



An Introduction to Releasing War Trauma with EFT4Vets

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The dream...

“Veterans are the light at the tip of the candle, illuminating the way for the whole nation. If veterans can achieve awareness, transformation, understanding, and peace, they can share with the rest of society the realities of war. And they can teach us how to make peace with ourselves and each other, so we never have to use violence to resolve conflicts again”. – Thich Nhat Hanh

I have a dream...that someday warriors and their families, those who understand what war truly means, will be able to go out into the world and teach...

Introduction

When I was a child in the 1960s and '70s in Germany, World War II was still very present and a frequent guest at our dinner table, dominating the conversations without ever allowing us children to ask questions. My father had been a prisoner of war, barely surviving three years in a Russian work camp. My grandfather served in both World Wars, and my mother grew up in the extreme poverty that all refugees experienced.

I remember the many ruins that remained between newly erected homes and the field trips to concentration camps that our school organized.

As president of a non-government organization, I spent five years collecting humanitarian aid for the victims of the war in the former Yugoslavia. During frequent trips into war zones, I experienced bombardment and human suffering first hand. I always felt that if we want to help create peace, we have to help those heal who are involved in war, who are fighting war. Warriors don't sent themselves on their mission, they are asked and ordered to fight by their governments, which are elected by the people. When they come back, we have to help them heal.



EFT4Vets: An introduction to releasing war trauma

Unless the trauma of war is released, people will always continue to be afraid of each other and send more warriors to fight for their fears.

That is the story I share with the veterans who come to me, hoping but doubting that EFT can help heal their insomnia, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and flashbacks.

I encourage them to ask any questions they have about the person they are about to go back into war with. If a warrior doesn't trust me, there is no point in getting started with our healing work. Trust in the integrity of the practitioner is of the essence.

A flashback feels no different from being back in the war zone. Talking about traumatic events always holds the risk of bringing war experiences back up. The warrior needs to be certain that I am reliable and will do whatever I can to get him or her out of this trauma, even if it means going the extra mile that standard treatment hasn't foreseen.

When teaching other healing practitioners how to help veterans using EFT, I share with them that in war warriors never go alone into a danger zone. They are advised to always go with at least one buddy, better in groups. This allows them to show up as a force, and they trust each other with their lives. The bond that is formed between warriors is stronger than anything most civilians ever experience. It can even exceed the bond that returning warriors feel toward their families. Naturally, this can cause great conflict at home.

The death of a brother in war is traumatic beyond belief. This trauma often follows surviving veterans for the rest of their lives. It haunts them in their dreams, shows up unannounced during the day as flashbacks, and changes everything. The grief and guilt never leave. Talking about this with fellow veterans can bring comfort and acceptance, but it never heals.



As practitioners, it helps to understand that when we are accepted to help, we become a buddy for the warriors. We are the ones they have to rely on to keep them safe and get them out of danger. Explaining why they are suffering usually does not take the symptoms away. Talking about what happened often increases acceptance, but it doesn't decrease the pain. As EFT practitioners, we can help in a profoundly different way.

I have seen that the specifics of war trauma can require healing practitioners to be more flexible in their approach, to accommodate the special needs of veterans. It might be that scheduling longer or more frequent sessions in the beginning helps the client feel safe, as can the skillful reframing of past events in positive rather than negative terms, and creative use of the Choices technique. I am at the beginning of a study to find out what works and how to find new paradigms for sessions that support warriors with severe trauma.

Creating Rapport

One powerful way to gain rapport with veterans is by sharing our own story, which explains why it is so important for us to do this work. All practitioners have reasons for wanting to help veterans heal, and I believe that as preparation for this work, it makes sense to do some soul searching.

Not everybody grew up with a military background or is married to a warrior. But I have heard people say that visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C., reading a spouse's blog on the Internet, or seeing a news report about a person in their community who was changed through the experience of war made it clear for them that they wanted to help. Each story is similarly relevant, as it comes from the heart and resonates with the passion to help and heal. Once we can explain to ourselves why we want to help, we can communicate it to warriors. It is important to them to know who we are before we can ask them to go back into a war zone in their minds and take us with them.



Trauma rewrites our beliefs about life, safety, self-worth, and peace. After tapping on their trauma, veterans often tell me that they feel comfortable socializing now. Crowds are not threatening to them anymore. One of my Vietnam vets emailed me that he had just signed up for dancing lessons with his granddaughter, and he was laughing in disbelief about how much he had changed.

Another was haunted by the memory of almost losing his life in a completely meaningless situation. He was alone in an office building that came under massive attack. It was an empty building, so he didn't have orders to protect it. There was nothing for him to do but hide in a corner and wait to die while mortars flew around him. He realized that he could lose his life at any moment for reasons that had nothing to do with an important cause. He created the belief that he was a coward for curling up and crying. This experience changed his life at the core.

