

## EFT for Gratitude

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### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) can help you rid your mind of negative thoughts and emotions, facilitating gratitude
- › EFT is especially helpful on those days when you feel like nothing is going right or you've received bad news
- › EFT can be invaluable in helping to free you from negativity, leaving room for feelings of gratitude to surface
- › Gratitude is associated with life satisfaction and multiple health benefits, in part because gratitude may lead to better psychological health and an increase in healthy activities
- › Gratitude is known to facilitate improvements in healthy eating and benefits depression by enhancing self-esteem and well-being

**Nurturing an attitude of gratitude is a simple way to bring more joy, well-being and even physical health to your life. From being thankful to appreciating kindnesses and recognizing all the good in your life, gratitude is the act of recognizing all that has value in your life (and this has nothing to do with monetary worth).**

**Feelings of gratitude are linked to brain activity in the anterior cingulate cortex and medial prefrontal cortex, brain regions associated with moral cognition, value judgment and theory of mind, according to a study in *Frontiers in Psychology*, which helps explain why gratitude leads to benefits in mental health and interpersonal relationships.<sup>1</sup>**

Showing gratitude is a healthy habit you can learn, just like eating right and exercising, and there are plenty of ways to cultivate gratitude in your life. Among them is the Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), a psychological acupressure technique demonstrated by Julie Schiffman, EFT tapping therapy practitioner, in the video above.

## **What Is Gratitude?**

Gratitude can be difficult to define, as it has elements of an emotion, a virtue and a behavior, all rolled into one. Robert Emmons, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Davis, and an expert on gratitude, defines it as a two-step process.

As explained in "The Science of Gratitude," a white paper by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley, the two steps include "1) 'recognizing that one has obtained a positive outcome' and 2) 'recognizing that there is an external source for this positive outcome.'"<sup>2</sup>

In this regard, the benefits of gratitude may be gleaned from the actions of other people or experienced in an internalized manner, such as when feeling gratitude about good fate or nature. Gratitude can also be a function of your mood, which fluctuates and may be temporary, or can be more of an affective trait, i.e., a tendency to have an overall gracious disposition.

Gratitude may also be affected by social and cultural influences, including religion, although it's been found that even young children have some understanding of gratitude, which suggests it may be part of the human experience and that, "The Science of Gratitude" added, "the roots of gratitude run deep."<sup>3</sup>

## **Why Practicing Gratitude Is Important**

At the most basic level, gratitude is associated with life satisfaction<sup>4</sup> and multiple health benefits, in part because gratitude may lead to better psychological health and an increase in healthy activities and a willingness to seek help for health problems.<sup>5</sup>

Gratitude is known to facilitate improvements in healthy eating<sup>6</sup> and alleviate depression

by enhancing self-esteem and well-being.<sup>7</sup> Further, people who are more grateful tend to be:<sup>8</sup>

- Happier
- Less materialistic
- Less likely to suffer from burnout

There are benefits for people with chronic illness as well, as among patients with heart failure, gratitude is linked to better mood and sleep and less fatigue, while those who expressed more gratitude had lower levels of inflammatory biomarkers.<sup>9</sup> Even if you're healthy, feeling gracious can help you sleep better and longer, perhaps by improving your thoughts prior to sleep.

"The relationship between gratitude and each of the sleep variables was mediated by more positive pre-sleep cognitions and less negative pre-sleep cognitions," according to a study in the *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*.<sup>10</sup>

Gratitude can also boost your relationship. In a study of romantic partners, gratitude from interactions was linked to increased connection and satisfaction with the relationship, with researchers suggesting, "gratitude had uniquely predictive power in relationship promotion, perhaps acting as a booster shot for the relationship."<sup>11</sup>

In the bigger picture, gratitude may act as a gateway to the development of other virtues, including increased patience,<sup>12</sup> humility and wisdom. "[G]ratitude is intertwined with several other important virtues, and perhaps ... by boosting gratitude in individuals, we can foster these other virtues as well," *"The Science of Gratitude"* noted.<sup>13</sup>

## **What Is EFT?**

Emotional Freedom Techniques, or EFT, is a psychological acupressure technique that's based on the same energy meridians used in acupuncture. However, instead of stimulating the pathways with needles, EFT uses tapping with your fingertips along with

voicing positive affirmations. EFT can help you rid your mind of negative thoughts and emotions, facilitating gratitude.

This technique is especially helpful on those days when you feel like nothing is going right or you've received bad news. As Schiffman says, everyone deserves to process negative emotions and feel upset for a short time, but if you let these feelings fester for too long, it can start to be damaging.

This is where EFT can be invaluable in helping to free you from the negativity and to find things to be grateful for – even in the midst of an otherwise hard time.

EFT can help to decrease the intensity of traumatic memories after just one session,<sup>14</sup> which may be a necessary step to facilitate gratitude in some people. Once you're able to recognize and tap into feelings of gratefulness during hard times, it will be even easier to feel grateful on ordinary or good days.

What's more, EFT is associated with benefits as well, including reductions in anxiety and depression,<sup>15</sup> increases in happiness and improvements in pain and cravings.<sup>16</sup> When combined with tapping for gratitude, it's likely that using EFT can contribute to enhanced health on both physical and emotional levels.

