>Modifying unhelpful beliefs</i>	✓
<i>Healing past trauma</i>	✓
<i>Enhancing sense of control and self-efficacy</i>	✓
<i>Reducing risk of relapse</i>	✓
<i>Day-to-day emotional &amp; stress management</i>	✓

## **How does EFT work?**

There are several explanations of how EFT works. The creator of the technique and many practitioners attribute its effect to balancing the energy in meridians, as in acupuncture, in relation to a specific problem.

Some neurological explanations for its efficacy include balancing the activity of parasympathetic and sympathetic branches of our nervous system, and facilitating “adaptive information processing”. The areas of skin associated with acupressure points contain a high concentration of mechanoreceptors, and brain scans of people whose acu-points are stimulated show the limbic (emotional) part of the brain being impacted by EFT - including the amygdala, which plays an important part in addictive and compulsive behaviours.

*“EFT brings immediate results. It makes me feel in control and independent, increases faith and confidence in myself and my abilities. It is a tool I can use anywhere... it is simple, but so powerful.” (J. S.)*

Research is ongoing to evaluate the efficacy of EFT, but thousands of case studies have already been published. Numerous professionals, clients and members of the general public are reporting profound and long-lasting benefits of EFT as a therapeutic intervention and a self-help tool.



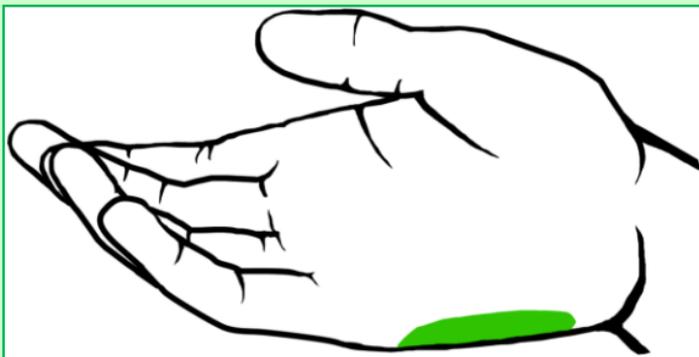
## **EFT Procedure for Self-help**

In this pocket guide I will describe a modified version of the original “EFT Basic Recipe”. One “round” or cycle of EFT would usually take just a minute or two, and can be repeated a number of times until relief from a craving, tension, pain or negative emotion is achieved.

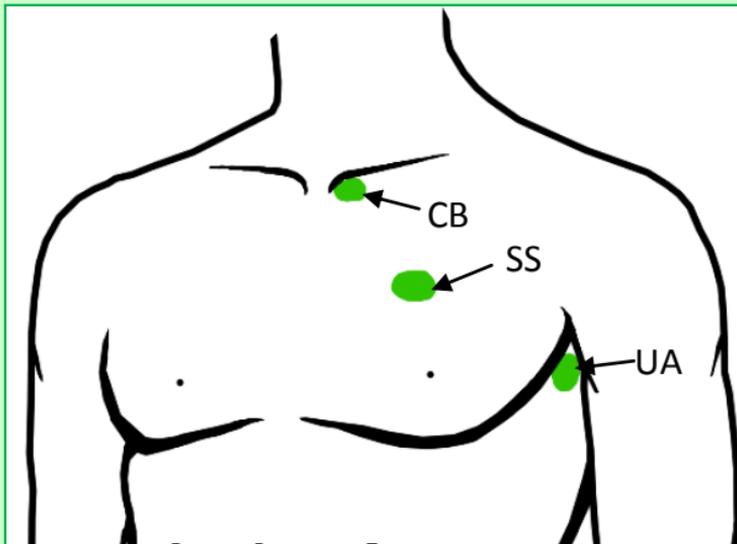
**Step 1 - Awareness.** Become aware of the problem you would like to work on. Notice any unpleasant bodily sensations, any tension, anxiety, or negative thoughts. *Describe* what is bothering you concisely but specifically – for example, “alcohol craving”, “thudding headache”, “worry about tomorrow’s interview”, “anger at Joe Bloggs for not ringing me”. *Rate* the problem on the scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is the mildest, and 10 is the highest intensity of the problem.