While gently tapping on the incident's different aspects, he released this belief along with his feelings of anger, betrayal, and never being safe. He just relaxed about it, realizing that this happened only once in his life, a very long time ago, and it would be appropriate and fitting to move on now without the fear and self-judgment.

PTSD and the soul

The veterans and family members I have worked with feel that PTSD is not a mental illness but rather a symptom of the soul. They describe losing their soul, something breaking inside, or a disconnect from the world and from their own true selves. The soul seems to be gone, broken away at the moment of terror, when survival of the self was a moment's decision that often caused harm and pain to others. After this break happened, things were never the same again.



It is easy to talk to warriors about their soul, asking, “When was the last time you felt connected? What happened before you felt your soul was leaving?” All of the severely traumatized warriors I have worked with had a surprisingly clear answer to that question, and it is usually one of the core issues we will work with. They know that something is missing in them that they can’t access anymore. They don’t know how to get back to who they were, and they feel lost and hopeless.

During times of war, they protected their soul for as long as they could and have since been suffering from their inability to reconnect. The same thing can happen when warriors come back home and realize that they are not respected and accepted by society, or they begin to doubt the righteousness of what their own role in war was. When warriors feel that something they saw, endured or did cannot be forgiven, when they have great, ethical doubt about what happened during or after deployment, symptoms of PTSD often begin to show.

Getting used to this state of being is hard, and often comes at a high cost:

Relationships outside of the veterans’ community become complicated and are often undesirable. Families break apart. Job relationships can’t be maintained. The veterans tumble through life, not knowing how to rest, not finding peace in anything they do. What used to be enjoyable has lost its meaning and there seems to be no hope that this will ever change. Nightmares and intrusive thoughts, hyper-vigilance, anger, and fear of connecting with and confronting others are all symptoms of a disconnect from the soul. Life has become a meaningless struggle for many of these men and women in ways that people in the outside world might not recognize or understand. When we can’t feel our soul in anything, nothing has meaning anymore.

When the time is right, I have used EFT with veterans on calling their soul back.

Witnessing the reconnection is an honor and a privilege.



Preparations

Clearing our own blocks to doing this work

When taking a moment to become clear about why we are doing what we are doing, we might realize that we have beliefs and thought patterns about veterans that could be released. Some veterans have told me that they are hurt when they feel that people perceive them as being “messed up.” They don’t like to be defined by PTSD, and don’t want to be an interesting case study. For the warriors, this work is very personal, and they want to be taken seriously. Their experiences often don’t allow them to believe and accept that anybody truly can and wants to help, and the fear of having to trust somebody and then be let down can be overwhelming.

PTSD is a symptom of the soul after horrific trauma, and offering healing techniques, no matter how powerful and effective, can at first feel inappropriate, even disrespectful, from the warrior’s perspective. There can also be a sense of not deserving help or forgiveness. I have experienced many times that a warrior who was suffering from many symptoms insisted that I should work with someone who was more in need.

I have heard warriors say that anyone who suggests that healing is possible simply doesn’t understand what he or she is talking about. This mindset, a self-protection mechanism, might be the first hurdle we have to take if we want to help a veteran heal. It often takes time and commitment to assist a warrior in making that first step, and it is worth the wait.



Finding forgiveness

I often find that warriors give me only a part of the story, the part that has created the way they feel or believe. But there is usually more to it than the warrior realizes or finds important enough to mention. Using EFT on the context in which the situation happened, often allows for the warrior to open up to giving and receiving forgiveness and peace in ways that didn't seem possible before.

Whenever veterans have the courage and trust to bring up traumatic events that they blame themselves for, I notice the discrepancy between the civilians they were and the warriors they became. I often hear, "I don't know what happened. I can't believe what I did in war. This is not me. I was never like that growing up." This is a very big conflict, and many veterans are scared of themselves at the core and believe that they don't deserve forgiveness.

They went through a transformation from civilian to warrior to warrior, and each of these roles has different rules. Back home, warriors often struggle with the rules of the civilian world, and they can't come to terms with what war did to them and what they did in war. They are often unprepared for coming home. Many of the nightmares and intrusive thoughts that we work with involve these traumatic events that have haunted the warriors ever since, even in their sleep.

So where can we go with this?

When helping a veteran heal, I don't look for excuses for what happened. It is important to not change the facts or minimize them, as this would be inappropriate and disrespectful to the situation. But I find it important to see the facts in context. There are reasons for why things happened, reasons that veterans who suffer from guilt and safe-blame often don't see or acknowledge. Together, we explore the difference between finding an excuse and finding the reason for what happened.



