



Emotion and Perception: EFT makes it a two way street

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First published by Gary Craig, EFT Founder on www.emofree.com

Hi Everyone,

Read this interesting concept by EFT Master Gwyneth Moss from the UK. She says, "In this article we will be considering how, with EFT, the "emotion follows perception" idea is really a two-way street and thus we also see the reverse, namely, that "perception follows emotion".

Hugs, Gary

Emotion and Perception

Aaron Beck, one of the founding fathers of cognitive behavioral therapy, said "emotion follows perception" meaning that the way we feel about a situation is a result of the way we perceive it. In this article we will be considering how, with EFT, the "emotion follows perception" idea is really a two-way street and thus we also see the reverse, namely, that "perception follows emotion".

We can all perceive a situation one way and find ourselves in the grip of strong emotions that then change as soon as we get more information and a fresh perception. Yesterday I saw a couple of teenagers nosing around and under my car and felt a surge of anger tinged with fear.

My car had once been vandalized and now here were the culprits right in front of my house. I ran over and as I was about to shout, one of the boys looked up at me and pointing said: "our kitten, she ran away". Cowering under the car was a smoky grey ball of fluff.



My perception of the situation changed in an instant and my emotions shifted from anger and fear to a cocktail of compassion and kindness. I quickly fetched a blanket to help the boys rescue their frightened pet.

Our brains are meaning-making organs. Whatever information comes in through the channels of our many senses, our brains are seeking for patterns that match to previous experience and then using that "meaning" to create perceptions or expectations of the future. Emotion follows these expectations.

This is the process that allows us to know our world. However, like the small print on investment sales, "past performance is no guide to future returns". When we get emotionally aroused it is like our attention becomes locked on a narrow view and we fix on the emotional expectation (what happened in the past) and block out the bigger picture (what is actually happening now).

When teaching EFT workshops I often use the metaphor that, as therapists we are like guide dogs (seeing-eye dog) with a blind person. It's not the guide dog's job to decide where to go: it's the guide dog's job to get across the roads safely.

To give an example I recently saw a woman, Sue, who reacted with massive resentment whenever she heard her sister's voice on the phone. Sue had avoided her sister for most of her adult life. However, the two of them were now trying to sort out care for their elderly father and so these calls were becoming more frequent. Each evening Sue would find herself becoming increasingly anxious, anxiety that she tranquilized with red wine, as she anticipated her sister calling.

In an agitated manner that was loaded with frustration Sue told me: "She is such a bitch, a prime bitch, she uses that tone with me, like she's putting me down, treating me like a baby, and I start to boil with resentment and I don't hear a word she says and we just can't get anywhere".

I introduced EFT to Sue and we did a round with "Even though my sister's voice makes me boil..." As we finished tapping I paused and said to Sue "take a nice breath and notice what comes to you." Sue



relaxed slightly and said, "She's been a tax officer too long my sister, she's too used to telling people what to do, she probably doesn't know how to be gentle. If I wasn't so hurt I'd feel sorry for

her." Sue's perception had changed and her 0-10 intensity had come down to a 7 of hurt from off-the-scale anger.

So we did another round with "Even though it hurts when my sister uses her put-down tax-office voice..." and again I asked her to take a breath and notice what comes. Sue now looked much calmer and sat back in her chair. She told me that when she was 11 and her sister 16, their mother had died and their father slid into deep depression. Sue's sister had taken on the running of the household even though her four younger siblings had not made that an easy job.

We tapped on several specific events of the time, of feeling scared, feeling humiliated and feeling guilty and after each round I paused and gave Sue an opening to voice her thoughts and feelings. Watching and listening to her it was clear that her perception of her sister was changing. From a narrow focus of "she's a prime bitch" Sue was opening up to a bigger picture, understanding how it was for her sister when their mother died, quite spontaneously she said: "Poor lost thing, I feel like I want to give her a hug".

As Sue's emotions shifted from anger to hurt to nervousness to guilt and finally to warmth so did the way she talked about her sister. The words she used changed; the things she noticed and remembered came with more detail, her whole perception of this woman she had known all her life was no longer narrowly focused.

Sue returned the following week: she and her sister had been on the phone for an hour long call during which they had both laughed and cried. Sue had found it surprisingly easy to respond to her sister's natural bossiness with humor and they were now working together to find a place for their father.

An old blues man from Mississippi once told me "it's not the notes, lady, anyone can play the notes, it's the spaces between them: that's the blues".



Throughout the session with Sue I simply chose the most emotionally loaded phrases as she spoke and applied EFT. Then I gave Sue the space to become aware of her shifting feelings and to express them. Sue needed little encouragement from me: she was aware of her thoughts and feelings, open and articulate and able to give voice to them.

Not all clients are like this. For some feelings are too scary and thoughts are something they keep to themselves. It can be tempting then to tell the person what we think, or to steer them towards what they should think. But that would be like the guide dog steering the blind man towards the butcher's shop.

As an EFT therapist we can be confident that EFT will do its job and that the results will happen within the person. If we choose well their specific words that tune the emotion then as we tap we can have confidence that the emotion will shift. So it's part of our guide-dogging job to help the client find the words and then to help them become aware of their changes in perception. (These changes in perception are the person's own and it is not up to us to supply them.)

To do this we need to be keeping their attention with their present inner experience by asking open and vague questions followed by a good long pause.

Questions like:

"And you can simply notice what comes to you now."

"And what do you know about that now?"

"And what are you experiencing about that now?"

"And how can you feel differently about X now?"

"If that were to happen again what can you do now that you couldn't do before?"

Like the blues man said the magic lies between the notes. So after asking something open and vague give a good long pause, longer than may seem polite, chances are your client will fill it as they, like me, see the kitten under the car.