

## Using EFT for Complex Issues

If you feel you know the basics of EFT; the basic recipe and shortcuts, how to find core issues, how to be specific and avoid shifting aspects, how to recognize and neutralize Reversals, then you're ready to learn about more complex issues. You may not be ready to handle these more challenging issues, but you should at least know how to recognize them.

The main difference in difficult and simple issues is that complex issues almost always have multiple aspects and a root cause that need to be discovered and examined. For that reason and others complex issues are not generally for the "newbies".

First let me *broadly* define "Simple Issues". There are no hard and fast rules for this, but typically simple issues are usually:

- Single faceted; your boss embarrassed you at the sales meeting, you can't seem to shake your hiccups, or you're disappointed that you didn't get the promotion, you're upset over your relationship breakup.
- Recent; as opposed to something that happened years ago, or has been going on for several years.
- Not chronic; that is it's not a persistent problem like chronic pain, anger or grief
- A simple pain or injury; such as headaches, cuts, bruises, back or joint pain, etc. as opposed to a complex medical issue or a serious illness
- Fear or non-complex phobia; fear of spiders, birds, public speaking, as opposed to deep-seated fear of water from your brother trying to drown you as a child
- Simple emotions; like stress, frustration, anger, embarrassment, cravings, etc.

Broadly stated, simple issues are ones you can generally work on and resolve yourself. There are hundreds of simple issues that can be dealt with using basic EFT knowledge and.

### Two Tiers of Complex Issues

I believe there are Levels of complex issues, and they both almost always involve multiple aspects and/or hidden core issues.

Tier One Issues would include issues like grief, chronic pain, "minor" traumas, some abuse issues, weight issues, food addictions, stuttering, asthma, and most non life-threatening illnesses. Tier One issues can *sometimes* be dealt with yourself, but you need more than rudimentary knowledge and experience with EFT to succeed in most cases.

**Tier Two Issues are more-difficult-to-work-with and should not be tackled by amateurs. Tier Two cases include child abuse, sexual or ritual abuse, traumatic or life-altering accidents or deaths, severe and sustained physical or emotional abuse, serious illnesses, drug addictions, morbid obesity, and depression. Tier two complex issues are usually highly charged emotionally or often a result of very traumatic occurrences. Also included in these more difficult cases would be psychological problems such as bi-polar, schizophrenia, multiple personalities, borderline disorder, and so on.**

**As a beginner it's best to avoid Tier Two issues when working on yourself or others and seek help from a professional EFT practitioner or psychotherapist. My concern is always that people will *try* EFT on a complex issue, then give up when it's not working, blaming EFT for the failure. Yet it's seldom a shortcoming with EFT, but rather the lack of knowledge or experience with the person applying it (usually the person with the issue.)**

**That said, sometimes what seems to be a simple issue turns out to be quite complicated, and you need to recognize it as such and know what to do when that happens. A great example of a complex issue, disguised as a simple one occurred during my Master's Training Course with Gary Craig. A volunteer "client" came to the front of the room and stated to the Master Candidate "practitioner" that she wanted to work on her persistent chapped lips. Well knock me over with a teaspoon! I thought we were supposed to be dealing with tough, complex cases in this course. So, I took the opportunity to go to the ladies room.**

**When I got back, just a few minutes later, the same subject had taken on the persona of a loud, foul-mouthed sailor. It turned out that this was only one of her several "multiple personalities". Chapped lips my foot! This was a doozie. I shouldn't have been surprised, since situations like this have happened numerous times in my private sessions, or in workshops.**

**An example of a seemingly simple issue turned complex  
There are many ways to deal with difficult or complex issues, so I'd like to give an example of a typical case. "Kim" came to me because she was having trouble sleeping. Initially, she couldn't think of any reason for it. After further investigation, and questions such as, "When did this start?" and "What was going on at the time?" it was discovered that Kim had been physically and emotionally abused as a child by her "evil stepmother".**

**Kim was seldom allowed to sleep peacefully through the night, and, even though she was in her fifties at the time of our session, I believed it was her childhood experiences that were affecting her sleep as an adult. Kim claimed she had "dealt with all that" during traditional therapy and didn't think her step-mother issues**

were relevant now. Based on her current insomnia problems, however, that wasn't the case.

We started by "cleaning up" any remaining anger, resentment and hatred toward Kim's stepmother. In spite of her previous years in therapy over her childhood traumas, there was still a lot of negative charge on how she was treated. Kim rated her anger, resentment and hatred at a 9, even after all these years later! It was clear then that this was more than just a clean up of leftover issues.