One of my vets blamed himself for being the leader of an outing that turned very violent. After almost 40 years, he still couldn't find peace with it. There is no excuse for going out and hurting people, and trying to find one would be unfair to the victims. But there was a reason: His unit had been under huge pressure for many, many days. They were on food rationing and had all lost 40 pounds or more. They were fed up because they had constantly been tortured by war and thoughts of the people they had lost. They couldn't take it anymore, got drunk, and started a fight.

Even though there is no excuse or justification for what happened and what they did, there is a place from which someone can ask for and receive forgiveness. Tapping on that with a warrior can change everything for him.

By healing their guilt about what happened, not through excuses, but through forgiveness, many warriors now feel free to see lessons of war and peace that they can teach to others. What better teachers could we have?

Getting started.

Since I don't want new clients to get unnecessarily upset, I try not to ask too many war-related questions before I introduce EFT. Instead, we tap a few rounds on general issues, which helps the person relax. It is usually easier to explain EFT after the client has tried it and seen results.

When appropriate, I do, however, ask what the person's goals are for the session and how he or she would like to feel. At peace? OK? Relaxed? Many veterans have never asked themselves this question, as the emotional load of their trauma didn't allow them to even consider getting well and having a good life. Tapping on the positive helps establish a sense of healing and acceptance, even if we have a way to go to get there.



Because veterans are often apprehensive when they encounter EFT for the first time, I use Setups that are as universal as they are meaningful for the individual involved. They are general enough to be easily adapted for anyone who suffers from trauma.

Naturally, all of these tapping statements can only be suggestions, as there are many ways of doing EFT successfully. I am not claiming that these words, repeated one by one, will always bring profound results. More than giving solutions to specific issues that might come up, it is my intention to help the practitioner and client resonate with them from the heart, the center of healing, and find their own way of phrasing that works for both of them. When speaking out loud, with an open mind and an open heart, we can find and unfold our own potential and the most powerful statements naturally come up perfectly.

Feeling overwhelmed

I like to start with a round of tapping on feeling overwhelmed, as this is usually appropriate and shows respect for the client and his or her emotions. It can also help to take the edge off in a safe and comfortable way and set the stage for more tapping.

Even though I feel very overwhelmed right now, I allow myself to be surprisingly okay with that.

This set up statement usually startles people, as it feels appropriate. They usually feel more relaxed, less apprehensive, and often even experience physical relief – and we were not specific, and it didn't hurt.

The word “surprisingly” opens us up to receiving new solutions and new feelings, even if we are not aware of them yet. Being open to positive surprises can fill us with expectations and curiosity, allowing us to consider new ways of dealing with our past, ways that we didn't even know were possible before.



Being in control

After the first round of tapping, most people already sense changes. They feel more relaxed, tightness in their body might be gone, or a specific feeling or issue might come up.

They also realize that they were in control during the tapping, and if something doesn't work for them, they are encouraged to change it. This experience usually increases their trust and willingness to work together with the practitioner.

Feeling misunderstood

Another statement that I use a lot is:

Even though I have been through more than you will ever understand, I choose to be surprisingly at peace with that

Any way of phrasing this basic statement is appropriate, such as:

Even though I have been through more than anyone knows or can understand, I choose to be surprisingly OK with that

After each round of tapping, in which I encourage the client to change any phrasing so it works better, the result can be greater trust and more relaxation. The client now sees that he or she is in control. With each round of EFT, I fill in the explanations and information the warrior needs to understand how and why we are so successful releasing trauma in a gentle, fast and non-traumatizing way.

Here are some more situations and beliefs that often have to be dealt with before we can begin to work on specific traumatic memories.



Resistance to EFT

Even though I don't want to make a fool of myself by tapping on my head and body, I choose to allow myself to relax about it.

Even though I could quite easily get very emotional here and I don't want that, I choose to feel surprisingly safe and in control.

Even though I don't know yet if this is going to work out, I realize that I can be open and at ease with this either way.

Even though I don't feel safe enough to even consider that I can heal, and I don't feel that healing is possible for me, I choose to take it one step at a time and appreciate my courage to never give up.

Resistance to healing

Some veterans believe that no therapy can be successful unless the practitioner has experience with the realities of war. While it is true that many EFT practitioners who are offering help have not been in combat, I found a way to tap on this that often works very well anyway: It is the simple phrase, "In a way that works for me". These words, added to the end of the Setup, allow the warrior to find his or her own way and resonate with what seems fitting, even without sharing it with the practitioner. The power and effectiveness of the Setup statements often increase dramatically.

