

## EFT in German Schools, Preschools, & Daycare Centers

Eleni Vardaki interviews Silke Johnson for her Guest Speaker blog series.

**ELENI VARDAKI:** Silke, hi. Thanks so much for being here.

**SILKE JONHSON:** Yeah hello Eleni. Thank you for having me. I'm very much looking forward to this.

**ELENI VARDAKI:** So let's dive in. I'm interested in learning more. We've already talked a bit about this, but I'm curious to learn more about why it is that you decided to start offering workshops to Preschool teachers and Daycare specialists. For the younger ones, if I understand correctly, it's (ages) 0-6 that you tap with during their end service training, their staff training days?

**SILKE JONHSON:** Exactly. I've been working for more than 22 years as a Behavior Consultant. So consulting families with children, teenagers with neuro divergence - autism, ADHD, even Down Syndrome. Any type of things that might have communication issues, behavior issues. And I also was consulting schools and preschools.

### **What often came up was that there was little understanding for:**

- What the nervous system does
- What trauma might have influence on the children
- And what maybe also teachers and preschool teachers have an influence on the children, their behavior, (and) their way of dealing with situations.

Since I am an EFT Master Trainer, it was somehow clear to me that's something they could benefit from. And especially the children could benefit from.

I was doing an Inclusion Instruction course for myself. And meeting this association. And I just suggest that that might be something they could be interested in. And they approved, and so for 8 years now, I've been actually doing this. Providing these workshops and going through this association.

Also doing in-service days, you know, at the preschools with just a team. The workshops usually are from all over Germany. They can attend, or even German-speaking Switzerland. And the in-service days are specific teams (in) specific preschools.

**ELENI VARDAKI:** So I'm curious with regards to the how, like how do you bring, with all of your other skills and expertise, how do you bring EFT into these training days for teachers in these workshops?

**SILKE JONHSON:** In the beginning it started out with...

- “We have these challenging behaviors. How do we deal with those?”
- “It's so overwhelming.”
- “There's this biting, there's this hitting, there's the scratching, there's throwing stuff.”
- “How do we deal with the behavior?”

And always the focus (was) on the consequences. Even with the behavior approach I'm having, I'm usually looking more into:

- “How can we prevent things?”
- “How can we set up the situation that we fulfil the need of the child to not show challenging behaviors?”

So yeah, in the beginning I usually collect, you know, what the issues are. What they are having trouble with. And it's a long list of behavior they are being confronted with.

And the other thing, the personal stress of the preschool teachers is also that have very little money. They get underpaid here in Germany, and have a lot of responsibilities, and usually not enough staff. So that's another, another part that comes in, you know, their personal stress. They're overwhelmed.

Wanting to do other things than they can do, and not having the time. And not having the knowledge. Not having the training. So that comes in as well. And so that's how EFT came in.

You know, I have the behavioral part, but on the other side, dealing with the stress, I know it works so well to tap, right? And to look at yourself. And to see, “Okay, what does that with me? If this child is spitting at me? If this child is screaming? If this child is hitting another child?”

Usually we have just 2-days workshops. But at the end of the second day, they're usually aware that there are some things they can change about their own nervous system, their own calmness, their own stress. Usually they are also stating “Well, if I can change things for myself and look at these things with my understanding too, and understanding there's a need, it's not because the children want to provoke us and hurt us and be mean to us.”

You know, sometimes they take it very personal. I even had people say, “Well, I beat because it hurts. And I want them to know how that is.” And that's, you know, not legal. And it's not right.

But sometimes, because they have no idea how to deal with these situations, these things come up. So being aware of that, knowing what they can do in the first signs of

# ELENI VARDAKI

EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT

stress in themselves. And then also helping the children to cope with the situations that might be difficult.

**ELENI VARDAKI:** And in terms of results, like what results have teachers who you have trained fed back to you after bringing it in for their own self-regulation, and self-care and emotional wellbeing? And then filtering it out into tapping with the kids, like what results have they got from that?

**SILKE JONHSON:** Just within the workshops, usually situations come up they had experienced as a child, and sometimes even at schools or preschools, where someone said something. And so they acknowledge that there are some personal situations they have not processed well yet, or might have even processed traumatically.

