

Immediate Symptom Relief: Thought Field Therapy™ in Trauma Work

by Robert L Bray, Ph.D., LCSW

A woman, age 42, comes to me for help. She has a history of severe childhood abuse by an alcoholic father; regular beatings from the beginning of her memory, sexual abuse several times a week remembered from age four through age 13, and all the emotional battering that goes with being taught you get what you deserve. Her history also includes being the victim of a drunk driver crash at age 15. She watched her best friend and three small children die. Because of severe chemical burns and multiple fractures throughout her body, she has had a lifetime of surgeries, recovery, and rehabilitation.

Today she is clean and sober for three years and coming to grips with her life. And she wants help with the repeating patterns of flashbacks, hyper arousal, disturbed sleep, and depression as she fights her habit of retreating into an isolated and fearful life.

Most therapists who specialize in trauma recovery have had the experience of working with this client. I have more than 25 years in the mental health field. As a Certified Trauma Specialist I am familiar with the best and most used treatment approaches including exposure, spiritual, cognitive, and EMDR. I know the limits of relief that a client can achieve using these techniques, and the time it takes.

I worked with this woman for about six months using the best tools available, primarily EMDR and behavioral modification. She had some improvement in her ability to manage her emotions and responses to the triggers in life. As the anniversary of the crash approached, the frequency and insensitivity of her symptoms increase. Her pain and suffering were overwhelming for her most of the time and at times for me.

At this point in her treatment I was trained in Thought Field Therapy. In a matter of a few sessions there was a dramatic change in her and her level of suffering. One of her more powerful triggers was the sound of a siren. Often in my office I had seen the effects of this sound as a fire truck or ambulance passed. In a matter of a few minutes this trigger was eliminated and her other anniversary symptoms were reduced. By tapping on herself at treatment points on specific meridians in a specific sequence she was able to reduce the emotional upset associated with the thoughts of the events to nothing.

She recognized this change and commented in amazement after she watched herself remain calm as the next fire truck drove by. And she still reports no response to the sound and is greatly improved in all aspects of this traumatic incident. She has been able to deal with the emotional disturbances from the other traumas in her life in the same way.

The tapping pattern differs for varying disturbances. She is still working with other traumas as they surface but most of the efforts in therapy today are on developing her self-esteem and working through problems of her life that come with getting started at age 42.

Too good to be true was my first reaction to TFT. However; the proof of the value of this approach is apparent within minutes to both the therapist and the client.

Thought Field Therapy™ (TFT) developed by Dr. Roger J. Callahan is a revolutionary approach to rapid and lasting resolution of psychological/emotional disturbances. TFT in minutes helps end the suffering from trauma symptoms, grief, phobias, anger, rage, guilt, depression, obsession, anxiety, addictive urges, and more.

When a person thinks about or is exposed to a situation (event, person, or context) the energy fields are aligned in a particular pattern. For some individuals when tuned to certain thoughts energy patterns result in psychological disturbances (pain, upset, anxiety, terror). Using precise diagnostic tools and procedures, the problem meridians and disturbances can be corrected. By tapping on the various points on the meridians in specific sequences the patterns are changed and the discomfort is removed.

The procedures themselves take only a few minutes and because the work is with the energy system the responses are immediately experienced. No wait time is required as with medication. The individual is not required to relieve the pain as with psycho dynamic work and cognitive desensitization or flooding.

The person's values, beliefs, and thinking are not challenged as with other forms of cognitive therapy.

Thought field therapy has been successful in thousands and thousands of cases with no negative side effects. A therapist with only the basic levels of training will is 80-85% effective. A therapist with advanced diagnostic training is effective 95% to 98% in resolving the problems. Mostly the cure holds outside the office in the live situation for years with no further treatment.

The best way to understand TFT is to experiment with it yourself. You will see immediately if TFT is helpful in resolving problems. The basic trauma treatment has been tested against other therapist. Dr. Mary Sykes Wylie remarked in the Family Therapy Networker (july-aug., 1996) "if it were a horse race TFT would have won hands down."

The trauma treatment used in the study is described completely by Dr. Callahan in a paper presented to the APA in New York (1995). You may test its value for yourself. Much of Thought Field Therapy is available through inexpensive self help books and videos produced by Callahan Techniques. For a free copy of the Trauma Paper, a list of other materials available from Dr. Callahan, or information about training call Robert Bray, Ph.D. at 579-8615.