

CHILDREN & TEENS

Using magic fingers to energize youngsters

By Jan Yordy

*“There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children.
One is roots; the other, wings.”*

Hodding Carter



IS EFT A TECHNIQUE WHICH IS SAFE TO USE WITH CHILDREN OR TEENS?

Many therapists, teachers and parents have found EFT to be a wonderfully effective tool to use with children and teenagers. I personally have seen it shift emotionally overwhelmed and upset children/teens into calm and relaxed persons who could comfortably deal with their upsetting problems. When using EFT with children/teens, I have found that they either have very positive experiences or they may have trouble tuning into their problematic emotions and report it didn't work.

Some children are so fearful of re-experiencing their negative responses to upsetting past experiences that they block the process from working. These children often end up suppressing the uncomfortable feelings, creating more problems and issues for themselves in the long run. EFT, should they be willing to try it, could give them a safe way to work through whatever is upsetting them. EFT is one of those significant tools that every child should have available to them.

EFT is a natural for parents to use within the safety of the home. When whole families start to incorporate this amazing tool, the family dynamics shift as everyone learns better ways to express and process their own negative feelings. When parents model effective use of EFT for their own emotional management, their children will be more open to try the process and work on their own feelings.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS TO TAP ON THEIR OWN ISSUES BEFORE APPROACHING THEIR CHILD TO DO EFT TAPPING?

Children often will mirror parents' issues and act out when they sense parents' vulnerability or negative feelings. When parents can examine their own feelings and reactions and release their negative feelings, often their way of reacting to their child will shift.

When parents work on their negative feelings first, the child's problem or issue begins to dissipate. One mother who contacted me about the stress and conflict between her and her 10 year-old daughter found that, when she tapped away her job stress and anger at her daughter, the relationship improved dramatically.

When the mother dealt with her own issues, her daughter began to talk more easily about her fears for her mother's long-term health because of smoking. Together they were able to change their communication patterns and work at their unresolved feelings using EFT, which created a more harmonious relationship.

As parents of children or teens, you can easily come across in critical or judgmental ways unless you have properly dealt with the uncomfortable feelings stirred up by your kids. Many issues that first appear to be related to your children, after closer inspection and some EFT tapping, are revealed to be your own stuff. Spending time identifying your issues, then resolving them using EFT, will pay off in more positive relationships within the whole family.



WHAT ARE SOME PARENTAL EFT SETUP PHRASES TO HELP WORK ON OR PROCESS PARENTAL ISSUES?

Use the following reminder phrases, or others appropriate to your situation, and end each one with "I deeply and completely love and accept myself."



Even though I feel guilty for getting angry and yelling at my child, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though I feel like the world's worst parent when my child [whatever the issue is], I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though I am tired and don't have enough time to deal with a fussy, whiney child, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though I am embarrassed by my child's temper outburst, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though I am worried about my child's [whatever the issue is], I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though I feel guilty for leaving my child at daycare or with a babysitter, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though my child knows exactly how to push my anger buttons, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though I want to control my child and make [him/her] listen to me, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though I don't have time to be a good enough parent, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though other relatives, teachers or friends like to tell me how to parent my child, I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though I feel overwhelmed by this [baby/child/teenager], I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

Even though I resent my child for [whatever the issue is], I deeply and completely love and accept myself.

These are just some suggestions that I hope will help you begin to examine your parenting issues. Feel free to create your own personal EFT setup phrases.



WHAT ARE SOME WAYS OF INTRODUCING EFT TO A CHILD?

Start with a simple explanation that includes the idea of emotions being energy, which can either feel good or yucky inside his/her body. Remember to use language and concepts your child already understands. When I explain EFT to a child, I may have him recall a time when he was angry, scared or sad, and I ask him if he noticed how that energy felt in his body.

If the child can connect to a physical sensation such as a tight/nervous stomach, heaviness in his chest, lump in the throat or tingling/hotness in hands or face, I explain that these sensations were energy vibrations.

Unless we work to release this energy, the uncomfortable feelings can stay stuck in his body. I ask him to tune into that emotion again and picture what was happening in his mind. When he is tuned in to the negative energy, he can release it from his mind and body by a simple tapping process called EFT.

I describe and show how he has *magic fingers* he can use for tapping at key energy points to release and move that energy out of his body. Then I ask if he would like to try this technique called Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) and see if he can make it work for him. Most children respond with “yes,” but hesitant children need more time to feel safe.

