

EFT Is an Effective Tool for Anxiety

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✓ Fact Checked

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Chronic anxiety, like stress, is very damaging to your mental and physical health, temporarily shutting down your immune system
- › Long-term anxiety raises your risk for depression, hypertension, hormone imbalance, cancer, and many other serious health problems
- › One of the most effective tools against anxiety is EFT, which helps correct the biochemical short-circuiting that occurs with chronic anxiety

This article was previously published January 15, 2015, and has been updated with new information.

The effects of stress on your mental and physical health are being studied more intensively these days. Anxiety can be considered a type of stress response, typically involving a sense of fear, dread, or apprehension.

A brief period of anxiety is a natural, adaptive response to a potential threat, which puts your body into a heightened state of arousal to keep you out of harm's way – your heart beats faster and your respirations increase as your muscles are prepared for action.

For instance, the anxiety you may feel while hiking near a steep drop-off will likely make you more alert and careful in your movements. The problem arises when anxiety becomes a permanent state in the absence of any real threats.

When anxiety becomes chronic – as it is for an estimated 40 million Americans – it can increase your risk for a number of mental and physical health problems. If you find you spend a good deal of time feeling anxious, then it's important to take steps to reduce that anxiety before it has a chance to damage your health.

While you can't eliminate anxiety from your life entirely, energy psychology tools such as the [Emotional Freedom Technique \(EFT\)](#), demonstrated in the video above, can help you reduce your stress by correcting the bioelectrical short-circuiting that can happen when anxiety becomes chronic.¹

Anxiety and Stress Have Similar Effects on Your Brain

Although stress and anxiety are not the same thing, they do significantly overlap in terms of their effects on your body. While stress often occurs in response to an external stimulus (like an argument with your spouse), anxiety tends to be more of an internal state.

Many experts believe that anxiety disorders result from a combination of nature (your genetics) and nurture (your environment).

In other words, individuals who are abused or neglected as children have a higher risk for developing an anxiety disorder, but whether or not it manifests depends in part on their innate ability to cope with stressful situations, "internal resources," personality traits, and social support system.

Anxiety evokes the same "fight or flight or freeze" response as stress, meaning that anxiety will trigger a flood of stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol that help you respond in an emergency.

It's normal to feel anxiety with a stressful event, such as before public speaking or in anticipation of a job interview, but normally anxiety will fade once the event passes.

Is Your Brain Becoming Wired for Anxiety?

If you experience anxiety long enough, your brain may become "wired" for it, such that any potentially undesirable situation sounds a biological alarm. Chronic anxiety might cause you to constantly look out for potential threats when none exist.

Worse yet, some people are so used to feeling anxious that they don't realize there's a problem and simply suffer in silence. Prolonged anxiety can lead to social isolation, physical symptoms, and related mental health problems, including depression.

Chronic anxiety and anxiety disorders may persist for months or even years, regardless of the coming and going of life events. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) explains how your brain processes anxiety:²

"Several parts of the brain are key actors in the production of fear and anxiety ... scientists have discovered that the amygdala and the hippocampus play significant roles in most anxiety disorders.

The amygdala is an almond-shaped structure deep in the brain that is believed to be a communications hub between the parts of the brain that process incoming sensory signals and the parts that interpret these signals. It can alert the rest of the brain that a threat is present and trigger a fear or anxiety response.

The emotional memories stored in the central part of the amygdala may play a role in anxiety disorders involving very distinct fears, such as fears of dogs, spiders, or flying. The hippocampus is the part of the brain that encodes threatening events into memories."

Anxiety Can Lead to a Number of Physical Illnesses

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 85% of all disease has an emotional element (and this is probably a conservative estimate), and stress and anxiety may top the list.

When you're stressed, the stress hormones that prepare your body for the perceived emergency also temporarily suppress parts of your immune system, which reduces your response to pathogens and other foreign invaders.

So, if you're stressed all the time, as with chronic anxiety, you are setting yourself up for a crash in terms of your overall health. The list of stress-related health problems is long and growing longer all the time. The following is just a sample:

- Lowered immune system function
- Heightened inflammatory response (researchers found that dwelling on a stressful event can increase your levels of C-reactive protein, a marker of inflammation in your body³)
- Increased blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Altered brain chemistry, blood sugar and hormone balance
- Increased risk of cancer and tumor growth rate⁴

Anti-Anxiety Drugs

It is estimated that only one-third of people with anxiety disorders receive treatment,⁵ and the majority of that "treatment" is limited to prescription drugs. Anti-anxiety drugs such as benzodiazepines, which include Ativan, Xanax, and Valium, are a poor solution and come with many potentially serious risks, including memory loss, hip fractures, and addiction.

Up to 43% of older adults use benzodiazepines for anxiety and insomnia, often chronically, even though their long-term effectiveness and safety remain unproven. People who take these drugs are nearly four times more likely to die prematurely than people who don't, and also have a 35% greater risk of cancer. There is also evidence that benzodiazepine use by older adults results in a 50% higher risk for dementia.

Benzodiazepines exert a calming effect by boosting the action of a neurotransmitter called gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), in the same way as opioids (heroin) and

cannabinoids (cannabis). This in turn activates the gratification hormone, dopamine, in your brain.

Taking anti-anxiety medications over time can result in addiction or physical dependence, and getting off of them can be a major challenge – and very unpleasant, as "benzodiazepine withdrawal syndrome" is characterized by panic, insomnia, sweating, vomiting, seizures, muscular pain and a plethora of other symptoms that can persist for up to two weeks.⁶ I believe there are better ways to manage anxiety.

