

The Emotional Freedom Technique for the Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, or Anxiety: A Review

Context

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression are prevalent mental health disorders in Canada. A recent study reported that more than 13% of Canadian military personnel were diagnosed with a mental health disorder following their deployment to Afghanistan. The Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) is an intervention thought to alleviate a range of psychological issues, including PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

Technology

The EFT is based on the idea that imbalances in the body's energy system have an effect on an individual's psychology. The technique aims to correct these energy imbalances by having the patient recall a traumatic memory while repeating a self-acceptance statement and tapping on a sequence of points on his or her body.

Issue

The EFT may be an alternative to standard care, such as pharmaceutical therapy or cognitive behavioral therapy, or it may be an alternative to other non-traditional treatments, such as eye movement desensitization and reprocessing. A review of the clinical evidence on the EFT for the treatment of PTSD, anxiety, and depression will help to inform treatment decisions for these patients.

Methods

A limited literature search was conducted of key resources, and titles and abstracts of the retrieved publications were reviewed. Full-text publications were evaluated for final article selection according to predetermined selection criteria (population, intervention, comparator, outcomes, and study designs).

Key Messages

- The Emotional Freedom Technique may be effective for reducing the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (based on limited evidence).
- More research is needed to determine if the Emotional Freedom Technique is effective for treating anxiety or depression.

Results

The literature search identified 53 citations. After screening the abstracts, 6 studies were deemed potentially relevant and an additional 2 articles were identified from other sources. Of these, 2 randomized studies met the criteria for inclusion in this review.

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