

## Tapping Our Hidden Potential

excerpted from the book

*Let Magic Happen: Adventures in Healing with a Holistic Radiologist*

by Larry Burk, M.D., C.E.H.P.

*Help us realize what formidable power  
and joy and capacity for action  
still slumber in the human spirit.*

--Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Jennifer Williams, a student in my stress management class, had been itching from severe hives all over her body for two weeks since fall break of 2002. The hives had gotten so bad she couldn't study, so she went to the Student Health Clinic and received an antihistamine. The hives went away, but then she got so drowsy from the medication that she still couldn't do her school work. She was getting desperate and came up to me after our class one day to see if I could help her. I had just introduced the students to a new stress management approach I had learned from a free manual I downloaded from the Internet. It was called Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT).

According to the manual, my first step with Jennifer would be to find out what had happened to her during fall break that had triggered the hives. After the other students had left I asked if she had changed detergents or started using a new shampoo she might be having an allergic reaction to. She said no, but then she mentioned having a serious car accident on the New Jersey Turnpike during the fall break. It had been raining that day, and after losing control of her car, she spun around a couple of times and hit a telephone pole. The airbags went off, so she didn't have any significant physical injuries, but the car was totaled, and she was pretty shaken up. The hives had appeared shortly afterward. She said she had never had anything like that before.

Her next class was in half an hour, so we didn't have much time to do the EFT. I told



her it wouldn't take long and asked her to think of a short phrase summarizing her experience. Her initial response was "scary car accident." I asked her to rate the feeling in her body on a scale of 0-10 when she said the phrase. This rating system, known as the Subjective Units of Distress (SUD) scale, uses 0 as no distress and 10 as the worst distress ever. Jennifer said it was a 6, but I suspected it was actually higher. Then I asked if she could add any more emotional words to make the number higher. She said, "Scary, thought I was going to die car accident." That turned it up to 8.

Next I had her start tapping with her middle finger on the inside of her left eyebrow, which is the location of the acupuncture point Bladder 2. She followed my simple instructions by repeating the phrase, called the "reminder phrase," while tapping six or seven times, just long enough to say the words out loud. The technique consists of tapping hard enough to make a sound, but not hard enough to leave a bruise, and I tapped along with her to demonstrate. We quickly tapped through the rest of the points in the EFT protocol, saying the same phrase once at each acupuncture point--

Gall Bladder 1 on the side of the eye, Stomach 1 below the eye, Governor Vessel 26 below the nose, Conception Vessel 24 on the chin, Kidney 26 on the collarbone bump, Spleen 21 under the arm, Liver 14 under the breast, and Governor Vessel 20 on the top of the head.

The instructions were to switch hands and sides of the face and repeat the process, then reassess the SUD score. After the second round, Jennifer said her number had dropped to a 4. She did look somewhat more relaxed. We only had a few minutes left, so I offered her the choice of either repeating the same phrase again or coming up with another phrase that might be even more emotionally important. Jennifer chose as her new phrase, "I feel guilty about totaling my dad's car." On the SUD scale, this phrase was 11 out of 10, and she looked distressed when she said it. We repeated the tapping using that phrase, and I'm glad to report that her score dropped to a 2 with an associated significant reduction in her anxiety.

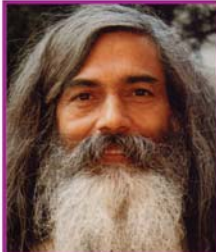
After agreeing not to take any more medicine, but to tap instead if she needed relief from itching, Jennifer went off to her next class. Two days later, she reported she had not taken any antihistamines and had no more hives. She said she still felt itchy on a few occasions, but she resolved that itchiness with more tapping. Most interestingly, she had tapped on "all the other car accidents" she'd had, but which I had not even known about. This is an excellent example of intuitively following inner healing guidance. By semester's end, Jennifer had regained her confidence in driving and told me that EFT was the most useful stress management technique she had learned in the entire course.



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