

Effect of Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping on Anxiety and Quality of Life

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) as a new therapeutic technique in energy psychology has positive effects on psychological and physiological symptoms, and quality of life. It has deep roots in modern psychology as well as ancient science of acupuncture. It is also called tapping because EFT involves tapping with your fingertips on acupoints on your body. Studies were conducted to understand the effect of EFT Tapping on Anxiety and Quality of Life on adults. Ethical approval was secured. Clients above the age of 20 years and staying in Delhi NCR area were invited to participate in a 2 week long intervention program. At the start and end of their intervention, participants were asked to complete STAT and WHOQOL-BREF questionnaires. 65 participants gave consent, and 61 completed questionnaires and 46 fulfilled the inclusion criteria. . The range of age was 20 - 75 years and numbers of tapping sessions conducted by the researcher were 3 sessions in a time span of 2 weeks. The main presenting conditions were anxiety. STAT and WHO-BREF scores showed both emotionally and statistically significant improvements after the intervention. Statistically there was significant improvement for anxiety and Quality of Life (all $p < 0.001$). Mean anxiety scores improved from 8.3250 (high) at start to 6.9750 (average). Mean Quality of Life scores improved from 65.5313 at start to 67.1125 (higher Mean shows better Quality of Life) at end (SD difference=6.81, $p < 0.001$). Improvements were seen in all participants. Despite the limited sample size and other limitations, significant improvements were shown. The results support the potential of EFT as a cost-effective intervention to reduce anxiety and thereby help improve quality of life. However, there were few data available comparing EFT to

standard-of-care treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy, and further research is needed to establish the relative efficacy of EFT to established protocols.

Keywords: *Emotional Freedom, Tapping on Anxiety, Quality of Life*

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INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is, or at least can be, a normal response to stressful situations and experiencing anxiety is a normal part of being human. Anxiety can become a disorder however, when you experience anxiety repeatedly in situations where it is not productive or rational. Anxiety is remarkably common in our modern world. Studies indicate that 1 out of every 4 people will at some point in their lives experience a diagnosable anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders are no doubt a part of your life, either because you have a friend or loved one who has, is, or will experience one, or because you personally struggle with an anxiety disorder.

Regardless of how anxiety manifests or what triggers it, there is a common root cause that accounts for all symptoms of anxiety. Experiencing anxiety is a consequence of a blockage within the body's natural energy system. When the body is in a natural state of energy equilibrium, anxiety is rarely experienced. Over time, our body and brain developed a “fight or flight” response. In the modern world, we humans fortunately deal with far fewer life or death situations than our ancient ancestors did. Despite this, the “fight or flight” response remains buried deeply in our DNA, impacting our decision making and influencing our reactions.

Over time, the fight or flight type of situations serve to disrupt the flow of energy, altering our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, in a way that eventually becomes a diagnosable anxiety disorder. To cure our anxiety we must break through these blockages and restore the

natural equilibrium we are intended to have. When the energy flows through our body we will be free of debilitating anxiety disorders and able to do and achieve the things we want in our lives.

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) tapping works by resolving disturbances and blockages that are inhibiting the natural balance and flow in your energy pathways. By resolving and eliminating the disturbances, EFT tapping restores a calm equilibrium to your body and allows your energy pathways to flow uninhibited the way they are meant to.

Emotional Freedom Technique Tapping

EFT has deep roots in modern psychology as well as the ancient science of acupuncture. The two approaches from psychotherapy from which EFT draws most are cognitive therapy and exposure therapy. Cognitive therapies address how we see the world through thoughts or “cognitions” that also shape our behavior. Exposure therapies focus on the therapeutic value of remembering traumatic life events. EFT is often called “tapping” because a central feature of EFT involves tapping with your fingertips on acupuncture points (acupoints) on your body. Research has shown that pressure on acupoints, or “acupressure,” can be as effective as acupuncture itself (Cherkin, Sherman, & Avins, 2009). Acupuncture theory teaches that energy flows through our body through pathways called meridians. Disease can be caused by a blockage or interruption of that flow, and acupuncture or acupressure can be used to remove those blockages.