**Step 2 - Balancing (or “The Set-Up”).** For this step, you will need to locate one of the following two points (it doesn’t matter which, it depends on personal preference). Either, find the Karate Chop point (Fig.1) – on the fleshy side of your palm (left or right) below the little finger – this is the area you would use for chopping bricks in half if you were doing Karate! Tap this gently but quite fast with the four fingers of your other hand (it is usually easiest to tap with your dominant hand, right or left, it doesn’t matter).

Alternatively, locate the Sore Spot (labelled SS in Fig.2) – by prodding your chest in the area where you might pin a badge (either side, left or right). The Sore Spot is usually about 2in/5cm in diameter and feels sore or tender when pressed with your fingers. This is the only point in EFT that is massaged in a circular fashion, rather than tapped – the Sore Spot is not an acupuncture point but is a so-called “neurolymphatic point”.



**Fig.1. EFT Karate Chop Point - KC.**



**Fig.2. EFT body points, including: SS – Sore Spot, CB – Collar Bone point, UA – Under Arm point.**

Now, during the Balancing step we introduce the psychological component of EFT by using a “Set-up Phrase” or affirmation that aims to both acknowledge the problem and, at the same time, “balance” it with self-acceptance. This helps to reduce the impact of self-sabotage, or the so-called “psychological reversal” which can happen when we are critical and harsh towards ourselves (which is so common with addictions and other chronic problems) and think thoughts such as “I am a failure”, “It won’t work for me”, “I don’t deserve to get better”, “Nothing can help me”, and so on.

The basic structure of the EFT Set-up Phrase is:

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“Even though [*the problem*], I accept myself.”



E.g. “Even though I really need this drink [cigarette, hit, chocolate etc], I accept myself.”

“Even though I have this horrible nagging headache, I accept myself.”

“Even though I am anxious about tomorrow’s interview, I accept myself.”

Gary Craig’s original Set-up Phrase is: “Even though [*describe the problem*], I deeply and completely accept myself.” Experience shows that this affirmation usually works well as part of the EFT procedure, even if you don’t quite believe it. If you are uncomfortable with the statement of self-acceptance, you may want to try some of the alternatives listed in Table 2 overleaf.

For Balancing, repeat the Set-up Phrase three times, whilst continuously tapping on the Karate Chop point, OR rubbing the Sore Spot (choose just one of the two).

**Step 3 - Clearing, or “The Sequence”.** The Clearing part of the EFT procedure aims to “clear” the energetic and/or neurological imbalances that are contributing to the issue, by tapping on the sequence of acu-points whilst you mentally focus on the problem.



**Fig. 3. EFT Face Points, including, from top to bottom:**

**EB – Eyebrow**

**SE - Side of Eye**

**UE - Under Eye**

**UN - Under Nose**

**CH – Chin**

Using *two fingers* of one hand (left or right), tap gently on each of the following points (approximately 7-8 taps is enough, but you don't need to count):

EB – Beginning of eyebrow (Fig.3)

SE – Side of the eye on the edge of the bone (Fig.3)

UE – Under the eye on the edge of the bone (Fig.3)

UN – Under the nose (Fig. 3)

CH – The dip in your chin - not the end of chin (Fig.3)

CB – Edge of your collarbone (the precise acu-point is in the dip just under the collarbone) (Fig. 2)

UA – Under arm (on the seam of your top, about 4in / 10cm below the armpit; for women – where you can feel your bra, for men – level with nipple) (Fig.2)

## **Table 2. Some alternative Set-up Phrases**

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"Even though [*describe problem here*]...

...I accept a part of myself."

...I am OK / all right."

...deep, deep, deep down [insert as many "deeps" as you feel is necessary], I am an OK person."

...I am doing my best."

...I am cool."

...I accept the possibility that one day I may accept myself."