Since these are such closely related emotions, based on the same events, we were able to clump them together. You cannot successfully bundle together fear at being thrown in the water by your cousin, anger at your dad for not protecting you and hatred toward your real mother for leaving home.

As a beginner you should not group different aspects or emotions together at all. But since I'm supposed to know what I'm doing ☺ I get to clump closely issues together when the circumstances are right...and it usually works for me. If I weren't getting the desired results when bundling emotions, however, then I would go back and deal with each issue, emotion or aspect separately. In the case with Kim, clumping worked just fine.

As I often do for old issues, I muscle tested Kim for a Reversal to see if she (her sub-conscious, actually) was ready to let go of her anger toward her stepmother. I do this for the client's benefit to demonstrate the power of the sub-conscious mind, especially for old, chronic, or highly charged issues. I had Kim say, "I really do want to get over this anger, resentment and hatred toward the Step-bitch" (which is what *she* called her stepmother). I then tested her arm strength, which was, not surprisingly, weak.

This often upsets or shocks clients a bit, causing them to think that maybe he or she must consciously want to stay in this "uncomfortable" or negative condition. The client often says "But I really *DO* want to get over this!" I assure them that Reversals are neither a conscious choice nor a character defect. In my experience, almost all old or chronic issues are somehow imbedded in the body's subconscious or magnetically in their genes.

Negative emotions, especially anger, often become addictive to the body. That's why someone physically abused as a child will often unconsciously seek out a spouse that will treat him or her the same way as their parent. This addictive pattern is not something we consciously decide to do, nor can we easily decide consciously to change the behavior.

If someone has carried around pain, anger, frustration, grief or other emotion for many years his or her body often *adapts* to, or even becomes *addicted* to, the negative emotion. After awhile the negative state or emotion becomes the norm. Think about it. Haven't you known someone who seems to be perpetually angry? They may be grumpy most of the time and snap at everything. If you ask them what they're mad about they usually say "I'm not mad!" Their anger has become so common to them that they don't even notice it...until it's gone.

Often clients will say they're not sure how to act if their anger or grief or other long-time emotion is gone. But again, that doesn't mean they are making a conscious choice to stay in that mode, nor does it mean they are walking around in a state of anger all the time.

Performing a Reversal Neutralization simply breaks the magnetic bond or sub-conscious hold the negative emotion has on the body, allowing EFT to work. As explained in the "9 Stumbling Blocks" article on overcoming SBS (Secondary Benefit Syndrome), the neutralization is quite simple to execute (read the article on 9 Stumbling Blocks).

In Kim's case I simply had her tap on the Karate Chop point while saying "Even though, for some reason, I don't really want to get over this anger, resentment and frustration toward the Step-bitch (heretofore referred to as the "S-B"). I do accept myself completely." We did that three times, adding the phrase "for WHATEVER reason..." into the sentence, to cover all possibilities.

After that I muscle tested Kim again, having her make the same initial statement of wanting to get over the issues with the "S-B". She tested very strong this time and was pleased with herself.

Next, I had Kim pick a particular incident or memory that was the most troubling for her with her stepmother. It was not surprisingly the first time the "step-bitch" terrorized her at night. Kim was sound asleep when "Lorraine", the "S-B", came into her room drunk and brandishing a bullhorn from the football game that night. She thought it would be cute to blow into the sleeping child's face. Naturally, it severely traumatized Kim, causing her to cry and cower most of the night.

The stepmother and Kim's drunken father laughed themselves to sleep in the next room, unaware that their abhorrent behavior would affect not only Kim's sleep but her self esteem and peace of mind for most of her life. Remembering this incident Kim's SUDs level went to a 10.

**We started Kim's treatment with this simple set-up statement while rubbing the set-up spot on the chest\* "Even though the evil Step-bitch scared me to death by blowing a horn in my face that night, I love and accept myself today."**

**\* I prefer to use the sore spots on the chest for the set-up statement, but Gary and many others use the Karate Chop point, which works just as well.**

**We repeated a variation of that three times. By variation, I mean, that sometimes I try to cover slightly different aspects that are closely related to the main issue.**

**Such as:**

- "Even though I had done nothing to deserve it, my wicked "S-B", blew a horn in my face at night when I was just 7....."**
- "Even though I was a good kid, and had done nothing wrong, the awful "S-B" scared the ---- out of me..."**
- "Even though the wicked "S-B" just laughed after scaring the bejeebers out of me...."**
- There are different ways to say the acceptance statement and these are just a couple of examples.**