In the early 1960s, an American chiropractor named George Goodheart discovered that he could treat physical conditions successfully by tapping on acupuncture points or stimulating them manually, without the use of needles (Adams & Davidson, 2011). He called his method “Applied Kinesiology” (Goodheart, 1991). A breakthrough occurred when Roger Callahan combined tapping on acupoints with exposure. Callahan along with other pioneers began to apply acupoint tapping to psychological problems. Callahan first discovered that it

could cure phobias. Later, he applied it to other psychological conditions including anxiety, depression, and PTSD. His method is called Thought Field Therapy or TFT (Callahan, 2000).

One of Callahan's students, named Gary Craig, simplified Callahan's TFT method and called it Emotional Freedom Techniques or simply EFT. While TFT uses elaborate diagnostic methods to determine which acupoints to tap and in which order, EFT simply taps on 12 points in any order.

The way EFT tapping works is by resolving the disturbances in your energy pathways. By resolving and eliminating the disturbances, EFT tapping restores a calm equilibrium as your energy pathways can flow uninhibited the way they are meant to. Since all negative emotions are manifestations of energy blockages and disturbances, EFT tapping can work on all of them.

As EFT became more popular in therapy and coaching circles, many researchers conducted studies of EFT and found that it was extremely effective for mental health problems such as phobias, depression, anxiety, and PTSD (Lane, 2009).

The Science behind EFT Tapping

When you're experiencing a negative emotional state - angry or upset or fearful - your brain goes on alert. It prepares your body to enter a full-blown, fight-or-flight response. All the body's defense systems are turned on to support either fighting or fleeing from the danger. The adrenaline pumps, your muscles tense, and your blood pressure, heart rate, and blood sugar all rise to give you extra energy to meet the challenge.

Most of our fight-or-flight responses are triggered internally. For many of us, the internally generated stress response is triggered by a negative memory or thought that has its roots in past trauma or conditioned learning from childhood. The adrenaline flows, the heart races, and so on. What tapping does, with amazing efficiency, is halt this fight-or-flight response and reprogram the brain and body to act and react differently.

The stress response begins in the brain in the amygdala, one of the components of the limbic system, or midbrain. The limbic system is the source of emotions and long-term memory, and it's where negative experiences are encoded. Amygdala signals the brain to mobilize the body in the fight-or-flight response. Tapping on the meridian endpoints helps to deactivate the amygdala's alarm and sends a calming response to the body, and the amygdala recognizes that it's safe.

How to do EFT Tapping

The basic technique requires you to focus on the negative emotion at hand: a fear or anxiety, a bad memory, or anything that's bothering you. While maintaining your mental focus on this issue, use your fingertips to tap 5-7 times each on 9 of the body's meridian points. Tapping on these meridian points while concentrating on accepting and resolving the negative emotion will access your body's energy, restoring it to a balanced state.

Tapping is simple and painless. It can be learned by anyone. And you can apply it to yourself, whenever you want, wherever you are. It's less expensive and less time consuming. It can be used with specific emotional intent towards your own unique life challenges and experiences. Most importantly, it gives you the power to heal yourself, putting control over your destiny back into your own hands.

Process of EFT Tapping

- a) Choose a "Most Pressing Issue" (MPI) and devise a reminder phrase.
- b) Rate the intensity the MPI on the 0-to-10 Subjective Units of Distress Scale. A 0 means no distress and 10 would mean the most distress a person can feel.
- c) Build a setup statement
- d) Tap on the karate chop point while repeating the setup statement three times.
- e) Tap eight to ten times through the eight points in the EFT sequence while saying the reminder phrase out loud.

- f) Once you have finished tapping the eight points in the sequence (shown below), take a deep breath.
- g) Again rate the intensity of your issue using the 0-to-10 scale to check your progress.
- h) Repeat as necessary to get the relief you desire.

The sequence of tapping

eyebrow, Side of eye, under eye, Under nose, Chin, Collarbone, Under arm, Top of Head. For the ease of understanding, pictorial representations of the tapping points are given below.



Anxiety

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure. (APA, adapted from Encyclopedia of Psychology).