So looking at that “What does it with me, you know, what's going on in me?” And to appreciate those parts and acknowledge those parts and deal with those parts so many times there's also sadness coming up about things they have missed or about things that have not gone well for them, and having that realization and tapping with that and dissolving that to a large degree. Sometimes even within those two days, we don't go into specifics, right? I don't do trauma work with them during those two days, but still having that awareness helps a lot.

And then doing future tapping, that's usually what helped the most. Where they can even just imagine a situation coming up the next day that might be stressful, and tapping on that. Where it's a high stress level, SUD level 8/10, 9/10, 10/10, and then just by doing a few rounds, calming down and realizing, “Hey, this is just a child, right? And there is a need. They just want to be seen. They want to be heard. They want to be held, they want to be acknowledged, they want to be loved. And if I can fulfill that, or at least hold space for that, then it's also much calmer for myself.”

And so we practice that, and they learn how to do that in the morning before they go to school, for example, to preschool where they tap on themselves. We usually try to set up a few rituals where they either have like a jingle, or even red light they encounter on the way to work, or each time a child starts to get louder. They start doing a tapping round either for themselves or with the entire group. There are so many great songs.

I mean, most of them are in English, but they are great songs they can just put on and do with the children. And I have my Tapping Bear, so I usually show them what to do with that. And how they can engage the children with the stuffed animals or with the doll and do it together. So whenever they feel a stress coming up as an adult, they just do it for the entire group. And usually that helps the children to come down, too.

**ELENI VARDAKI:** And I'm curious, were those stickers on the Tapping Bear?

**SILKE JONHSON:** I have little Melody Learning Center, that's my company, I have little, little stickers with a logo on. Right? These are notes because most of the children I'm working with, they like music and so they can tap on these little notes.

# ELENI VARDAKI

EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT

**ELENI VARDAKI:** Got it. So they can then remember where they see where the points are, and practice. Okay, cool, cool, cool. So it sounds like, basically, you work on identifying what are the triggers that sometimes can come up for a teacher that's actually their work to do, from a behavior that might be a past memory from their time in education.

And once they clear and neutralize that, or at least bring some awareness to it, and then they tap on thinking about the next day, the next week going back to work and a potentially similar situation come up, it reduces the chance of them getting as triggered so that they can manage a situation in a more constructive way. Did I understand that correctly?

**SILKE JONHSON:** Yeah, certainly. And the other thing is, you know, sometimes they have issues within the team too. That maybe a colleague that is not so nice, or they're just overwhelmed because they don't have capacities in time. Or they have more responsibility to take on because someone is sick. And all these type of things. So also tapping for that.

And even trying to get the entire team to be involved. So one can maybe remind the other, "Hey, I think something is coming up. Maybe there's some tension. Would you like to tap maybe around? Or if you like, you can take a break and I take over and then you could do a round of tapping for yourself."

Or sometimes just doing a round with the children.

I have lots of other exercises we implement as far as all these Brain Gym energy exercises we can implement, the crossover movements, and these are all things the children love. They love to do that. They have fun with that.

**ELENI VARDAKI:** Before we wrap up, Silke is there anything else that you'd like to add?

**SILKE JONHSON:** Oh, that's so fast! Time goes by so fast.

We actually founded an initiative, four colleagues of mine and myself, to bring EFT more into schools. To reach more schools and more associations. To teach the teachers in the first place, and preschool teachers, but then also that they either can pass it on to the children, or we can come in and teach the children as well. And also get the parents involved. Because we strongly believe if we start there with the children, with the teachers, preschool teachers, then there's so much more calmness and peace overall.

I'm convinced we wouldn't have war if everyone would learn that. So that's like one of my biggest goals, one of my biggest wishes, that everyone has EFT in their toolbox. And can use it, and apply it.

**ELENI VARDAKI:** I understand you also work one-to-one. You've got a private practice as well. Do you wanna talk a bit about that?

# ELENI VARDAKI

EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT

**SILKE JONHSON:** I do one-on-one coaching with parents, with teachers, with individuals, with children too. So when working with parents, usually I'm working first with the parents and then with the child. But things come often up, like anxiety. Being afraid of going to school.