## **How to Perform EFT**

While you can recruit the help of a professional EFT practitioner, I invite you to use the following resource to learn the mechanics of EFT, as well to help you gain an appreciation for its wide-ranging application, including to boost gratitude.

- [EFT: Basic Steps to Your Emotional Freedom](#)

There are two basic areas to learn in order to use EFT: the tapping locations and technique, and the positive affirmations.

Tapping is done with your fingertips, solidly but not so hard that it hurts. Ideally, remove any glasses or watch (which could interfere electromagnetically with the process) prior

to tapping, and tap each point five to seven times. The tapping points are below; it's easiest to start at the top and work your way down.

- 1. Top of the Head (TH)** – With fingers back-to-back down the center of the skull.
- 2. Eyebrow (EB)** – Just above and to one side of the nose, at the beginning of the eyebrow.
- 3. Side of the Eye (SE)** – On the bone bordering the outside corner of the eye.
- 4. Under the Eye (UE)** – On the bone under an eye about 1 inch below your pupil.
- 5. Under the Nose (UN)** – On the small area between the bottom of your nose and the top of your upper lip.
- 6. Chin (Ch)** – Midway between the point of your chin and the bottom of your lower lip. Even though it is not directly on the point of the chin, we call it the chin point because it is descriptive enough for people to understand easily.
- 7. Collar Bone (CB)** – The junction where the sternum (breastbone), collarbone and the first rib meet. This is a very important point and in acupuncture is referred to as K (kidney) 27. To locate it, first place your forefinger on the U-shaped notch at the top of the breastbone (about where a man would knot his tie).

From the bottom of the U, move your forefinger down toward the navel 1 inch and then go to the left (or right) 1 inch. This point is referred to as Collar Bone even though it is not on the collarbone (or clavicle) per se.

- 8. Under the Arm (UA)** – On the side of the body, at a point even with the nipple (for men) or in the middle of the bra strap (for women). It is about 4 inches below the armpit.
- 9. Wrists (WR)** – The last point is the inside of both wrists.

While tapping, you'll want to hold the problem or negative emotions in your mind while saying (ideally out loud) your positive affirmations, which can take on any number of

forms.

A basic phrase to use would be, "Even though I have this [you fill in the blank], I deeply and completely love and accept myself." If you are in public and don't want to say your affirmations out loud, it's acceptable to say them very quietly or in your head, but for best results speak them with feeling and emphasis (even if you don't believe them yet).

Sometimes one round of tapping is enough to clear up an issue while with others repeated rounds are necessary. The great thing about EFT is that it costs nothing and you can use it as often as necessary to support your emotional health. You can also perform EFT on children (or teach them how to do it themselves) during stressful situations or to help resolve emotional traumas or gain positive attributes like gratefulness.

## What Else Works to Become More Grateful?

EFT is a simple, fast and no-cost way to facilitate more gratitude in your life, but it's not the only method out there. In fact, for best results use EFT in conjunction with other [gratitude facilitators](#), such as these tips from Emmons for living a more grateful life:<sup>17</sup>

- Keep a gratitude journal, and set aside time daily to fill it with moments of gratitude from your day.
- Remember hard times in your life, which remind you how much you have to be grateful for now. "[T]his contrast is fertile ground for gratefulness," Emmons says.<sup>18</sup>
- Appreciate what it means to be human by tuning into and appreciating your sense of touch, sight, smell, taste and hearing.
- Use visual reminders, including people, to trigger gratitude. This helps to combat "the two primary obstacles to gratefulness," which Emmons cites as "forgetfulness and a lack of mindful awareness."<sup>19</sup>
- Make an oath of gratitude. Simply vowing to be grateful can increase the likelihood that you'll stick to the behavior, so write a note "vowing to count your blessings" and post it somewhere where you'll see it often.

## Sources and References

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- <sup>1</sup> [Frontiers in Psychology September 30, 2015](#)
- <sup>2, 3, 8, 13</sup> ["The Science of Gratitude," a white paper by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley May 2018 Executive summary](#)
- <sup>4</sup> [Personality and Individual Differences July 2008, Volume 45, Issue 1, Pages 49-54](#)
- <sup>5</sup> [Pers Individ Dif. 2013 Jan; 54\(1\): 92–96. Abstract](#)
- <sup>6</sup> [Journal of Experimental Social Psychology March 2019, Volume 81, Pages 4-14](#)
- <sup>7</sup> [Personality and Individual Differences December 2015, Volume 87, Pages 30-34 Highlights](#)
- <sup>9</sup> [Spirituality in Clinical Practice, Vol 2\(1\), Mar 2015, 5-17 Abstract](#)
- <sup>10</sup> [Journal of Psychosomatic Research January 2009, Volume 66, Issue 1, Pages 43-48 Results](#)
- <sup>11</sup> [Personal Relationships May 21, 2010 Abstract](#)
- <sup>12</sup> [Emotion, Vol 16\(4\), Jun 2016, 421-425](#)
- <sup>14</sup> [Traumatology September 1, 2012](#)
- <sup>15</sup> [J Evid Based Integr Med. 2018 Jan-Dec;23:2156587218756510](#)
- <sup>16</sup> [J Evid Based Integr Med. 2019; 24: 2515690X18823691](#)
- <sup>17, 18, 19</sup> [Greater Good Magazine November 17, 2010](#)