Anxiety is a general term for several disorders that cause nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worrying. These disorders affect how we feel and behave, and they can

manifest real physical symptoms. Mild anxiety is vague and unsettling, while severe anxiety can be extremely debilitating, having a serious impact on daily life.

People often experience a general state of worry or fear before confronting something challenging such as a test, examination, recital, or interview. These feelings are easily justified and considered normal. Anxiety is considered a problem when symptoms interfere with a person's ability to sleep or otherwise function. Generally speaking, anxiety occurs when a reaction is out of proportion with what might be normally expected in a situation.

Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety

There are some common symptoms including:

- **Physical:** panic attacks, hot and cold flushes, racing heart, tightening of the chest, quick breathing, restlessness, or feeling tense, sleeplessness, wound up and edgy
- **Psychological:** excessive fear, worry, catastrophizing, or obsessive thinking
- **Behavioural:** avoidance of situations that make you feel anxious which can impact on study, work or social life

Methods to overcome anxiety

It has been seen that when people get anxious, they do try to get away from it by either indulging in leisurely activities like shopping or in vices like smoking, drinking etc. The more serious kind of people may opt for activities like exercising, meditation, yoga, meeting a physician and taking prescribed medicines or even talk therapy.

It has been seen that exercising, praying, meditation are very helpful in overcoming anxiety, but at the same time, time consuming techniques. Hence people tend to lose patience and/or faith in them sooner or later, unless they are very determined. In general, it has also been observed that people are skeptical about using anti-anxiety medicines due to possible side effects.

This is where EFT Tapping has seen to be an excellent technique with immediate and long term (if not permanent) solution.

Quality of Life

Quality of life (QOL) is the general well-being of individuals and societies, outlining negative and positive features of life. It observes life satisfaction, including everything from physical health, family, education, employment, wealth, religious beliefs, finance and the environment.

Quality of life should not be confused with the concept of standard of living, which is based primarily on income.

According to World Health Organization (WHO, 1998), Quality of life is the individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems, in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. In this way, it is a personal option to be pursued, defined according to its needs, hopes and possibilities, being subject to constant transformations.

The concept of QOL is subjective. QOL of an individual would be affected by a number of factors, particularly by the significant positive and negative life events. These life events may be related either to his family or society or community where he lives or his own personal life (Khurana, 1996). It is a broad-ranging concept affected by an individual's physical health, psychological state, and level of independence, social relationships, and their relationship to salient features of their environment (WHOQOL Group, 1996; Celle and Bonomi, 1995).

Until recently, quality of life was not considered an issue of psychological importance. For many years, it was measured solely in terms of length of survival and signs of presence of disease, with virtually no consideration of the psychological consequences of illness and treatments (Taylor &Aspinwall, 1990).

In a study, Clond, M. conducted randomized controlled trials in 2016 on individuals with anxiety using EFT. Emotional freedom technique treatment demonstrated a significant decrease in anxiety scores, even when accounting for the effect size of control treatment.

In a study, Gaesser, A. H. examined the anxiety levels of gifted students, as well as the effectiveness of two interventions: Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) in 2014. EFT participants showed significant reduction in anxiety levels when compared to the control group. CBT participants did not differ significantly from either the EFT or control groups.

In a study, Stewart, A., Boath, E., Carryer, A., Walton, I., Hill, L. conducted a study in 2013 on referrals for any emotional condition (including physical pain).

The main presenting conditions were anxiety, depression and anger and clients revealed up to 4 additional issues. The results support the potential of EFT as a cost-effective treatment to reduce the burden of a range of physical and psychological disorders.

Louis Focused 2 conditions - EFT and a control group- to assess emotional self-report and mindfulness in 2013.

Mixed analysis of variance with paired-sample t tests showed that EFT participants experienced significantly greater increases in enjoyment and hope and significantly greater decrease in anger and shame than did the control group. When data from all emotion-dependent variables were grouped together, analysis showed that EFT participants experienced a significantly greater increase in “positive emotions” and significantly greater decrease in “negative emotions” than did the control group.