If the child agrees to try it, I give him several choices on how to proceed. I show him the special tapping spots and ask if he would like to tap these spots using his *magic fingers* or if he would like me or his parent to tap these spots for him. If the child seems especially hesitant, I have the parent demonstrate how they can tap away some of their own negative feelings.

The child will also have some choices about what feeling he would like to shrink first. If the child has trouble thinking of what to work on first, I either ask the parent for suggestions or quickly think up some from what I know about the child and his issues.

If the child decides not to use the EFT tapping process this time, I give her options about other techniques that may help her express or process her feelings. I also like to tell her what some other children have processed using EFT -- nightmares, fear of riding a bicycle, issues with a bully or feeling anxious about taking a test. Until the child feels safe enough to try EFT, I help her develop lots of positive ways of coping with her uncomfortable feelings.

Parents can help their child by occasionally modeling appropriate uses of EFT. If your child sees and feels your anger dissipate about being stuck in traffic, the dog's muddy feet on the couch or a burned dinner, she will be more open to trying it too. Please note, I wouldn't recommend processing negative feelings *about the child* in front of them. These issues are your own issues and need to be processed privately first.



WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO USE EFT WITH A CHILD OR TEEN?

The best time to use EFT with a child is when you are in an emotionally balanced space. You are less likely to get resistance from the child when you are calm and supportive rather than stressed and demanding.

After the child has had an introduction to the EFT method, any intense emotional issue can be an opportunity for releasing negative energy using EFT. It is a tool that can quickly help the child calm down, release his/her negative feelings and feel better. To start with, utilize EFT for the child within the privacy of the home or office. When he has had some success using it, it may be appropriate to use it more extensively.

Remember, any negative issue can be improved by tapping at key acupressure points. When a child is emotionally upset may be an excellent time to employ EFT. However, how you approach the child to engage them in using EFT is important. Be respectful of his heightened emotions, provide choices about doing the EFT, and make sure your energy is calm and accepting.

Assist him in the process only if he finds it helpful. If your child is resistant to the process, don't try to force it because it won't work. Just wait until a better time or check to see if you can do some surrogate tapping (explanation follows).

The first thing in the morning, or as part of bedtime, may be helpful times to build in an EFT routine. If your child has experienced a negative dream or nightmare, the morning may be a good time to decrease the frightening emotions. If your child is anxious or worried about anything that is coming up during the day, tapping first thing in the morning may be an excellent time to shrink that worry.

Bedtime also provides a wonderful opportunity for connecting with your child about the upsetting events of the day. What was the most challenging part of her day? What uncomfortable feelings did she have to deal with? Are there any leftover feelings that could be released right now with EFT? Daily supporting your child to find healthy ways of processing negative feelings will increase her self confidence and create resiliency for coping with life's inevitable problems.



WHAT DOES THE BASIC SETUP PHRASE FOR A CHILD LOOK LIKE?

The basic setup for children is similar to adults except everything is simplified. First, simplify the setup phrase. Children need words and concepts to express upset feelings as well as for accepting themselves. Be creative about creating phrases that acknowledge the child's feelings in the situation.

Learning to accept himself, even though he has these big feelings, is an important step toward emotional maturity. Help the child fine tune the statements so they really feel they address her feelings. "Even though I am angry with my sister, I like myself and I'm okay," is a phrase simple enough for most children to understand and use.

Another setup adaptation is to have a child gently tap the Karate Chop points of each hand against each other to help clear energetic reversals.

Having the child say the setup phrase and then take a deep breath releases energetic toxins stored at the bottom of the lungs and helps the EFT tapping work more efficiently. Most children will feel a positive energy shift in their stomach and chest area just by doing this Karate Chop setup process.

You should also simplify the rating scale. If the child is still quite young, she may not understand how to rate her problem/feeling with a number. Using your hands, demonstrate a more helpful scale. Use hands touching to mean zero and hands wide apart to mean 10. Sometimes I use numbers along with the hand scale for added clarity. That seems to work well for most children who are six or older.