...I give myself permission to be [hopeful, kind to myself, curious etc]."

...I'd like to bring healing to this."

...I'd like to get better."

...I am open to a possibility of change [healing, health, acceptance, peace etc]."

...I accept that this is where I am right now."

...I accept that I am only human."

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*"In a very short time,  
EFT relieved me of the  
distress, anxiety, fear  
and hate caused by my  
marriage breakdown"  
(E. L.)*

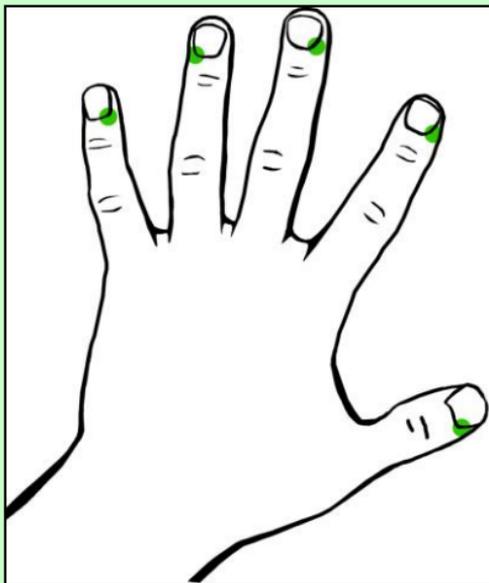
At each point say a Reminder Phrase to yourself: “This... [name the problem here]”, e.g. “This nagging ache in my forehead”, “This anger with Joe Bloggs for not ringing me”, “This anxiety about the interview tomorrow”. The purpose of the Reminder Phrase is to focus you on the specific distressing issue, which is important for EFT to be effective.

Following the Under Arm point, move to tapping on your hand (left or right, it doesn’t matter), using two fingers of your other hand (Fig. 4):

TH – Thumb – outer edge of the nail

IF – Index Finger – edge of the nail nearest to thumb

MF – Index Finger – edge of the nail nearest to thumb



**Fig 4. EFT Finger Points:**

**TH – Thumb**

**IF – Index Finger**

**MF – Middle Finger**

**RF – Ring Finger**

**LF – Little Finger**



RF – Ring Finger – edge of the nail nearest to little finger (you may see this finger being missed out in some versions of the procedure)

LF – Little Finger – edge of the nail nearest to thumb

And finishing with tapping on KC – Karate Chop (Fig. 1)

You can use an abbreviated version of the procedure by missing out all the points on the hand and, instead, after the Under Arm point, lightly tapping with all your fingers on top of your head. There are a number of different acu-points located there, so you don't need to aim at any particular spot. (Important note: It is best not to stimulate the points on the head for people who have high blood pressure.)



*“EFT brings me a profound sense of peace & connectedness with something greater than myself - call it what you like: God, spirit, universal consciousness, ‘the force’...” (N. R.)*

**Step 4 - Evaluation.** Focus on the problem or issue again, and notice how you feel. Check the rating on the scale of 1 to 10 – is the intensity the same, or has it subsided? Is there anything different about the feeling, sensation or the thought? Often people have insights or new awareness coming to their mind when they tap.

### **Persistence is important**

Some simple problems may be relieved completely after a couple of rounds of tapping, but the more complex ones require perseverance. Repeat the procedure as many times as necessary, every time changing the words of the Set-up Phrase and the Reminder Phrase to

describe what is happening *now*, acknowledging any changes (even small ones) that you noticed, e.g.:

“Even though I still can’t stop thinking of alcohol, this craving is maybe a little less, and I accept myself.”

“Even though I still have some of this annoying headache, I am cool.”

“Even though I feel more sad than angry now about Joe Bloggs not ringing me, I am an OK person.”

“Even though I am still a little anxious about tomorrow’s interview, I accept this is where I am now.”

And for the Reminder Phrase in Step 3:

“Remaining craving...”

“Remaining headache...”

“Sad about Joe Bloggs not getting in touch..”