Here are some examples:

Even though I have been through more than anybody will ever understand, I choose to allow myself to heal in a way that works for me.

Even though I am overwhelmed by all that I have been through, and the mere thought of it is scary, I choose to feel confident that I can take it one step at a time, in a way that works for me.



If the veteran feels angry about the offer to help, which can be a side effect of PTSD, trust issues, or not completely establishing rapport, but wants to give it just one shot:

Even though I resent the thought of even considering peace, healing or forgiveness, and only veterans can understand why I am saying this and you just don't know what you are talking about, I allow myself to feel respected for all that I have been through, and I consider the possibility that I can find and accept healing in a way that works for me.

Other positive endings

Even though

...I allow myself to consider the possibility that I can feel safe enough to relax about it

...I consider being as relaxed as I was when I was when I was 15.

...I choose to find it surprisingly appropriate to find peace anyway.

A longer, more carefully “testing the waters” version could be:

...I allow myself to consider that there is a way that allows me to be at peace with this in a way that works for me and everybody else involved.

And finally:

...I choose to claim my power back in a way that feels safe and appropriate



The importance of language

When a veteran decides to trust enough to give EFT a chance, I am careful to let him or her set the tone and choose the words we use, so that we speak as much as possible in the person's own language.

Words have meaning and power, and being specific and on target can make all the difference in a successful session.

Very often, this leads to using quite a bit of really strong language. While this is not everybody's thing, we have to be authentic to be successful, and using strong language, calling it what it is, can be very powerful for the purpose of being specific.

In the military, warriors are exposed to very minimal language. They use a short and straightforward style that the warriors adapt to. This no-frills use of language can make it hard to emotionally connect with things that happen. However, strong language can be an outlet that allows for otherwise suppressed feelings to be expressed. It is astounding to see in how many different ways the F-word can be used – as a verb, noun, adjective, adverb, and exclamation. For the purpose of being specific, it might be appropriate for the practitioner to chime right in. Of course, the authenticity of the practitioner remains essential above all. If someone has great resistance to using language this way, those words won't come across as authentic. In that case, it's probably better to do what works for the practitioner. For me personally, since I grew up in Germany, I don't have any "writings on my wall" about American slang, as it was not part of my upbringing.



Common issues and feelings and “the wall”

In my experience, veterans often don't like to talk and bring up memories that we could work on. They have a wall around themselves that keeps them safe and required huge effort to build. As an EFT practitioner, I find it important to recognize and accept the wall for as long as the warrior needs it, as it gives a feeling of control and safety. At the same time, there are feelings and mindsets that many warriors share. Those may include:

Feelings of being overwhelmed, misunderstood, or cheated.

Life isn't fair.

I am angry all the time.

My life is like never waking up from a bad dream

People see me as a monster.

I feel like a failure.

I'm not able to keep my family or others safe.

I am not safe for others to be around.

My marriage is in trouble.

My buddy got killed and I couldn't help him.

My physical health is deteriorating.

I have pain where there shouldn't be pain.

I am injured and they told me that I will never recover.

I hate authority.

I am always on guard and never feel safe.

I don't trust anyone.

I suffer from insomnia.

I have intrusive thoughts.

And the list goes on. If it is safe and appropriate, it can be very healing to ask for a specific event that caused any of these feelings, beliefs or physical symptoms, and let the warrior choose which one he wants to tap on.

Here are some examples:



Betrayal

Most of the veterans I have worked with felt betrayed in many ways. This can be a good starting point, as it can be linked to anger, resentment, frustration, and trust issues, and it might contain specific events that can be released with EFT.

Before getting to specific events, or if a warrior doesn't want to share what happened, I find the following Setups useful:

Even though I am mad as hell that they betrayed me, I choose to feel surprisingly at peace with that.

Even if they betrayed me and it's not fair, I allow myself to live my life in a powerful and positive way, that truly works for me.

Even though my body and mind are not the same any more, I feel very betrayed, I allow myself to claim my power back and heal in surprising ways.

Even though you betrayed me and I am deeply hurt, I allow you and me to take the time we need to heal from what happened to us, in a way that truly works for us.

Naturally, these short statements won't change everything, but they can open doors that allow veterans to work through specific feelings and memories that need to be resolved. They are a start. It is also useful to add the specific feelings such as anger, resentment, etc, that the betrayal has caused.