Church, in his 2013 research says that EFT has shown efficacy in several RCTs of anxiety. In one study, students with fear of public speaking received a 45-minute EFT session and improved significantly (Jones, Thornton, & Andrews, 2011). In another, high school students with test anxiety were evaluated before their university entrance exams (Sezgin &

Ozcan, 2009). Those who learned EFT improved significantly. A study of fibromyalgia sufferers found significant improvements in anxiety (Brattberg, 2008), as have studies of veterans and hospital patients with PTSD (Church, 2013b; Karatzias et al., 2011). EFT was found to be as efficacious as CBT in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

In a study, Boath, L. Stewart, A., & Carryer, A., conducted a study in 2012 on presentation anxiety which is one of the most common fears that people express. EFT was done on a sample of 25 3rd year Foundation Degree level complementary therapy students undertaking a Research Module. They were guided through one round of EFT focusing on their fear of public speaking. The students were assessed using the Subjective Units of Distress (SUDs) and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) pre and post EFT. There was a significant reduction in SUDS HAD and HAD Anxiety Subscale. There was no difference in the HAD Depression Subscale. The results suggest that EFT may be a useful addition to curricula for courses that include oral presentations.

In a study, Jones, S. J., Thornton, J. A., Andrews, H. B. conducted a study on thirty six volunteers with Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) in 2011. Subjective self-report measures were taken before, during, and after a forty-five minute treatment session with Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT). A significant reduction in PSA as measured by Subjective Units of Discomfort was demonstrated within the first 15 minutes of treatment with EFT, with further significant reductions also demonstrated at 30 and 45 minutes. EFT was found to be a quick and effective treatment for PSA.

In a study, Church, D., & Brooks, A. J. examined whether self-intervention with Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) in 2010, had an effect on healthcare workers' psychological distress symptoms. EFT provided an immediate effect on psychological distress, pain, and cravings that was replicated across multiple conferences and healthcare provider samples.

In a study, Benor, D. J., Ledger, K., Toussaint, L., Hett, G., & Zaccaro, D. (2009): Despite small sample size, significant reductions on the TAI and HSCL-21 were found for WHEE; on the TAI for EFT; and on the HSCL-21 for CBT. There were no significant differences between the scores for the three treatments. In only two sessions WHEE and EFT achieved the equivalent benefits to those achieved by CBT in five sessions. WHEE and EFT show promise as effective treatments for test anxiety.

In a study, Rowe, J. conducted a study in 2005 to measure any changes in psychological functioning that might result from participation in an experiential EFT workshop and to examine the long-term effects. Using a time-series, within-subjects repeated measures design, 102 participants were tested with a short-form of the SCL-90-R (SA-45) 1 month before, at the beginning of the workshop, at the end of the workshop, 1 month after the workshop, and 6 months after the workshop. There was a statistically significant decrease in all measures of psychological distress as measured by the SA-45 from pre-workshop to post-workshop which held up at the 6 month follow-up.

METHOD

Research Problem

To study the effect of Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping on anxiety and Quality of Life.

Objectives

- To examine the effect of Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) tapping on anxiety among urban Indian adults.
- To assess the effect of Emotional Freedom Technique Tapping on Quality of Life among urban Indian adults.
- To see the impact of Anxiety on Quality of Life among urban Indian adults.

Hypotheses

- There would be a significant effect of Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping on Anxiety among urban Indian adults.
- There would be a significant effect of Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping on Quality of Life among urban Indian adults.
- There would be significant effect of Anxiety on Quality of life.

Research Design

The study was pretest and posttest study.

Pre-test	Intervention	Post test
Anxiety Quality of Life	EFT Tapping	Anxiety Quality of Life

Variables

Independent variable

Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping

Dependent variables

Anxiety and Quality of Life

Sampling

Sample size of 40 adults (20 males and 20 females) in the urban area of Delhi and NCR. The tests were administered on a total of 30 males and 35 females. From this, only the subjects who met the following criteria were called for intervention:

- Those who had a score of 7 or above for anxiety; and
- Those who completed both the questionnaires.

Inclusion

- People in the age group of 20 years and above
- People willing to participate in both pre-test and post-test
- People who can read and understand basic English (as per Indian standards)

Exclusion

- People whose pre-test and/or post-test were incomplete
- People with major physical/mental illness.

