



Tapping on TREES - a metaphor for using EFT

By Gwyneth Moss, EFT Master

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

Hi Everyone,

EFT Master Gwyneth Moss, from the UK, spells out a useful metaphor that expands upon the tree example that I use in The EFT Course. Interestingly, she uses this model to teach us how to craft useful EFT Set-up phrases. Please know that this article assumes that you have familiarity with The EFT Course on DVD see www.emofree.com.

Hugs, Gary

Tapping on Trees - Part 1

In his excellent article in the emofree [tutorial series](#), Gary compares an emotional problem to a forest of trees. In my teaching I like to extend this metaphor of the trees and the forest to offer my trainees a useful model that can act as a guide to help navigate through an EFT session.

Our emotional forests are filled with healthy trees of joy, compassion, love and resourcefulness and yet there are also weed-like trees of fear, shame and anger that, though they may have been helpful once, have now become a problem. We can use EFT to clear these unwanted trees so that our emotional forests can flourish.

EFT Newcomers often ask "How do I find the right words to use?" Well, the beauty of this **TREE** model is that it helps you to craft the words of the set up phrases. I'd like to share the **TREE** model with



you and to take you through it with the illustration of Becky and her encounter with the Rat from Gary's excellent EFT Course DVD.

T-R-E-E spells Tree.

T is for Trunk or Trigger.

The **T**runk of the tree is the bit above the ground that you can see. Every emotional arousal has something out there that sets it off, a trigger. It could be something we see, hear, touch, smell or taste or it could equally be something that we imagine or remember seeing, hearing, touching, smelling or tasting. Our emotional systems can't tell the difference between what we imagine, what we remember and what is coming in through our senses.

For Becky the **t**trigger, the **T**runk of her **TREE**, is the word "rat" as Gary says "what would you do if someone put a rat in this room?" Becky does not need to see a rat. It is enough for her to hear the word and imagine a rat in the room.

R is for Roots.

The **R**oots of a tree are underground; from the surface you can't see them. When Becky hears the word "rat" she does not stop and think about why rats are scary or what they remind her of; she just gets scared instantly, physically and automatically. In that moment Becky is not conscious of memories of previous experiences with rats but below the level of her awareness a little bit of her brain called the amygdala will be matching that trigger to the roots of past emotional experiences.

Somehow, long ago, Becky learned to be afraid of rats. It could be that she was surprised by one as a child or saw a rat-infested horror film when she was too young, or even that her mother was afraid of rats and she learned by imitation. We don't know and we don't need to. Whatever happened back then, Becky doesn't consciously remember that now but her mind-body system does. The memory is what we call an implicit memory and like the **R**oots of the **TREE** it is buried and not apparent from the surface. We can only see the branches of the tree – we can't see the roots.



E is for Energy.

Energy is the life force of the **TREE**. Our energy system gets disturbed, goes "zzzt" by responding to the **R**oot experience as if it was happening over again for real, rather than responding to what is actually happening out there now. As Gary holds out his hands and says "Imagine there's a rat right there now!" Becky's energy system is going "zzzt". That "zzzt" is not in response to a friendly guy like Gary standing there with his hands held out. That "zzzt" is in response to something that happened long ago and that scared her in a big way.

E is for Experience.

When **E**nergy goes "zzzt" we get one or more of the following **E**xperiences: an emotion, like feeling afraid, angry, ashamed or whatever; a change in physiology such as tension, nausea or sweating; a firmly held emotionally laden belief; or a behavior such as running away, hitting out, reaching for chocolate or biting nails.

For Becky as her **E**nergy system goes "zzzt" in the presence of the imaginary rat she experiences:

- an **emotion** she calls fear;
- her **physiology** expresses the "zzzt" as sweaty palms, heart pounding;
- the strongly-held **belief** "I am afraid of rats";
- the **behavior** of running away.

The **TREE** chain for Becky is a **T**runk, the word rat, which matches to a **R**oot (unknown past experience) that sets off the **E**nergy "zzzt" that she **E**xperiences as fear, sweaty palms and running away.

Finding the Words

Now how do we use this **TREE** model to help craft the words to use in EFT? Well because the **T**, the **R**, the **E** and the **E** are all connected we can craft our words around any of them and get to the "zzzt". When Becky came up on the stage Gary started tapping with the



most obvious and crafted the words around the trigger "rat" as in "Even though I have this challenge with rats..."

Becky's **EE**'s, her 0-10 intensity level then changed, her **E**xperience was different and so Gary brought in a real live rat as a test: was the **TREE** chain still linked? Did the **T** trigger still set off the chain and result in a problem **E**xperience? Well we all saw Becky happily stroking the rat and having it lick her finger. The test showed that the **TREE** was gone.

Gary could equally well have started by crafting words around her **E**xperience as in "Even though my palms are sweaty and my heart pounding..." (This is what we do in Chasing the Pain) or her behavior as in "Even though I want to run away..."

