



TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH JONDI WHITIS FOR THE TAPPING IN SCHOOLS SUMMIT (OCTOBER 2022)

ELENI VARDAKI: Hi Jondi, thanks for being here.

JONDI WHITIS: Good morning. I'm very happy to be here with you.

ELENI VARDAKI: I wonder if you could talk to our audience here about why you started introducing EFT into schools.

JONDI WHITIS: Oh, I would love to. The short version is that I was a Teaching Artist in the New York City school system. And that's one of the largest in the world, if not the - and it's pretty chaotic, because there's so many different types, systems, needs. And that gave me a chance to see, first-hand, boots on the ground, from Kindergarten up to High School, what they might need that they're not getting, that's not part of the actual curriculum of learning, that prevents them from accessing the curriculum.

As a Teaching Artist, my job was to help them with Literacy, using Art and Creativity to get there. I loved that, because I went to Art School, and I used to be very involved in the arts. End everyone in my *inaudible* was an artist of some kind. So this was really great for us because we got to meet the children in a different way. They were very excited, because we have long left the idea of sort of Humanities in a wide education here in this country, I'm sorry to say, for testing readiness and things like that. It's really sad.

Children would say, "Oh boy, it's something different!" And that way, I was able to make new information accessible to them, and I already knew about this wonderful thing called Tapping and all of its adaptations. And so I was able to apply it at need, on site, in situ.

ELENI VARDAKI: So you started off applying it in your own classroom then, so you kind of started, with all of them at the same time? Or did you start with one year group?

JONDI WHITIS: Well I had done a website a long time ago with Sue Charlton called Tapping Star, and I've let it be neglected a bit because it's old technology now, but it's still there, tappingstar.com (See <http://tappingstar.com/>). On there you can see some downloads, they are age-appropriate, and one of them was called Tapping Star (See <http://tappingstar.com/page/downloads-1>). And it was a little Diddy, a little serial learning song that involved kinesthetic crossing of the star that a child could do, in circle. So we started there with this little tiny song for the little tiny kids. So there was something to do and it's imperceptible that you're learning something at that time. But of course we were touching on 5 points (of the EFT Tapping points), and getting everyone together, with the teacher, to create this group experience.

So that's one of the No. 1 things I'll say might be useful to your listeners is, many times the teacher would just like to get everybody on the same page. That illustrates a group opportunity, right? (Yeah). So it might be in the early morning, it might be coming back from lunch or vacation. It might be making a



transition, or it might be a departure for a period of time, and wanting to get them all on the same page, or at attention. But these are wonderful ways to do it with tapping.

ELENI VARDAKI: You've already started answering the second question actually, which is how have you introduced tapping into schools? And that through your role as a classroom teacher. Since then, you've done so much incredible work in the field. Would you like to say anything else about how you've been introducing it at the schools?

JONDI WHITIS: Well yeah, I would like to say all of us want to do more of it and it's, and I think it's very important for us to go ahead and say it's harder than we think it's going to be, on one hand, because schools are systems. And as the Child Protectors, they are also risk averse. "I don't know what that is." "I've never seen that before." "Who's telling us we should do this?" "Is their research?" So just go forward knowing, yeah, everybody has this issue, but together we're making a tipping point. That's Number One. Number Two: What I learned, I decided to put in a book with my friend, Deborah Miller who is formerly a Cellular Biologist, and later a Pediatric Oncology Child Advocate in Mexico. And we have a heart for children. And so we said, you know, we're getting tired of saying the same things over and over again because we wanna teach everybody. So we actually created a book between us, *Emotional First-Aid for Children* (See <https://jondiwhitis.com/books/>). And my original title for this was "Talking to Children During Troubling Times." Because 'troubling' is something we can all access without becoming triggered ourselves. If I had said "Teaching in Times of Trauma" that would segment and send a different message. So this is one of the things that I'm most proud of, because I've sent it as many places in the world I can, so that it's going to be helpful as a field guide. And yet knowing: There's no one way, there's no one program that's off-the-shelf that's perfect for everyone. And so in this way, I hope to liberate your listeners to look at the culture of your surroundings, and your school, and their unique problems, and how do we find out? Ask.

ELENI VARDAKI: I wonder if you could share like an example from your book so that we can get maybe like a practical kind of "How To" tip?

JONDI WHITIS: Absolutely. So there's a couple of things we're talking about here. We're talking about level of child development, which informs your approach. We're also talking about "What is the situation?" Right? Is it normalcy and nothing else is going on and you are merely introducing a new piece of curriculum or expectation? Or have you just had something tragic happen, perhaps a natural disaster like a fire that consumes your community? So these two things are really going to inform how you're going to introduce it to them, right? (Mmm).

And the next thing I take from - there's one area called **Emotional First-Aid** (or Psychological First-Aid, they are the same). And then there's another part of that called **Verbal First-Aid**. And Verbal First-Aid is about using language that is appropriate to the two things I just mentioned. I'm going to arrange my languaging so that if I'm talking to pre-teens, I'm going to be saying something much more casual. Maybe much more, almost a little cheeky sometimes.