Guilt and the passage of time

In war, it is often hard to find anything positive in all the horror that happened. Doing so would at the very least feel inappropriate, and unacceptable to the veteran as much as to the practitioner. There is nothing good about a dear person dying or almost getting killed while hanging from a parachute. At the same time, the vet has probably struggled with this for a long time and is looking at the practitioner with hope and despair. Tapping on negative or problem statements might not be enough, as it doesn't give a perspective into the future. In this case, I find it helpful to bring up how much time has passed since the event occurred. Going back and forth between the traumatic past, the possible future outcome, and the reality that the person has been safe for many years, even though it might not have felt this way, can be an eye-opener that allows for the veteran to finally feel safe in the here and now.

The Setup can include the time that has elapsed since the traumatic event, which might be 40 years ago, last year, last month, or even yesterday, but clearly not now. Depending on the client, I might prefer to start more generally by suggesting phrases like “what I experienced,” “what I did,” or “what I suffered,” as they carry meaning for the warrior without having to tune in and share specifics before the person is ready to do so. Then we turn to the realization that NOW, after all this time, the trauma still feels real, even though it is truly in the past. For example:

Even though I have never felt safe since I returned from Vietnam, I choose to open up to the possibility that I have been safe for 40 years now, whether I felt it or not.

Even though I keep reliving these events, I realize now that after all this time it is okay to heal from what happened long ago



Even though this happened a long time ago, it feels like yesterday, and I am still dreaming about it as if it just happened, and my life was more difficult than what I ever thought I could survive, I allow myself to realize that I made it anyway. I must be a survivor/I must have it in me.

Even though, 40 years ago, I went through more, saw more, and did more than anybody will ever understand, I choose to already allow myself to feel the peace that I will have once we are done tapping.

Even though I have been hurt in the past, I allow myself to realize that what this happened a long time ago, and I can feel safe to consider releasing it [to let it go/that I won't get hurt again even if I find peace with it] after all this time.

Guilt

As said before, I find it important to be honest and not find excuses for the things that happened.

In my experience, when a veteran has suffered for so long from guilt, shame and self blame, an excuse, no matter how well intentioned, will be hard to accept. It may even increase the person's negative self-talk, that what happened was so bad that there is indeed no way to ever receive forgiveness unless we make something up. Instead, It can help to listen calmly and respectfully for the warrior's version of the situation. Tapping on each component of it, using the Movie Technique and Tearless Trauma Technique, can release excess feelings about what happened. I often see that there was more to the story that what the warrior remembered or found important, and in those details we often find the true reason for what happened and why.



War has rules and a life of its own. Once a warrior becomes a part of war, he may be exposed to situations that force him to make decisions that he later regrets.

Here are some setups that might help bring relief:

Even though war sucks, and so did my role in it, I can't believe what it made me do, and I feel guilty and responsible for the things that happened, I choose to allow myself to find peace with that in an appropriate way that truly works for me, the victims, and everybody else involved.

Even though it hurts to see what war has made of me and my dreams and values, and I feel ashamed about the whole thing, I choose to allow myself to find peace and forgiveness in surprising and appropriate ways.

Even though I wish this had never happened, and I can't forgive myself for what I have done, I choose to allow myself to heal from what war has made of me and find a better way to honor and support those who had to suffer through what happened.

Even though I can't imagine my life will ever be what it was before I left, I choose to open up to the possibility that there are ways to live a powerful, meaningful life in a way that truly works for me and those I care for.



Finding meaning

Many vets feel that they have a lesson to teach but suffer too much or don't feel comfortable enough to share their story or even consider being heard. Opening up that possibility can help them find power in their past:

Even though I believe that the guilt that I have felt for all these years will never be enough to make up for what happened or for what I did, I open up to the possibility that there might be a more powerful way of taking responsibility for what happened and transforming it into a powerful lesson of peace.

Even though I am sorry for what I did, and I could never express it, I allow myself now to realize that my plea for forgiveness might be heard, even by myself.

Then we do a round of tapping using Reminder Phrases like "I'm sorry for what happened" and, "I ask for forgiveness and I allow myself to receive it."

Grieving and survivors guilt

Since veterans have often developed powerful bonds with their fellow warriors, their brothers in war, if one of them dies, the grief and survivors guilt can be so overwhelming that they may never get over it. They often make an inner vow to honor their fallen brother's or sister's memory forever with their grief.

The challenge for the practitioner is to help the warrior find a better way to handle the grief. EFT's Tearless Trauma Technique, Movie Technique, and strategies for sneaking up on the problem are essential for this work. I'd like to suggest some Setups that can take this a bit further. Please be aware that mentioning the word "brother" or "grieving my brother" can bring up huge emotions that the warrior might not be prepared for. It can be either healing or re-traumatizing, and excellent rapport and trust are essential to start the healing process.



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I am very careful with the use of “brother” or “sister” when referring to fellow warriors, unless the veteran brings it up himself or herself.