Table 1

Tests/tools

No.	Tool Used	Variable
1.	State Trait Anxiety Test by Psy-Com Services	Anxiety
2.	WHOQOL-BREF by WHO (1996)	Quality of Life

Procedure

The tapping was done in 3 steps

- Accepting one-self
- Acknowledging and addressing the issue
- Letting go of the emotion

Statistical Analysis Techniques

The data was analysed by computing mean, standard deviation, correlation and applying paired sample t-test using SPSS.

Results and Discussions

RESULTS

H₁: There would be a significant effect of Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping on Anxiety among urban Indian adults.

Table 2

Paired t-Test Analysis of Anxiety Pretest and Posttest

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p Value	Significant
<i>Anxiety Pretest</i>	40	8.3250	1.22762			
Anxiety <i>Post test</i>	40	6.9750	1.36790	11.094	<0 .001	Yes

p< .001, significant at two tailed

Low score indicates low levels of anxiety

The Mean score for Anxiety in pretest and posttest are 8.3250 and 6.9750 respectively. The Standard Deviations are 1.22762 and 1.36790 respectively at *df*39 and which is significant at the level of p<.001. Hence, hypothesis 1 is accepted. Therefore, we can say that there is a significant difference in anxiety levels in subjects before and after EFT Tapping.

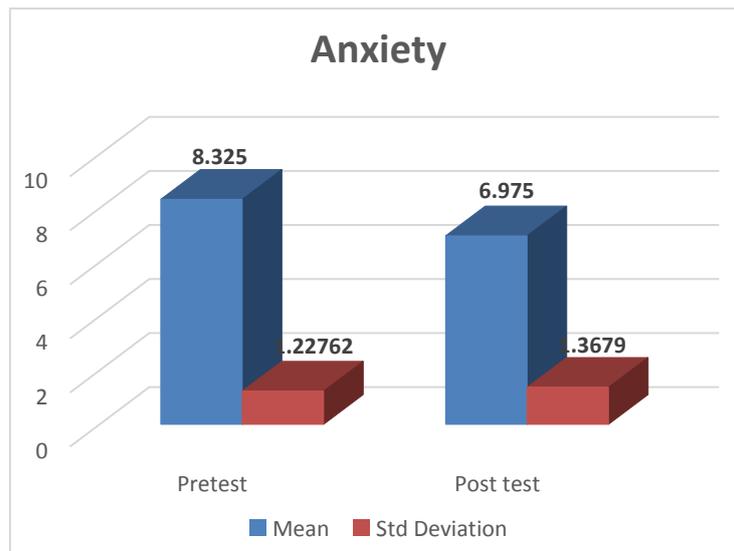


Figure 1: Analysis of Anxiety Pretest and Posttest

H₂: There would be a significant effect of Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping on Quality of Life among urban Indian adults.

Table 3

Paired t-Test Analysis of Quality of Life Pretest and Posttest

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p Value	Significant
QoL Pretest	40	65.5313	10.62731			
QoL Post test	40	67.1125	9.88150	-4.585	<0.001	Yes

p < .001, significant at two tailed

High score indicates good Quality of life

The Mean score for Quality of Life in pretest and posttest are 65.5313 and 67.1125 respectively. The Standard Deviations are 10.62731 and 9.88150 respectively at *df*39 and which is significant at the level p < .001. Hence, hypothesis 2 is accepted. Therefore, we can say that there is a significant difference in Quality of Life in subjects before and after EFT Tapping.