And I'll go, "Hey, you wanna do something about that?" Because that is their development, language style, emotional sort of style, if nothing's going on. And that doesn't mean that I am using their phrases, because I've done that before and it's hilarious, but you know, it's not exactly what I had in mind. It's



just a way to get their attention and make them laugh and break that emotional state of sort of freeze, or discomfort.

But if something has happened, I think it's important to conversationally approach them. Again, I'm still talking about the same age group, maybe let's say 12 to 16. And I'll say, "I know there's a lot going on. I have some ideas. They might work for. You wanna see?" Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom. Short, directive, conversational.

Because I'm really trying to reach them where they are, which is Gary Craig's probably No. 1 Rule: Meet them where they are. So if it's a smaller child, we're going to address our language, even our idiomatic language. You know, already in that room, about where they are, right? So you might be able to go, "Kids! Something new I just learned. I'm so excited! Shall I show you?" Right? Just small little languaging pieces, but I'm riding the energy and discovery of small children. They're delighted, and curious, and ready to discover. So I'm going to speak to them in those terms. Does that help?

ELENI VARDAKI: Yeah, absolutely. Oh gosh, I love it! And I love how you're modeling it as well, so that's like really helpful to see how we change our intonation, and adapt, and meet them where they're at. We could go on for days with this, but if you could kind of in a nutshell give some examples of what outcomes and what results you've had in your work with schools, so people can get a taste of it today?

JONDI WHITIS: Absolutely. And in complete honesty, I wish I had more, I wish I had a huge canon to draw from and share with you. But the truth is I've only had the experiences I've had. Yours may be different, right? This is like a pre-frame. But the ones that I have had, teachers have been very grateful to have a new tool that is not cognitively-focused. When we are teaching mind-body techniques, especially in times of trouble, it's important to realize we need to go body-up instead of head-down.

This, like the great Dr. Siegel will show you (referring to Dr Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain demonstration) - we flipped our lids (when our brain is in a stressed state). So we don't have access to the Prefrontal Cortex. We don't have access to our mid-brain limbic learning, emotional learning, in a good way. We have more the reptile coming up to, you know, the bottom stem of the brain, and the automatic coming up to the emotional learning. But all of it goes offline. So all we're left with is our reactive survival brain (when stuck in a state of stress). So that's no good in this moment. That means I have to get back into my resourceful state. And so of course kids love flipping their lid. Kids love not being blamed for "bad behavior". Instead it's "reactive behavior". All of these things are things that we learn together, and through places like your summit, this is how we learn and put that into play. I wanna say the teachers have said, "I'm able to easily calm the class or get their attention." "It shows them how much better they feel when they're in their body, embodied, than all over the place." "It helps them with their self-control. Because if I teach self-control that merely means will power, do, you have to you must...they can't! They've filled their lid!"

So what we're trying to do is peel them off the wall, so to speak. People go, "Well we treat yoga." And I say, "That's great, but if they're on the wall, they're not doing down dog, they're doing every dog, right?" (Yes.) So helping teachers find a body-up protocol, as a area not just a protocol - I should have probably said that - helps them teach as they do, from their purview, their relationship, and understanding, "I can't keep barking at them, preaching at them, demanding at them, because that part is not available right now." So what they have learned, what they've brought back to me and said, "Hey Jondi, now I can talk to them - but not yet. I'm learning to train me to model better in a different way so that I can now



talk to them about what we need do or what's going on. And I can do that as a onesie, that could be one-off or one person at a time, or I could do that as a group."

And I guess the next thing I wanna say to everybody, is what I learned is, 100% is often an unreasonable idea. We are outliers - I'm an outlier. You know, there are always outliers that do not fit the norm, and in this case, you're gonna have some. So try not to be frustrated by the fact that not everyone's gonna on board. Because they're an outlier. Because they have extenuating circumstance. Because they're still flipped. So go with what you can, and let the energy of the room make the rest of the outliers seek that more coherent, safe, quiet, calm place. They may or may not. 100% is not your job.

ELENI VARDAKI: Yeah, oh my goodness. That's really helpful as well for us to remember. 'Cause sometimes we feel like unless we get everyone engaged...

JONDI WHITIS: It's so reflective! It's about us. It's all about us! No, it isn't.

ELENI VARDAKI: Exactly. Yeah, very, very useful reminder and a useful reminder to stay humble, as well. It's not about us. Focus on turning the flashlight out onto the students so that we can actually be there for them, and be fully present. So thank you very much for that. And before we wrap up, is there anything else that you'd like to add?

JONDI WHITIS: I wanna just tail onto what you said. Being fully present is hard work, at first, because we are not embodied all the time, either. We are very, sympathetic to our environment. Reactive. So cut yourself a break, and learn how to easily slide yourself into this other parasympathetic mode of being fully present and at balance with them. Often that's the most important thing that you can give yourself, and them.

ELENI VARDAKI: Love it. Thank you very much, Jondi. Thank you very much for your time, and wisdom from all of these experiences you've had with many schools. I'm excited to start reading your book. I'll have links below to your website. I can also have a link below to your book, so people can access that.

JONDI WHITIS: Thank you. I hope to be useful.