Intuitive tapping can sometimes start a dialogue between the diseased person and the survivor that can be very healing. Here is a suggestion. It might help to read this out aloud.

KC (Karate Chop) or SS (Sore Spot) – Even though, on a very deep level, I might have decided or [made a vow that I will can or should never let go of this grief and guilt, I choose to allow myself to heal in an appropriate way that truly honors what happened and what it meant to me and to everyone involved.

Even though I can't even imagine ever letting go of this grief, I choose to open up to the possibility that I can find new ways of honoring my brother and all that he and his death stood for, in a powerful and meaningful ways.

Even though I suffer from all that happened, all that I did [didn't] do back then, I allow myself, now, 40 years later, to find peace in a surprisingly appropriate way.

TH (Top of Head) – I am still overwhelmed with grief over what happened

EB (Eye Brow) – Nobody will ever understand

SE (Side of Eye) – I will never get over this

UE (Under Eye) – My way of honoring him [her/what happened]

and all that he [she/it] meant to me [and others]

UN (Under Nose) – I am overwhelmed with grief

Ch (Chin) – My way of honoring him

CB (Collar Bone) – I will never forget

UA (Under Arm) – And I will never forgive myself or anyone else involved

TH – Even if it costs me!



EB – I could allow myself to wonder why that would be a good thing

SE – I could wonder who would benefit from me feeling this way

UE – And I could wonder, if I was on the other side

UN – And I looked at my brother who made it home

Ch – If I wouldn't like to call on him and say

CB – Hey, brother, it's okay now

UA – I am all right now

TH – I am at peace here

EB – You being sad doesn't serve me

SE – It hurts me to see you in such grief

UE – I wonder if I was on the other side

UN – If I wouldn't like to say, Relax!

Ch – You have your whole life to live and I'm glad for you

CB – Please let go of this need to grieve

UA – You did the best you could and it was not your fault

TH – Maybe you can now do something wonderful and powerful with your life or with our experience or all that we learned and know.

EB – Maybe you can find meaning in helping those who feel like you

SE – You can give yourself permission to move on without grief

UE – I am not upset, and you are not letting me down

UN – I am glad and proud that you decided to claim your power back

Ch – And I know that if you were here and I was still living

CB – You would tell me just the same

UA – I love you brother, and I am proud and happy for you. Thank you for your loyalty.

TH – But you are needed out there, and it is OK to find peace.

EB – I choose to accept myself and all that I have learned

SE – I am grateful now that I can see a mission in life

UE – And I choose to do amazingly powerful things with it



UN – Thank you, [name of grieving warrior], for your willingness to sacrifice your life and happiness for the memory of your brother

Ch – I allow myself now to find an even more appropriate way to

honor you

CB – In a way that allows me to find peace

UA – Peace to you, and peace to me

TH – Thank You!

Childhood

Veterans have childhood issues, just like everybody else. Addressing those with EFT can be a very important part of the healing, as they set the foundation for beliefs about self and the safety of their surroundings. So, even when a veteran has war-related trauma, I always ask if there were specific, traumatic events in childhood. The power that we set free by releasing those can often speed up the healing process.



The outside world

Returning home is often not as easy as expected. Friends and family have moved on with their lives, and after a long deployment, things have often changed in subtle ways that are very disturbing and difficult to understand.

While overseas, certain things were accepted, and certain rules were enforced that don't exist in the outside world. Many warriors have great conflicts with this, and they pull back from their lives and families. They separate themselves, trusting and communicating only with other veterans, and they don't talk about their experiences while deployed.

Even though I am overwhelmed by how different things are from what I expected them to be, I choose to allow myself to find a way back into my life one step at a time, in a way that truly works for me.

Even though I feel lonely and misunderstood by most people, I choose to allow myself the realization that the outside world is not as dangerous as the war zone was.



Finding core issues

After taking the time we need to gain rapport and trust, I ask, “If there was something that you feel cannot be forgiven, could you come up with something?” This question might lead us to a fundamental core issue that the warrior might or might not be ready to release.

I am always surprised at how precise and specific the answers can be.

Being very comfortable using the gentle EFT techniques will make all the difference in how a warrior experiences the release of his or her past.

It might take a bit of tapping to take the edge off first. If possible, I like to tap on the story in tiny increments. This allows me to keep my client safe, and the veteran has control over what we are working on, without fearing that we are addressing the “big one” before its time has come. Even though this might take a while, releasing a lifelong traumatic event in an hour or less is a wonderful healing experience.



