

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH EFT TAPPING AND MENTAL HEALTH
EXPERT, DR. AMY GAESSER, ON BRINGING EFT TAPPING INTO SCHOOLS**

ELENI VARDAKI: Amy, hi. Thanks for much for being here.

DR. AMY GAESSER: You're welcome, I'm very excited to be here with you today.

ELENI VARDAKI: Before you share your tips here for EFT Practitioners or (other) people who want to bring EFT into schools, having seen or heard of the great results that you can get and how effective it is for supporting students' mental health, if you could talk us through how you got into doing this research on EFT, and bring it into your practice as a school counselor and private practitioner?

DR. AMY GAESSER: I'm happy to do that. So I was a School Counselor for 16 years. I worked with primarily Middle School students, and during that time, over a 2-year period, I had 3 students who had experienced either trauma or anxiety in different ways.

They were working with an outside therapist, and I noticed that they were able to move through their traumas or their anxieties in a way that was uniquely different than some of the other children who were just doing talk therapy. So I had three students:

1. One had had a traumatic brain injury and was at the top of her class before the accident. And then after the accident doctors were saying, "No, she's only gonna be about 70% with her cognitive ability." And parents were saying, "No, we're not gonna accept that. There's gotta be other things we can do." And so they started incorporating EFT into her treatment, and she graduated high school again top of her class.
2. Another young man was so clinically anxious that he could hardly get into the school building most days. And we incorporated EFT through his therapist into his school day activities. And by the end of the school year, he was coming every day, he had friends, and he was doing much better.
3. And the third student had had a sexual molestation trauma, and had become almost catatonic. And mom said, "There's gotta be another way to do this besides medications." And so she incorporated EFT into part of that child's therapy, and she did much better and was no longer triggered by her traumas. And now is a successful young woman, with a family, and doing amazing things.

And so from those experiences, I realized pretty quickly that there's something different here. The kids aren't just learning to cope, but they're actually healing their traumas, their anxieties.

And so from that I became so passionate about getting EFT into schools that when I had the opportunity to pursue my PhD, I decided to do research in that area because we didn't quite have

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enough research at that point to convince schools that it was an evidence-based practice and help them feel comfortable getting it in the door. So when I was doing my PhD program, we did several studies on EFT in schools.

I've continued to pursue that now that I'm a College Professor, and I also have a private practice where I work with both adults and children using EFT as a tool. So that's how I've gotten into it. And as I said, I feel very passionately about the need for EFT in school settings. And I've learned a couple of things about best ways to approach schools, and how to focus things so that you can get your foot in the door as well as help teachers and school counselors effectively incorporate it into the school day. Because what we don't wanna do is overwhelm folks in schools any more than they already are.

ELENI VARDAKI: They've got so much already on their To-Do List, and they're so busy as it is. How do you, you know, for someone who wants to be of service and in their local area, their community, offer their services to bring EFT into schools, how can you get in the door? What tips have you got for someone just starting out?

DR. AMY GAESSER: Sure, sure. Well, I'm happy to share that. So one of the biggest things I've found is don't focus on what they're doing wrong. Or don't tell them that - don't send the message to them that they can't be successful without this great thing that you're bringing to them. What you wanna do is focus on what are important things to them and give them praise for either their goals. Oftentimes it's to help their staff be less stressed, help students be less stressed, anxiety management, how to move through the day more smoothly, or feel more confident in their academics if we're talking about students.

Another thing that I focus on sometimes is how when students are less anxious and stressed and staff are less anxious and stressed, there's less days missed from being in school. And so those are key things that schools are looking for:

- Improving attendance
- Helping kids be more academically successful
- Keeping the burnout rate down for their staff.

And so those are the areas I focus on, and I praise them for having those goals. Even if they're not clearly stated goals, I talk as if those are things that they've already got as high priorities. And often schools do want those as priorities, but they're just juggling so many other things.

The other thing I do is I focus on it first as a self-care tool for the staff - for teachers and counselors and other school personnel administrators. Because what we don't wanna do, they've got so much on their plates, they're trying to juggle so many things, and so if we can pretty quickly help them experience what EFT can do for them, even in just one tapping session, we can start to help them then think about how to integrate it.

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DR. AMY GAESSER: There are some great strategies I use with administrators because oftentimes they're doing the discipline in the schools. So I help them learn EFT as a down-regulation and focus tool for themselves. But then also help them understand that if we don't help kids down-regulate, first, when there's a difficulty going on at school, they're not gonna be able to engage as effectively. And so that creates buy-in with the administrators.

With the teachers, it's about self-care. And it's about helping their class run more smoothly. And so we talk about that. With counselors, it's about their own self-care so they can best serve schools.