“Remaining anxiety about tomorrow’s interview..”

### **Dealing with challenges**

If EFT does not appear to be working , try one or all of the following: (1) make sure the wording of your Set-up and Reminder Phrase is specific; (2) drink some water; (3) keep both feet flat on the floor while tapping; (4) put some emphasis into your words, even shout if you like!

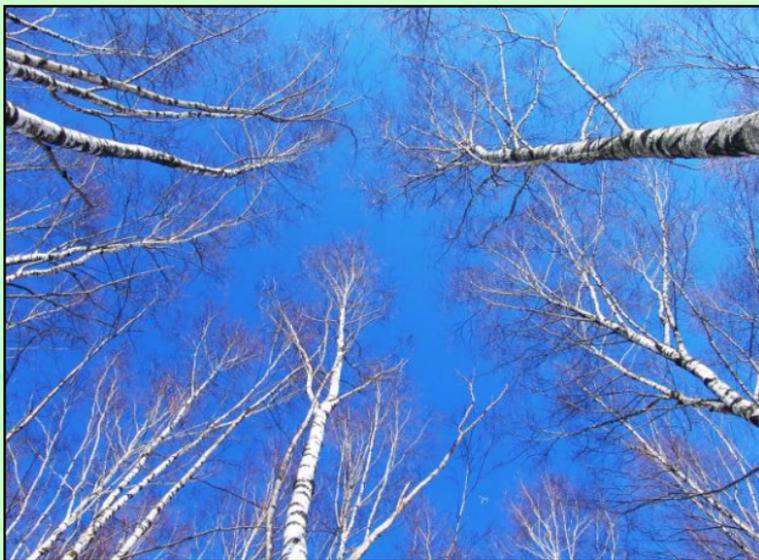
Possible side-effects of EFT could include: sleepiness, temporary increase in emotion (if this occurs, continue tapping until it subsides to comfortable levels), physical sensations shifting to another part of the body (again, continue tapping), feeling of thirst (drink water).

## **What to expect**

Some of the typical results that many people in recovery are able to achieve with the use of EFT include:

- Intensity of craving or urge decreases
- Perceived smell of addictive substance changes (usually to unpleasant or neutral)
- Physical tension reduces
- Anxiety drops to a manageable level
- Pains, aches, nausea and other withdrawal symptoms are alleviated
- Anger, sadness, grief ease gradually
- Quality of sleep improves

Many people report warmth and lightness in their body, gentle tingling, a sense of relaxation and peace, during or immediately after using EFT.



*"I have had very positive experiences with pain relief and helping to sleep."  
(H. H.)*



*"EFT has given me a toolbox of techniques that I can effectively use for myself, family and friends." (A.W.)*

### **EFT Shortcut for Cravings and Anxiety**

If you find yourself in a difficult situation, and a trigger sets off a craving, you could try an EFT shortcut that can help quickly, without having to go through the whole procedure. Tap on these points on both sides of body simultaneously, whilst focusing on the body sensations, emotions and thoughts associated with the craving:

*Under Eye, Collar Bone, Under Arm, Collar Bone*

Repeat several times without pausing, until the intensity subsides. Revert to the full EFT protocol if needed.

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## **About the author of this guide**

Masha Bennett is a former Drug Treatment Manager and Drug Worker, who combines her own psychotherapy and training practice with work as a therapist in the NHS. Masha teaches EFT around the world (in the UK, Norway, Israel, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Kazakhstan and other countries) to health and care professionals, addiction practitioners, mental health workers, teachers, counsellors, psychotherapists, prison staff and prisoners, carers and people in recovery. To find out more about EFT and how it can help, visit Masha's websites [www.eft4addictions.co.uk](http://www.eft4addictions.co.uk) and [www.practicalhappiness.co.uk](http://www.practicalhappiness.co.uk).

*"In my experience EFT is a gateway to personal power and wholeness." (R. R.)*

*"Being able to do it by myself has allowed me to work on personal material that I could not say in front of anyone else."  
(M.H.)*