Here are the steps I go through when utilizing EFT with children:

1. Think of a problem or feeling you would like to shrink. How does that make you feel?
2. Using your hands, show how big the problem is. You can also pick a number from zero to 10 to represent the size of the problem.
3. Do the Karate Chop by tapping one hand against the other in a gentle chopping motion. While tapping say the setup phrase out loud three times. “Even though I have this [whatever the problem is], I still am a super kid.” (Change the words to fit the situation/child.) Take a deep breath following each repetition of the phrase.
4. Tap at the special spots with your *magic fingers* to let go of the yucky feelings. If you like, you can say while tapping, “I am letting go of my anger” or other appropriate words.
5. For children we often use fewer tapping points. I recommend the following:
 - a. Eyebrow point
 - b. Side of eye point
 - c. Under eye point
 - d. Under nose point

- e. Chin point
 - f. Collarbone point
 - g. Under arm point
 - h. Below nipple point
6. Check to see how big the problem or feeling is now. Can you give it a number?
 7. Tap the Karate Chop point again if there are still some yucky feelings left. You might want to change the reminder phrase to say something like “Even though I still have some of this [whatever the problem or yucky feeling is], I like myself and I’m a terrific kid.” Remember to repeat it three times and to take a deep breath following each repetition.
 8. Do another round of tapping to continue releasing the blocked emotional energy.
 9. Keep tapping the Karate Chop point with the phrase, continuing until it appears the child is at a zero. Don’t forget to check if other aspects of the problem are coming up and need to be tapped on as well.
 10. Use this tapping process whenever you or your child needs to process some yucky feelings. If you make it a regular part of your child’s life, such as in the morning, after school or before going to bed, he/she will improve even faster.



WHAT KINDS OF ISSUES ARE MOST EFFECTIVE TO PROCESS WITH CHILDREN USING EFT?

Anything and everything can be issues to process with children. Notice what triggers their strongest negative feelings. It may be a conflict within the family, a bully at school, fears about trying something new or being afraid to go to sleep at night because of nightmares. The following topics contain some setup phrases to help you think about the kind of issues your child may want to process using EFT.

For feelings, end each phrase with “I like myself and I’m okay.”



Even though I am angry about [whatever it is], I like myself and I’m okay.

Even though I am scared of [whatever it is], I like myself and I’m okay.

Even though I am sad about [whatever it is], I like myself and I’m okay.

Even though I resent or am jealous of [whatever it is], I like myself and I’m okay.

For sickness or physical pain, end with “I like myself and I am still a great kid.”



Even though my tummy hurts, I like myself and I am still a great kid.

Even though I feel like I am going to throw up, I like myself and I am still a great kid.

Even though I have this pain in my [wherever it is], I like myself and I am still a great kid.

Even though I believe I am going to have an asthma attack, I like myself and I am still a great kid.

Even though I am embarrassed because I was car sick, I like myself and I am still a great kid.

Although EFT often brings a significant reduction in physical symptoms, don’t hesitate to seek appropriate medical care when needed.

For nighttime issues tap using one of these setup phrases:



Even though I am scared of the monsters in my dreams, I like myself and I’m okay.

Even though I feel scared and need to have a light on when I go to sleep, I like myself and I’m okay.

Even though I pee my bed when I go to sleep, I like myself and I’m okay.

Even though I don't feel tired and want to stay up as late as my brother or sister, I like myself and I'm okay.

Even though I am scared of what I see in my bedroom at night and don't want to sleep alone, I like myself and I'm okay.

For school issues, end with "I like myself and I'm still okay."

Even though I feel stupid and hate going to school, I like myself and I'm still okay.

Even though I am afraid of my teacher and the way she yells at kids at school, I like myself and I'm still okay.

Even though I feel anxious about taking this test, I like myself and I'm still okay.

Even though I am embarrassed about getting in trouble at school, I like myself and I'm still okay.

Even though the teacher blames me for something I didn't do, I like myself and I'm still okay.

For teasing and bullying, end with "I like myself and I am a super kid."

Even though I am scared of the mean kids at school, I like myself and I am a super kid.

Even though the neighbor boy calls me names and makes fun of me, I like myself and I am a super kid.

Even though a girl who I thought was a friend is spreading rumors behind my back, I like myself and I am a super kid.

Even though I don't feel safe at school, I like myself and I am a super kid.

For conflicts within the family, end with "I like myself and I am a super kid."

Even though I feel like everyone in the family is upset at me, I like myself and I am a super kid.

Even though I have to do chores that I don't want to do, I like myself and I am a super kid.

Even though I am lonely and no one has time to spend with me, I like myself and I am a super kid.

Even though I had a fight with [name], I like myself and I am a super kid.

Even though I am bored and have nothing to do, I like myself and I am a super kid.

For grief and loss issues use:



Even though I can't believe [person or thing] is gone, I like myself and I am a super kid.