But whenever I go into a school, what I do is I work with the staff for a couple of weeks to help them become comfortable with the tool, and experience what EFT can do for them before we move on to then incorporating it into the classroom. Because if you believe in the tool, and you've experienced the tool, you're gonna be much more highly effective in sharing it with your students.

ELENI VARDAKI: I'm wondering, like, is there a certain time frame, like 15 minutes, 20 minutes, or 30 minutes, that you found works well when you're introducing it to administrators or teachers as a first session?

DR. AMY GAESSER: What I usually do is I'll go in and do a presentation, maybe an hour presentation, talk a little bit about. I find it's really important with both students and staff, to give them a little bit of information about what EFT is doing. Give them a little bit of research information. So we talk about the (Dr. Dan Siegel) hand model for the brain, and (how) when your brain's under stress, the thinking part goes offline. And what EFT and other strategies do is help bring that back online. And if we don't do that first, we can't learn. We don't relax as much. We can't problem-solve as effectively.

Then I take them through a tapping session within that presentation, and we talk about how it works best when it's specific, so we can fine-tune it some more. So it kind of wets their appetite, gets it interesting for them.

Then usually I start to engage and work with those who are interested - and I never force it on anybody. I say, "Who's interested? We can do this as a pilot." And then I spend about a 3-hour session with them, helping them become more competent in EFT. And then I give them 2 weeks to use it on their own. I'm available through emails and things like that to help them fine-tune it.

We get back together. We talk about where it worked and we problem-solve where it didn't and how to fine-tune things.

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And then from there we take it and start to do it in the classrooms. I introduce it, you know oftentimes it's a transition tool. So kids coming in and settling from the bus, in the morning. Kids coming back from Recess. Older students, you know, getting ready for tests or exams, or just transitions between classes.

So helping them find ways to integrate it into the culture of the school. Seeing it as a normal part of "Hey, this is the way we help our brains. This is the way we help ourselves to regulate." The more we can make it a normal part of the culture, versus "This weird thing that everybody's doing", helps kids engage a little bit more. You know?

And when working with kids, I acknowledge, and sometimes the staff too, "This looks a little weird. It's a little different, you know? But we're incorporating some practices that have been used in other fields, for a number of years, to help people..."

- deal with stress.
- deal with anxiety.
- think more clearly."

And then when working with kids, we never force kids to tap if they don't want to. But what I found, especially in studies where we're talking with teachers and we're talking with kids about what it's like to use it in school, what I've found is sometimes the adult's perception is that:

- "Kids are never using it, they're not interested", or
- "One student, in particular, is not interested".

That kind of thing. But when you talk to the student, they're like, "Oh yeah, I do it all the time. I do it at home. I've taught it to my brother. I do it when no one's looking 'cuz I'm a little self-conscious. But I've found ways to tap without anyone realizing I'm tapping."

Other kids don't care. It's a part of the culture. They just tap, they share it with their family, friends and it's not a big deal.

The final piece you have to make sure you're engaging with is the parents and the families. Because you wanna prep them and prime them and answer any questions that they have. So I usually do an Evening Presentation too, for the parents, to answer questions. And again, I'm available via email if they wanna talk further.

ELENI VARDAKI: Got it. Wow, that's so interesting to see how you've got these systems in place, not only for the day but also for support afterwards. So you've got systems in place where you can support them to problem-solve.

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DR. AMY GAESSER: Absolutely, absolutely. And you know, we work with the teachers and the students to help them to begin to trust themselves as far as - because some of them get so anxious about "Where exactly is that point?" And so we talk about 2-3 fingers, we talk about trusting their body, and kind of tuning into their body. Because you can feel that slight adjustment as you start to use it a little bit more.

And we really help them get more comfortable and feel self-empowered, which is one of the most beautiful parts of EFT. Once someone has mastered it, it's really a lifelong tool. And so you're helping people become self-empowered throughout their lifetimes.

ELENI VARDAKI: Yeah. Yes, yes, yes. Oh love it - love it! So before we wrap up is there anything else that you'd like to add?

DR. AMY GAESSER: No you know I think we've covered quite a bit. Just when you're going in, make sure you're getting to know the folks a little bit. And what's their desires, what are their focuses, and where are they most stressed? And then gently focus in on those areas.

And have fun! Have fun, because sometimes we go in all serious about "how this has to be". But you know, part of EFT is bringing joy to the experience as well.

ELENI VARDAKI: Yes! Oh gosh, thank you so much, Amy. This has been really, really helpful. It's been wonderful to have all these lovely tips, and to learn from your experience. So I personally really appreciate it.

And on behalf of the practitioners watching here, or others who are watching this on YouTube, I'm sure they also appreciate it too. So thanks a lot. Many thanks.

DR. AMY GAESSER: Absolutely, it's my pleasure, it's my pleasure. I look forward to talking further in the future.

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