Like I have one situation right now in my mind where a girl, 10-year-old, didn't want to go back to the gym because she got bumped into by two boys. She thought they did it on intention. So she felt very hurt, not only physically, but also emotionally. She didn't want to go back in there. So we tapped on that. We tapped on her fear. We dissolved the situation and went back into the moment where she experienced it or shortly after. And then we also did a future tapping on that. And it's so cool because she already knows now the procedure, so she can go and she's like, "I'll do it. I'll do it."

And then she tells me how to do it. And she taps and one, two rounds usually are enough. And then this thing is from 10/10 to 0/10. And she's like, "Oh, I'm looking forward to going back to sports tomorrow."

**ELENI VARDAKI:** Yeah. Oh my goodness. That's the amazing thing is when we get them young and we tap with them when they're young, they need less tapping. They don't have as much baggage as the older ones or the adults. 'Cause it's nipping it in the bud.

Totally. You know, if they fall down, I had a little girl falling off the bike. I didn't know her. I was walking by and I saw her falling and like, "Would you like to try something?" She was crying. She had her knee scratched. "There are these magic points." And she's like, "Wow, yeah." So we did that and it wasn't even a round and she was already fine.

Or another child falling off the trampoline. I was like, I thought she really hurt herself. The neck looked a little weird in the beginning, but not even a full round. And she's like, "Oh, it's all good." I usually want to keep tapping, and the children are done!

**ELENI VARDAKI:** Yeah, and they're open. We don't have to tap on any suspicion, any doubt, any over-thinking things. They are already in their body. They're already open. They're feeling their emotions. We go straight to it, and it's like, it's just incredible.

**SILKE JONHSON:** And one major example - maybe someone already heard me talking about that because for me, that was the most intense experience - tapping with a 9-year-old girl with Down Syndrome. And I was doing behavior services with them, right? The parents already told me before, "She's crying so much in the car, and screaming. It's really hard to get her into the car, she usually doesn't want to."

They have no idea what happened. She might have gotten hurt, but she couldn't talk. She couldn't tell. She just refused to go in the car, and it didn't matter if they went somewhere where it was fun or if they went to a therapy session or to school. Whenever they got into the car, she was screaming.

# ELENI VARDAKI

EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT

So I started the regular thing, approaching the garage where the car was, and reinforcing single steps, and getting her to open the car and standing there. But she didn't go into the car. And then a good friend of mine told me, "Well, did you try tapping with her?" I was like, "I didn't even think about it 'cause I thought, 'She's not understanding it, she's not imitating yet.'"

And she seemed to not understand the process yet. And for me at that point, it was in the very beginning when I started EFT. It was still that I thought "It's more (working) mentally." Right? And so I started tapping on myself, and I tried out if she would be okay with me leading her hand, which she was. So we tapped a few rounds and not even two rounds finished, and she was climbing into the car!

I did all the reinforcement stuff still, music, and right away got her back out before she could even get uncomfortable. Then she took my hand, and she wanted to continue tapping. From that moment on, it was dissolved. There was no more issue.

**I didn't have the language right. I didn't know what to really tap on. I just talked about things that might have happened. Like...**

- "Even though I might have burnt myself in the hot seat...", or
- "Even though I might have pinched skin when they closed the buckle of the seatbelt...", or
- "Even though it might have been really boring and a long way...", or
- "Even though I might have been going to a place I didn't want to go to..."

So all these things I, I just tried it. And it seemed to work. There it was clear to me. It's not mental, it's not cognitive, it's really emotional. That was a big eye-opener for me, this situation.

**ELENI VARDAKI:** Oh my goodness. So inspiring, so inspiring. Thank you so much, Silke, for your time. Sharing your experience here. And I really appreciate you also coming on here to help support spreading this information that this tool exists that a lot of people just don't know it exists. It's helping so many lives.

So the more people can be aware of it, more people who are ready to give it a go and see if it can help them can also benefit. So thank you for helping well with supporting and raising awareness with that.

**SILKE JONHSON:** Yes, thank you for providing this platform and providing and having this interview. So thank you very much.

**To learn about Silke's services and offerings go to: <https://www.melodycenter.de/>**