Calling the soul back

At some point, it makes sense to address the separation of the soul. In my experience, warriors have a very powerful, often unspoken way of relating to their souls. Some say that PTSD happens when the soul separates from the body. When I work with a warrior, I gently throw in a question like, “If there had been a time when you felt like something broke inside, as if your soul had disappeared, when would that be? Can you come up with something?” Depending on the person’s religious background and feelings about the word “soul,” I encourage him or her to substitute other words as needed so that the following Setups feel comfortable and authentic.

Even though I remember how lost I felt when I was pushed beyond the breaking point over and over again, I allow myself to realize that this was a long time ago, and I can truly feel safe and protected now.

After tapping on the above Setup, I ask whether this statement is true, and they usually confirm it. This is when I begin to introduce Setups like the following:

Even though I felt like my soul had left me and my life was never going to be the same again, I allow myself now to consider the possibility that my soul might not have left but rather moved itself to a safe place where it has been waiting for me to get ready for its return.

Even though after all that happened, I never felt safe enough to call my soul back, and I didn’t even know if I deserved it, I choose to consider the possibility that I have been safe for a long time and I might as well enjoy it in a way that works for me. The Sequence is then tapped on the fragments of the above statements, that the person resonated with the most.



The specific event or events that brought the warrior beyond the breaking point usually need to be cleaned out. I use the gentle techniques for that. Some of these events may have occurred in pre-military times or even in childhood. I simply honor everything that the warrior brings up and tap on it until the issue is resolved. Then we can call the soul back:

KC (Karate Chop) or SS (Sore Spot) – Even though I never thought that my soul could come back to me, I choose to feel safe enough to consider that my soul has been waiting for me to call it back.

Even though I felt so out of control when I realized that something was broken and it left me devastated, I allow myself to heal in surprising ways.

Even though I didn't believe that there was any way out of this trouble and pain, I choose to see that if there is a way in, there is a way out.

TH (Top of Head) – I choose to realize that my soul might be in a safe place

EB (Eye Brow) – I allow myself to heal

OE (Outside Eye) – I can call my soul back now

UE (Under Eye) – As I am ready and prepared for it's return

UN (Under Nose) – I am already enjoying the feeling of being connected and whole

Ch (Chin) – I am my soul, so there is nothing to disconnect

CB (Collar Bone) – I love how comfortable and safe that feels

UA (Under Arm) – I choose to do wonderful things with the lessons I have learned

TH – I choose to find meaning and purpose for myself and others

EB – That allows us to heal now

OE – I am asking my soul to come back to me

UE – While I realize that we were never separated

UN – Even though it felt that way

Ch – I am allowing myself to realize that I have been safe for a long time



EFT4Vets: An introduction to releasing war trauma

*CB – I am amazed at how obvious that has always been
UA – Even though I didn't see it*

TH – I am calling my soul back to me with love and appreciation

EB – I am ready and I have deserved it for a long time

OE – I choose to find peace in surprising ways

UE – In an appropriate way that truly works for me

UN – I allow myself to release my fear now

*CB – And I am deeply grateful that I have the power to choose
to reconnect*

UA – I already enjoy how the loneliness is leaving me

TH – I welcome my soul back with gratitude



EFT4Vets Stories

Since participating in Gary Craig's veterans PTSD study in San Francisco in March 2008, I have been working with many veterans, mostly by phone, and documenting their progress with the same standardized tests used in the study. Here are some recent examples.

The "PCL-M" is the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder form – Military, a standardized form with 17 questions to measure the intensity of Combat stress. A score above 50 is considered an indicator of PTSD.

"Don", Vietnam Veteran

"Don" is 61 and has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. We worked together for a total of six treatment hours.

In our first session he said his thoughts were like bumper cars, bouncing all over, but the tapping helped him relax and release the tension in his mind. It also stopped the tremors and shaking that are a symptom of Parkinson's Disease. In our second session he worked through the traumatic memory of having shot someone's arm off two weeks before he returned home from Vietnam. The third session dealt with a very traumatic event – his best friend, who was walking in Don's place, had been shot and Don couldn't rescue him. Next, Don had a dream relating to the death of his father, who killed himself while driving drunk, so we worked through his childhood trauma.

In our fifth tapping session, Don talked a lot about the improvements in his sleep and overall well-being, then we tapped for the stress and feelings of lack of control resulting from the construction of his new home and people not doing what they were supposed to do. No more war memories came up for him! Reviewing his progress two weeks later, Don said, "I still think about Vietnam but it doesn't seem to bother me."



In our last session, another war memory came up where he had to identify dead bodies days after they had been killed. After tapping on all the aspects of what he saw and realized, he stated that now the bad spirits are gone. He had felt as if these dead men had always been with him, and now he reported that a huge weight is lifted of him, and he can breathe and think clearly.

