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This article was first published on Gary Craigs Emofree site.

H. contacted me because she had become stuck working through a particular memory and the therapist she had been working felt unable to work with her. The feeling she was left with was her emotions about this event were 'too much'. Therefore she did approach this session with a degree of scepticism that EFT really could help this very intense memory and emotion but she was also very desperate for help and in her words 'ripe' to work with the memory. I considered myself fortunate, much of the work had already been done to get to this point.

She was very aware of her memory. As a very young child her mother, who she recognised to be seriously emotionally disturbed, possibly with undiagnosed schizophrenia, tried to kill her. She reported memories when a black darkness came over her mothers face and it looking as if something evil had come over her.

I began with asking her what would it mean to her to have freedom from this memory. She answered it would mean she could breathe. I then asked 'If you could breathe what would that mean?' She started to cry and she said 'I can live'.

I instructed her to keep just tapping as she was quite intense at this point and evidently tuned into the feelings. She calmed down and I gently asked her to check her beliefs about living.

I want to live felt about a 5, halfway between true and false

I deserve to live felt a 0, not true at all.

I am allowed to live felt a 0 and once again she was very upset.

'How can I be allowed to live when my mother wanted me dead'. Again I instructed her to keep tapping as I repeated

'That happened, its over, I survived, that was then, this is now, its not happening now. My body remembers a feeling and feelings can change and I choose to allow myself transform that feeling somehow'.

This allowed her to calm down again.

She started to tell me about a memory where her mother put her pillow over her face and she could see this event in the 3rd person with her little hand scrabbling over the edge of the pillow. This is how she had been tapping on this memory trying to disengage from it but with no success. However as she talked she got more and more intense.

I decided to use one of my favourite metaphorical techniques to take her a few steps further back from this very distressing memory and invited her to imagine a box or a basket to put this particular 'Mother tried to kill me memory'.

She imagined a wicker basket floating in a river. For both of us the idea of Moses in the basket on the Nile came to mind. From now on all the tapping phrases follow the path of this visualisation where my clients subconscious mind now took over.

“Even though this basket is floating down the river, someone may discover it I accept myself and all my feelings”

“Even though the sky is black and the moon is shining on the basket.....”

“Even though the sky is red, the sun is coming up, its a new day.....”

‘Even though the basket is not moving, it can’t go forward it can’t go back.....

The intensity rose here, I don’t want to leave my mother but how can I stay

‘Even though part of me wants to stay and part of me can’t stay its too dangerous.....

I suggested tapping at this point

‘Even though I can’t go forward and can’t go back, this is an impossible situation, part of me really loves and needs my mother and part of me is so afraid of her, I need a miracle right now, there is no solution to this problem, I can’t leave, can’t go, what if there is a third way?’.

‘What if I can go up, I wonder if I can go up, how will I go up? Perhaps God can help me, thats what I need now, only a miracle can help me’

She reported a sharp stab of anxiety at this in her solar plexus I asked her to place her hand on it and be aware of its shape and colour, a clear orange segment shaped piece of glass. What was this piece of glass trying to say? She answered ‘if my my mother didn’t want me God might not want me either.’ This felt very true

‘Even though my mother didn’t want me, she tried to kill me, I wasn’t good enough, what if God doesn’t want me either I choose to know the truth is....(I just leave this as an open ended question to allow the client to bring up a reframe rather than making the mistake of pushing my own reframe during a vulnerable moment which can be intrusive and unacceptable)

‘The truth is my mother isn’t like God, my mother wasn’t God, my mother was sick, God can help me!’

‘Even though the basket is rocking, something is trying to get out, I see a little hand coming out of the basket’. Again tears and strong emotion which subsided as we kept tapping.

‘Even though that little hand is coming out of the basket, that brave little hand, reaching out for help, I really appreciate that little hand, that hand helped me survive.....”

There was a moment here of appreciation for this little girl who did survive the situation and had what it took.

She said she could now see into the basket and the baby was grinning and reaching to be lifted up but she couldn't lift up the baby

"Even though I am scared to pick up that baby, what if I can't look after it, what if I hurt that baby, what if I am like my mother and won't even know it until I have a baby, what if that evil is residing in me and this baby brings it out"

We did a lot of tapping around this fear and belief she had this blackness just like her mother. There was a deep sigh as she realised she was not like her mother and did not have this blackness.

She then said 'I need to visit this memory now, I need to help my mother, can I tap for my mother.'

I asked her how she would like to do this and she wanted to tap for her mother when she was asleep before the darkness came, as often she would awake from sleep and be in this black place.

I asked her to imagine being outside the door. She was aware of her small child self being relaxed and keen but she was less so, as if the child trusted her more than she did.

"Even though I am afraid to go into the room, what if there is nothing I can do to help"

She imagined entering the room and seeing her mother there lying asleep. Immediately strong feelings of compassion came up. We tapped as she spoke about the fact her mother had been under intense stress, so many difficulties for her, with no support at all.

She imagined tapping on her mother, acknowledging all this pain and suffering her mother had been through and bringing her peace now. She felt deeply honoured to be able to do this and it felt very good for her.

After she had some time to absorb this peace and sense of forgiveness I then asked her to go back and imagine the baby in the basket.

The baby was still smiling but there was a snake in the basket.

'Even though there is a snake, a black and yellow snake, ready to strike, I can't pick up the baby, the snake will attack me, I can't help this baby its too dangerous.

She reported the snake looking more relaxed and less ready to attack. I asked her to be aware of the purpose of this snake in the basket. She said it was part of her always ready to defend against good or evil, always on the attack, a very destructive part.

We talked a little of the function of the nervous system and how we need to be able to be ready for action when necessary so having a snake would not be a bad thing, but this snake did need time off.

Even though this snake has been on guard 24 hours a day trying to protect me, of course I needed a snake, I was a vulnerable baby with no protection, I really appreciate this snake it has been keeping me safe, I choose for this snake part of me to know that I am an adult now, I have more resources, I can trust myself to know when I am safe or in danger and act appropriately.

This felt very good for her and she imagine allowing this baby part of her to nestle in her heart while the snake hovered above her heart available to protect her if necessary.

She reported her breathing was much improved.

I went back to her original limiting beliefs and retested.

I want to live was a full 10 now.

I deserve to live felt and I am allowed to live both felt about an 8 but she realised she needed to do some further work and felt more than able to now tap on specific parts of this memory as the memory was now not causing much distress at all.

I left with the agreement that we could work together again if she felt she was still stuck but I felt confident she did have the skills needed to deal with this effectively now we were past the most intense buried fears.

I received an email a few days later from her:

I had the hardest time remembering much about the whole scenario. Like it was so far away and I couldn't really get a hold of it, it just kept floating away, so that was wonderful. I had had 2 really hard weeks before I talked with you and suddenly I was just so light and just couldn't remember all that stuff.

When I checked in today, I was a 10 on "I want to live" and "I deserve to live" but still only an 8 on "I am allowed to live". So I did some more EFT on it and it suddenly struck me that I am totally allowed to live - otherwise I would have died back then! If I hadn't been allowed to live, I wouldn't have come back, I would have died! But I didn't die - so clearly I am supposed to live/I am allowed to live. All that writing on my wall, as Gary says, is totally wrong. And now, I am a 10 on "I am allowed to live" as well :)

So, I'll keep checking in and see how I am doing with that.

A funny coincidence is that this week I received my immigrant visa to Canada - it has been a 6.5 year process to become a permanent resident of Canada - and this was the week that I received my right to immigrate to Canada. A new start in a new country, where I am allowed to live :)