**(The end of each statement is followed by a love and acceptance phrase.)**

**On the first round of tapping, on each point, I had her say "The horn-blowing terror" for the reminder statement. On the second round I did "stream-of-consciousness" statements with her. I use my intuition while tuning in with the client, but if you're working on yourself, just say what comes up for you about the situation. On each tapping point you bring up a thought about the incident. This is often about the unfairness of the situation, like "it wasn't my fault", "I didn't mean to do it", "I was just a kid", "I didn't even know what I had done wrong," etc.**

**At each consecutive point I had Kim repeat a different phrase such as:**

**It wasn't fair....it scared me to death....I hadn't done anything wrong....I don't know why she treated me like that...maybe she was jealous of my relationship with daddy...I was just a little girl...it wasn't my fault...she was evil and mean to me....I was a good kid and didn't deserve that...I couldn't believe she thought it was funny and kept laughing at me, etc.**

**This type of tapping is often highly effective and covers several closely related aspects at one time. I usually do two rounds back to back like this to really diffuse the situation. It's ok to repeat the same aspect or phrase more than once. What is not ok is to veer off the initial issue, such as "Daddy should have been there to protect me".... "My new bicycle got stolen the next day too." These are completely different aspects of the same incident.**

**I then asked Kim what her intensity level was. Constant reassessing helps you to know where you are, and therefore where you need to go. She was then at a 6, so the next set-up statement became:**

**“Even though I’m still upset at the memory of how the S-B treated me I realize now that it wasn’t my fault and I completely accept who I am.”**

**At each point we tapped using the reminder statement of:**

**“Remaining anger, resentment and hatred toward the S-B”**

**Notice that on the first rounds we dealt with the “Horn Blowing Incident”, and on this round we addressed the more specific emotions associated with the incident *and* her stepmother.**

**Being flexible and creative comes with practice and experience and is just part of the “art of EFT” It’s not a specific “rule”. Each practitioner does EFT slightly different.**

**It’s not a matter of what’s right or wrong, but what works.**

**I do what I find works for my clients and often shift gears on the fly if something isn’t working. However, that said, until you’re more experienced, stay with the basics.**

**On the next round, we did more of the random stream-of-conscious phrases, just like above. On the third round in this series I eased into more positive choices on each point such as:**

**“I’m so tired of feeling this way...she doesn’t even deserve to be in my thoughts....I really want to let this go....I hate feeling this anger and resentment after all these years....I thought I was over all this....I really want to let it go....I deserve to be free of this....I deserve to be able to sleep at night (now sneaking up on the original problem)...I really want to be able to sleep at night...I’m so tired of feeling this anger, resentment, and hatred...I’m even willing to start forgiving her, etc.**

**After those rounds the next assessment brought us a 3 SUDs rating. I love getting to a 3 or less, because I can then introduce the Choice Method (developed by Dr. Pat Carrington) but with my own little spin on it. Here’s how we did it with Kim:**

**On the set-up point I had her say:**

- **“Even though part of me is still angry, resentful and hateful toward the S-B, a bigger part of me wants to get over it. So I choose to let that bigger part of me win by overcoming this anger and hatred.”**
- **“Even though I still have many bad feelings toward my step mother (introducing the less inflammatory term of endearment, to which she did not balk) I choose to ask my body to release and eliminate any remaining anger, resentment or hatred toward her.**
- **“I love myself enough to sleep calmly and peacefully through the night, so I choose to consciously let go of these negative feelings and emotions toward Lorraine.”**
- **On the first tapping round of this sequence I had her use the simple reminder statement on the points repeating the negative phrase of:**
- **“Remaining anger, resentment and hatred”.**

The second round was all positive phrases, alternating on each consecutive point between an “elimination statement” and a “positive outcome” statement like this;

- **EB “I choose to eliminate these negative emotions toward my stepmother...”**
- **OE “I choose to be calm and unaffected about this incident...”**
- **UE “I choose to completely let go of these negative emotions toward my step mother”....**
- **UN “I chose to start forgiving her”...**
- **CH “I choose to overcome any remaining negative emotions toward my stepmother”....**
- **CB “I choose to feel calm and confident”...**
- **UA “I choose to completely release this anger, resentment and hatred”...**
- **TH “I choose to relax and sleep peacefully through the night”. (Again, I started sneaking back to the main issue of sleep deprivation.)**

On the third round we alternated the positive with the negative on each different point;

- **“remaining anger”....**
- **I choose to let it go...**
- **remaining resentment and hatred....**
- **I choose to eliminate these feelings....**
- **remaining negative feelings about my stepmother...**
- **I choose to overcome them completely ....**
- **remaining negative emotions ....**

- I choose to overcome them and start forgiving what's her name (This brought a chuckle, which like Gary teaches, is a great way to change the energy or break up a tough situation. I could tell by Kim's demeanor that we had really made significant progress.)