His voice has a very different sound now. It is clearer, lighter, and faster. There is less roughness and he laughs more. It is truly nice to hear the hope and confidence in his voice. His sleep has improved from getting four or five hours per night in a ten-hour time period, interrupted by an average of two nightmares, to getting an average of seven or eight hours with no nightmares.

Between the first session and his 60-day follow up, his PCL-M dropped from 65 to 34 and remained there for the following two months. He continues to tap on his Parkinson's symptoms to keep the shaking under control.



“Joanne” Coast Guard Veteran with MST

That same week I worked with “Joanna,” a non-combat veteran with severe PTSD who has been on disability since 1993. In addition to her PTSD, Joanna suffered from severe MST (Military Sexual Trauma) and childhood sexual trauma.

When Joanna agreed to try EFT, she did so out of a sense of desperation. As she explained, “I had already tried group counseling; PTSD awareness training; Veterans Administration individual counseling for many years; Transcendental Meditation; metaphysical training (including candle magic, crystal and gemstone magic, and numerology); herbal remedies; Vial Handwriting by Vial Rogers; astrology; Native American healing beliefs; prescribed pharmaceuticals; Western medicine; chiropractic care; New Age healing techniques such as pendulum dousing and chakra cleansing; University of New Mexico PTSD Sleep Study and Nightmare Reduction; Veteran’s Administration Group therapy many times; nutritional education; self-help books; and most any suggestion by any health care worker.

“I still couldn’t fall asleep. I couldn’t remain asleep without waking up repeatedly during the night. And I was plagued by repeated traumatic nightmares every night. Sleep was my enemy and I fought it every night, waking up exhausted and tired. I obsessed about sleep because I was always in sleep deficit. I would get very distressed if I stayed up late, yet couldn’t seem to go to bed until late because I dreaded the nightmares. I wouldn’t take naps during the day because it would make getting to sleep more difficult at night. The things that I tried helped very little.

“I gave EFT a chance and I was thrilled with the results. Within two sessions, I felt myself release all the associated trauma, emotions, and obsessions that interfered with my sleep. Sleep became an easy and gentle activity free from worry and fretting. No longer am I afraid of going to sleep or of even how much sleep I receive. Today I let my body tell me when to sleep instead of rigorously following a clock. Sleep today is a joy that refreshes my body and rejuvenates my soul. I wake up earlier than I used to and I need less sleep than before.



Sometimes the associated old beliefs about sleep come up but now I utilize EFT to release them. Quick. Easy. Gentle. No more nightmares. No more fighting sleep.”

In her one year follow up, Joanna’s PCL-M score had continued to improve. She has a daily tapping routine and shares EFT with her fellow Veterans and friends.

“Jack”, OIF

This next veteran, “Jack,” is a 43-year-old who served in Iraq and is also a fire fighter and ambulance driver. He frequently witnesses horrific events. Jack’s sessions were different because we worked in person instead of exclusively over the phone. Also, he very much wanted his wife to participate in some of the sessions. First, we did three hours of couples counseling. Then Jack and I had a 2½ -hour single session and a 40-minute phone session.

The last session was again with both of them in person.

Before the first EFT session, Jack’s PCL-M score was 72. Twelve days after his introduction to EFT, his PCL-M score was 44. These are impressive results by any criteria. 75 days after his first introduction to EFT, Jack’s PCL-M score is now 38.

“Jack’s” wife had similar improvements.

“Michael”, Vietnam Veteran

“Michael” suffered from shaking hands, depression, lots of stress at home, and many issues stemming from childhood as well as being deployed in Vietnam and Iraq multiple times. In six sessions, he could release some of his traumatic memories with EFT.

Michael’s PCL-M score fell from 59 points to 39. He has spread the word to his support group and counselor.



Conclusion

It is exciting and an honor to be a part of this work. And we still have a lot to learn. While we now have a lot more [published research](#), which demonstrates the effectiveness of EFT with war trauma, we have our challenges cut out for us when it comes to creating rapport. If we want to be effective with EFT, we have to understand military culture. We have to find ways to present EFT in ways that are acceptable for the guys as well as for the chain of command. We have to continue to prove what we claim, bring more research and reach out in whichever way we can.

EFT works. Now we have to put it to work in a way that is appropriate, respectful and comfortable for Veterans and active duty personnel alike. We will have to change our “bridge building”, metaphors we use and the wording we suggest. A lot has been done and learned in the recent months and years, and a profound life EFT4Vets training has been created as a result. Videos, audios and more e-books are in preparation to support practitioners and lay people who want to help Veterans and their families heal.

Please visit our blog on www.eftforvets.com and continue to read the EFT4Vets newsletter for updates!

With Gratitude

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