Very often starting with the **T**runk (trigger) or the **E**xperience will be sufficient to clear the unwanted **TREE** and (as with Becky's case) after tapping a few rounds for the Trigger we can test and the chain is no longer set off. Sometimes the process seems to get stuck and then we need to go searching for the **R**oot (what we may call the core issue).

So here are some simple guiding points for clearing unwanted **TREES**. Start with crafting some words around the **T**runk (trigger) or the **E**xperience as it happens in the present and do several rounds of EFT, checking for further aspects and getting more specific after each round, until the problem is no longer a problem. If the problem "sticks" then look for the **R**oots or past experiences and tap for those until they are no longer a problem. Then come back to the present and test: does the **T**rigger still give rise to the problem **E**xperience?

TREES can also generate further trees. The **E**xperience can feedback and act as a **T**rigger for a secondary **TREE** and so create an unwanted forest. Thus an emotional energy disturbance that is experienced as resentment can trigger further roots of resentment and set off further waves of "zzzt"s. This will be the subject of a future article.



Tapping on Trees - Part 2

In my first article in this series I introduced you to the **TREE** metaphor as means of navigating through an EFT session.

The Trunk of the TREE is the trigger, whatever is out there or imagined or remembered to be out there. The Trunk of the TREE connects to the Root of the TREE, the emotional event of the past, which may be consciously remembered or may be a hidden or implicit memory. The Root sets off the energy disturbance or "zzzt", the first E of TREE. The "zzzt" is then manifested as an Experience (emotion, belief, behavior or physiology) the second E of TREE.

Forests of unwanted TREES are created when the E of experience itself becomes a trigger and creates more trees. For example, in response to some trigger (somebody shouting say) the experience is a particular behavior, like nail biting, the nail biting itself then becomes the trigger for emotions and beliefs about nail biting.

We've all heard people say "I hate myself when I bite my nails" and of course "I hate myself" then sets off more emotions, beliefs and behaviors. This happens because our memories are stored in our memory banks with emotional tags. When we feel a particular emotion, memories with a similar tag are accessed. This is why when we feel happy we can remember all the good times and when we feel sad then its like life has always been nothing but sadness.

So it goes like this: something triggers frustration; frustration triggers nail biting; nail biting triggers "I hate myself because I can't stop this"; "I hate myself" triggers memories of failure; memories of failure triggers tears and so on.

If these chains continue uninterrupted then this is how unwanted forests spread. These secondary trees can generate lots of emotional arousal that obscures what it's all about. Thankfully with EFT we can clear many of those secondary trees to get to the heart of the matter. Here is an example.



Example: Clearing Trees to get to the Root

Kay (not her real name) is a top level manager in a large organization and was off work with stress. She came to me with a whole forest of emotions: confused, tearful, feeling out-of-control and not able to find a reason for her behaviour other than her own miserable shortcomings.

Kay was ready to tell me about everything that was wrong with her and all the woes of her life. Rather than catalogue her many ills I asked her when this episode had started or got worse and she said that she had been off work since a recent board meeting in which her department had been heavily criticized despite good performance in difficult circumstances. Since then she had fallen apart.

We started by tapping on her general manifestations of emotion "Even though I'm tearful since the board meeting...." and "Even though I wake up shaking since the board meeting..." after each round she was calmer, we were reducing the secondary trees but had not yet got to the central tree. When she had calmed down enough to do so, I asked her to imagine being in the board meeting and to ask herself: "What was the worst thing about that?" She sat quietly and then said strongly "It's not fair!" so I asked her "What does its-not-fair remind you of? What was happening the first time you ever felt that its-not-fair feeling?"

We were rewarded with a memory, a Root. When she was 12 her mother threw her alcoholic father out of the house. On a rare visit to Dad, just before her birthday, he promised her a watch next time if she was a good girl. Well she was a very good girl but Dad never gave her the watch and a few weeks after her birthday she saw her mother wearing a watch and concluded "That's mine, it's not fair".

We tapped around the specifics of what she saw and heard. Then I brought in a reframe, referring to her mother: "what does a single mother bringing up 4 children on her own and holding down two jobs need a watch for? No, a twelve year old needs a watch much, much more." This had Kay laughing out loud as she tapped. I then brought her back to the boardroom meeting and found that her emotion had gone right down, and out came a change of perception



that 30 minutes ago would have seemed a miracle: "So what if they criticize, I'm retiring in two years and it's going to be good to take a backseat and wind down and plan to do what I enjoy."

This is an example of how tapping on the experience of the emotions can reduce the secondary trees and so allow the main root to emerge for specific tapping and permanent clearing. Had we worked on her many tearful feelings Kay would no doubt have slept better but the "It's not fair" would have been re-triggered by the next obstacle she encountered.

Kay made a contribution to the Quotes page of my website she said: *"A lifelong trauma has been unlocked and unblocked. I can see myself on top of a mountain and there are lots of roads ahead."*

Gwyneth Moss
EFT Master