At this point Kim said she *thought* she was over it. That usually tells me that it's not quite gone but perhaps at a 1 or .5. I asked her to guess how much negativity might still be there and she said quickly "About a .5". When an issue is *almost* gone (a 1 or less) I use the 9-point Gamut sequence to polish it off.

Doing the Gamut (tapping on the back of the hand at the Gamut point, eye-work, humming and counting, etc.) balances the right and left hemispheres of the brain and usually finishes off a low SUDs rating quite nicely. And it worked for Kim.

Even though her stepmother had mistreated her physically and emotionally for years, taking care of this first incident cleared up all of the occasions her stepmother mistreated her. This is often the case with multiple times of abuse. However, sometimes it's not the first time, but the last time, or the worst, or the time the other parent knew what was going on but did nothing to stop it. What's important is that you eliminate all remaining negative emotions associate with that issue.

To test the completion of the problem I asked Kim to *try* to get herself upset at something the S-B had done to her. "I don't want to call her that anymore" She said. "Lorraine probably had a terrible childhood herself and really didn't know how to be a parent. Besides, I can't seem to even remember clearly the other things she did to me. It all seems kind of fuzzy or something."

If there had been a time when the stepmother had hurt Kim in some way and it had not been cleared with the other work we did, we would have dealt with that separately. There were in fact, many times that the stepmother embarrassed, hurt, humiliated or taunted Kim. And even though there were several other bullhorn incidences dealing with the first trauma seemed to collapse the whole enchilada.

**Note:** This is not always the case, however. Often in cases of abuse we need to deal with several aspects or incidences to clear the issue.

Now that Kim was over the awful behaviors of her stepmother I wanted to take her treatment one step further. This is my favorite part of EFT, as well as for my clients.

**For real completion and icing on the cake, after finishing an issue, I like to do a final round inputting only positive affirmations. And in Kim's case I still need to address the sleep issue.**

**At the setup point we said:**

**“Now that I'm over these issues with my stepmother, I want to start sleeping completely through the night. So I ask my body to relax, be calm and fall asleep easily. I also ask my body to sleep deeply and peacefully through the night.”**

**I've found that “asking my body” for whatever I'm trying to accomplish, is a highly effective way to get what I want from it. If you ask your body to stop a cold or virus, for instance, end lactose intolerance, overcome a food sensitivity, heal an injury faster or whatever, the body almost always complies. It's as if the body says “*Oh, OK! I didn't know you wanted me to do that. So I'll do it now and thanks for sharing*”. Try it yourself for whatever you want your body to do; run a faster race, heal an aching joint, overcome an upset stomach, or become more confident or brave.**

**Back to Kim's final positive round. On each consecutive tapping point we input a positive sleep phrase such as “I choose to fall asleep easily....I ask my body to stay asleep through the night...I choose to be relaxed and calm when falling asleep....I choose to quiet my mind so I can sleep deeply and peacefully through the night....I ask my body to sleep soundly and wake up in the morning refreshed and energetic.”**

**Kim loved these affirmations and was feeling really good about herself. However, she was actually getting sleepy as we spoke. I sent her home with the instructions to try this last sequence just before going to bed that night. She agreed and did it. The next day Kim called me with real excitement and joy in her voice. She had not only slept soundly, but also felt that a 50-pound weight had been lifted from her body. She felt rested, more energetic and most importantly, felt optimistic about her life and her future for the first time since she was a little girl. I love this job!**

**This example with Kim is just one way to handle a more complex case. The point is, you can't just say “Even though I don't sleep at night” or “Even though I have arthritis” or whatever, and expect it to work. You need to find the core issue(s) and deal with them completely as well as any Reversal. Often there are many aspects to deal with as well.**

**This is why a trained EFT practitioner is highly recommended for complex issues. There's nothing like experience to help you sort out what will work. Kim told me she had “tapped until I was bruised” on her sleeplessness problem but to no avail. She hadn't even come close to the real reason for her problem.**

**It's possible, but not as likely that you will encounter the same blocks, as a beginner in trying to work with complex issues. However, it's worth a try. Many report that they at least feel better, or more relaxed after tapping, even if they don't get complete resolution. But "feeling better" is not the purpose of EFT. So do try it for your simple issues. But please seek the counsel of a competent EFT professional to help you completely resolve complex problems. Whatever you do, don't give up on EFT. It does work miracles! And good luck.**