Tapping Your Troubles Away

Energy psychology techniques, such as the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), can be very effective for reducing anxiety by correcting the bioelectrical short-circuiting that causes your body's reactions – without adverse effects. You can think of EFT as a tool for "reprogramming" your circuitry, and it works on both real and imagined stressors.

EFT is a form of psychological acupressure, based on the same energy meridians used in traditional acupuncture for more than 5,000 years to treat physical and emotional ailments, but without the invasiveness of needles.

Following a 2012 review in the American Psychological Association's journal *Review of General Psychology*, EFT moved closer to meeting the criteria for an "evidence-based treatment" and, in 2019, a journal article finally pronounced it "an evidence-based self-help therapeutic method" with over 100 studies demonstrating its efficacy.⁷

Research has shown that EFT significantly increases positive emotions such as hope and enjoyment, and decreases negative emotional states, including anxiety. EFT is particularly powerful for treating stress and anxiety because it specifically targets your amygdala and hippocampus, which are the parts of your brain that help you decide whether or not something is a threat.⁸

If you recall NIMH's explanation about how your amygdala and hippocampus are involved in anxiety disorders, you can see why tapping is such a powerful tool. EFT has also been shown to lower cortisol levels.⁹

Although you can learn the basics of EFT on your own, if you or your child has a serious anxiety disorder, I highly recommend that you consult a qualified EFT practitioner. For serious or complex issue you need a qualified health care professional that is trained in EFT to help guide you through the process, as it typically takes years of training to develop the skill to tap on and relieve deep-seated, significant issues.

Teach Yourself How to Tap – And Then Teach Your Entire Family

EFT is simple to learn and can be done effectively by both adults and children. We have a number of free articles, videos, and tutorials on our website that will help you learn how to do it, and then the more you tap, the more skilled you'll become. EFT is a great tool to teach to your children to help them diffuse their everyday stresses, thus preventing them from festering or evolving into chronic anxiety.

Children with mood problems such as anxiety are being drugged at an alarming rate, which certainly doesn't help them learn how to regulate their emotions. If your child's anxiety is out of control, then there's a good chance it will persist into adulthood, setting him up for all of the problems already discussed.

Many mood and behavior problems can be addressed safely and effectively without drugs. Suitable approaches include nutrition, appropriate exercise, avoidance of environmental toxins, and tools such as EFT. Learning to regulate emotions helps children to better manage their own moods and behaviors, improves self-esteem, and empowers them to feel more "normal" and less stigmatized.

You can learn the basics of tapping on your own and then teach the process to your child, or you can recruit the help of a professional [EFT practitioner](#). I invite you to use the [EFT tutorial](#) to learn the mechanics of EFT, as well to help you gain an appreciation for its wide-ranging application for such things as stress, food cravings and tension headaches.

The Major Contributors to Anxiety That Many Fail to Consider

If you suffer from anxiety, make sure you are addressing basic factors that are often overlooked with mental health issues. Specifically, make sure to address the following:

Too much sugar — Many studies have demonstrated the connection between a high-sugar diet and poor mental health. High sugar and starchy carbohydrates lead to excessive insulin release, which can result in falling blood sugar levels, or hypoglycemia. In turn, hypoglycemia causes your brain to secrete glutamate in levels that can cause agitation, depression, anger, anxiety, and panic attacks. Additionally, sugar fans the flames of inflammation in your body.

Leaky gut and poorly functioning second brain — As explained by Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride, toxicity in your gut can flow throughout your body and into your brain, where it can cause a variety of psychiatric symptoms, including anxiety and depression.

Reducing gut inflammation is imperative when addressing mental health issues,¹⁰ so optimizing your gut flora is a critical piece. Your gut sends more signals to your brain than the brain sends to it. It also has more neurons and produces more neurotransmitters than the brain. So optimize your gut health by eliminating sugar and increasing beneficial bacteria.

Make sure to include plenty of naturally fermented vegetables in your diet to help balance your gut flora, and if that's not an option for you, consider a high-quality probiotic supplement.

Inactivity — Exercising creates new GABA-producing neurons that help induce a natural state of calm. Exercise also boosts your levels of serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, which help buffer the effects of stress. Stand up as much as possible, as compelling research now tells us that prolonged sitting has an extremely detrimental impact on your health, even if you exercise regularly.

Intermittent movement may be even more important than regular exercise, so make a goal of walking 7,000 to 10,000 steps daily.

Animal-sourced omega-3 deficiency – Your diet should include a high-quality source of animal-based omega-3 fats, like krill oil. The omega-3 fats EPA and DHA play an important role in emotional health, and deficiencies have been linked to mood disorders. Research has shown a dramatic 20% p reduction in anxiety among medical students taking omega-3s.¹¹

Food additives and genetically modified/engineered ingredients – A number of food additives and dyes are thought to negatively affect mental health, and many have been banned in Europe. Potential culprits to avoid include Blue #1 and #2 food coloring; Green #3; Orange B; Red #3 and #40; Yellow #5 and #6; and the preservative sodium benzoate.

Research also shows that glyphosate, the active ingredient in Monsanto's herbicide Roundup, which is used in large quantities on genetically engineered crops, limits your body's ability to detoxify foreign chemical compounds. As a result, the damaging effects of those toxins are magnified, potentially resulting in a wide variety of diseases, including brain disorders that have both psychological and behavioral effects.

EMF – Limit your exposure to radiofrequency microwave radiation, cell and portable phones and electro-pollution. This is especially true for your sleeping environment where rest and repair occur.

Other toxic exposures – Avoid all known toxins as much as possible, such as MSG and artificial sweeteners including aspartame, mercury from "silver" amalgam fillings, and fluoride in the water supply, just to name a few.

Sources and References

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