Even though I am angry about my parents moving us to a new home, I like myself and I am a super kid.

Even though I am angry at the person who [whatever they did], I like myself and I am a super kid.

Even though I miss my [person or thing], I like myself and I am a super kid.

For self-esteem issues, end with "I like myself and I choose to see my good qualities."



Even though I feel like nobody likes me or wants to be my friend, I like myself and I choose to see my good qualities.

Even though I feel too [fat, skinny, tall, short, clumsy, shy, stupid, bored, lonely, etc.], I like myself and I choose to see my good qualities.

Even though I feel nervous about giving a speech in class, I like myself and I choose to see my good qualities.

Even though I feel different from everyone around me, I like myself and I choose to see my good qualities.

For music or sports performance, end with “I am a super terrific kid and I choose to play my best.”



Even if I am nervous about playing in the next game, I am a super terrific kid and I choose to play my best.

Even though I am worried that I may get hurt again playing the game, I am a super terrific kid and I choose to play my best.

Even though there are others who play much better than me, I am a super terrific kid and I choose to play my best.

Even though I hate to practice things that are hard for me, I am a super terrific kid and I choose to play my best.



WHAT IS MEANT BY SURROGATE TAPPING AND HOW IS IT DONE?

There are many times when children will not cooperate to use EFT for parents, teachers or a therapist. They may be energetically reversed, sense your need to have them do it or they are scared to be in touch with their unpredictable feelings. Attempting or forcing a child to do EFT is really counterproductive to helping them feel safe enough to release these troublesome feelings. Another option when children will not cooperate to do EFT is to do Surrogate Tapping.

Surrogate tapping means that, for a short period of time you take on your child's energy to help them release some of their problematic feelings. The process is quite simple, effective to carry out and often helps your child feel better. Here are the steps to carry out this process.

1. Resolve your own issues about your child and what she is dealing with using EFT.
2. Tune in to your child and his emotional issues. Silently ask his permission to do this process for him. Wait for a positive or negative internal response before continuing.
3. If the response is positive, then focus energetically on your child and say, “I am no longer [your name]. I am now [child's name].”

4. Focusing on your child's feelings, establish the level of upset and the appropriate setup phrase to start with. Begin tapping through the acupressure points using a reminder phrase if it is helpful.
5. Continue focusing on your child's feelings and tapping until it feels resolved.
6. When finished say, "I am no longer [child's name]. I am myself again."
7. If the problem is a long standing problem, you may need to repeat this process several times to make a shift in the energetic pattern. I know parents who have gone into their child's bedroom to tap nightly while their child is sleeping. They reported very positive results.



AT WHAT AGE DO YOU RECOMMEND INTRODUCING CHILDREN TO EFT? DO YOU HAVE ANY HELPFUL STRATEGIES FOR SHOWING EFT TO YOUNGER CHILDREN?

Most children who are four or five years old can pick up EFT tapping. Make sure the language you use is developmentally appropriate and that you pick a time when your child is open and receptive. One idea for introducing younger children to EFT is to show the tapping to them using a favorite doll or teddy bear.

When they're familiar with the process, they may want to tap on their doll or teddy bear's negative feelings, which will be similar to theirs. A gentle exploration of their feelings with some validation that it is okay to have those feelings is reassuring for a young child.



ARE THERE TIMES WHEN A PARENT SHOULD SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP FOR AN ISSUE WITH THEIR CHILD?

Yes, if your child/teen experiences significant trauma, such as a serious accident or sexual or physical abuse, it is advisable to seek support and help. During these times parents often have their own emotional

baggage about what has happened, which may preclude them from being there in a positive way for their child. When looking for a caring therapist to assist your child, a feeling of safety and trust is a key ingredient for the healing process.



DO YOU HAVE SOME TIPS FOR MAKING EFT MORE SUCCESSFUL FOR CHILDREN?

- Tap along with the child.
- Be creative about your approach. Keep it lighthearted and fun.
- Problems are like puzzles with many pieces. The more pieces the child and parent work on, the better they feel.
- Try it on everything! It can't hurt.
- Be persistent. The more EFT is used, the better the child feels.
- Make EFT a routine part of the day. Bedtime rituals or morning clearings are great.
- Ask children if they want to be the “Boss of their Feelings.” With EFT they can choose when they want be upset and when they want to feel better!

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Also, please see Jan Yordy's biography at the back of the book.