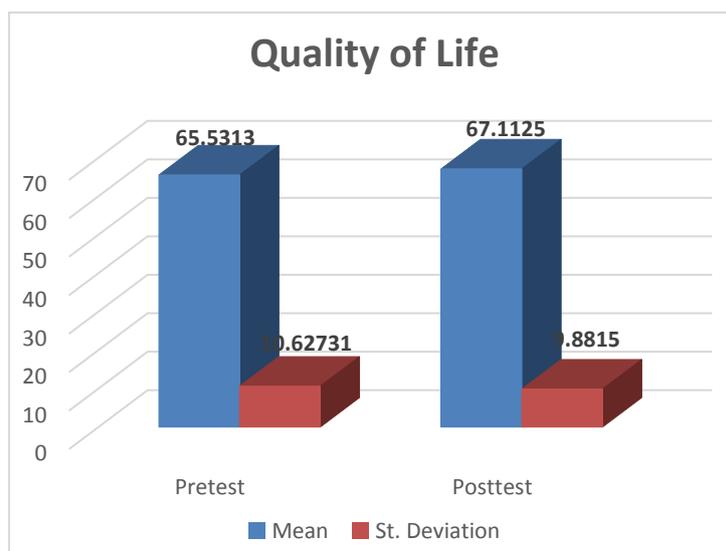


Figure 2: Analysis of Quality of Life Pretest and Posttest

H₃: There would be significant effect of Anxiety on Quality of life.

Table 4

Correlation of Anxiety and Quality of Life Pretest

Variables	N	Mean	Correlation
Anxiety	40	8.3250	-0.281
Quality of Life	40	65.5313	

Table 5

Correlation of Anxiety and Quality of Life Posttest

Variables	N	Mean	Correlation
Anxiety	40	6.9750	-0.460
Quality of Life	40	67.1125	

In both the above tables, it is observed that the correlation between anxiety and QoL is negative i.e. when the anxiety levels are high, QoL declines and, when the anxiety levels are low, QoL is improved.

Before tapping, the correlation between anxiety and QoL was $-.281$ and after tapping, it is $-.460$. This means after tapping when anxiety levels decrease, as shown in pretest and posttest mean score, the QoL score increases as seen in the mean score of pretest and posttest. Hence, hypothesis 3 is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The present research is aimed to study the effect of Emotional Freedom Technique on Anxiety and Quality of Life in urban Indian adults. Pretests and posttests were with the sample of the study (N=40).

A significant difference was found in anxiety levels in subjects before intervention and after intervention. The result was obtained with the help of paired t-test.

The present findings support previous research conducted. 'Quantitative findings indicated participants reported significantly less subjective distress and anxiety after using EFT. Qualitative findings indicated three themes whereby participants found EFT calming, relaxing and helpful; considered the transferability of EFT in other settings; and proposed some of the mechanisms of EFT's action.' (Elizabeth Boath, Rachel Good, et al., 2017).

According to the knowledge of investigator, very few studies have been reported exploring the effect of tapping on QoL. The present study however, attempts to examine the effect of tapping on QoL. A significant difference was found in QoL levels in subjects before intervention and after intervention. The result was obtained with the help of paired t-test.

The current study has examined the immediate effect of tapping on anxiety and its relation with Quality of Life. Negative correlation is found between anxiety and Quality of life which means that when anxiety levels increase, Quality of Life decreases and vice versa. Tables 4 and 5 (under Results) of current study shows that EFT tapping has helped in decreasing anxiety levels and increasing Quality of Life respectively.

There are previous studies on how EFT tapping helps release pain and thus enhance Quality of Life. Numerous studies have demonstrated the efficacy of EFT for depression, anxiety, phobias, PTSD, and other psychological conditions.

The current study “Pain, range of motion, and psychological symptoms in a population with frozen shoulder: A randomized controlled dismantling study of Clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques)” assesses whether acupoint stimulation is an active ingredient or whether treatment effects are due to non-specific factors. Though EFT showed a greater trend for improved Range of motions in most dimensions of movement, changes were non-significant for most measures in all groups. Reductions in psychological distress were associated with reduced pain as well as with improved Range of motions. The results showed that acupoint stimulation is an active ingredient in EFT treatment. The study adds further support to other clinical trials indicating that Clinical EFT is an efficacious evidence-based treatment for pain and psychological conditions (Church, D., & Nelms, J.; 2016).

The above study has relevance because pain is one of the physiological dimensions of Quality of Life. When levels of pain increase, Quality of Life is seen to be low.

CONCLUSION

Despite the limitations of the study, the results suggest a potential role for EFT as an intervention in reducing anxiety and enhancing quality of life. Also, it takes a very short time to train participants to use EFT, and that once learned, EFT can be very effectively self-administered and can easily be transferred to other aspects of life. The study shows a negative correlation between the two variables i.e. Anxiety and Quality of Life.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained from all participants.

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