

The Curse Of Premature Reassurance

You probably cut yourself when you were a kid. Maybe you fell off your bike, or stepped barefoot on broken glass.

When you ran screaming to your mum to show her the wound she probably did three things – calmed you down, cleaned the wound, applied a sticking plaster.

Imagine if you suffered an injury today as an adult, you might end up at your local Hospitals Accident & Emergency Unit, where the staff would calm you down, clean the wound of all the stuff that shouldn't be there and then bandage you up so you can heal.

But, imagine for a moment that you are lying there with a wound full of soil, splinters and other bits and pieces that don't belong to you. What would your reaction be if the medical team started to bandage you up without cleaning the wound? Would you become a little bit apprehensive?

You might ask: *"Aren't you going to clean that? What about infections?"*

"There, there, you'll soon be better!" say the medical team

You protest: *"What! I've got an armful of soil, you're covering it up! It will go septic"*

"No, no, no, don't you worry, just think happy thoughts you'll soon feel better!", they say, wearing happy smiley faces

"Happy thoughts! That hole in my arm is full of muck! Aren't you going to clean it first?"

"Just think of all the fun you'll have when you are all better ... we'll just get your bandage on"

"Argggghhh! I'm phoning my mum, at least she knows what she's doing!" you shout, as you run for the exit.

I know, it's a ridiculous scenario! Competent medical staff would want to clean the wound so that you have the best possible chance of healing.

EFT can do a powerful job of releasing negative emotions, anyone who has experienced this release can testify that negative feelings seem to melt away. In some situations there are a lot of facets to a problem and lots of painful emotions to be worked with and through. Life can be very cruel at times and there may be a lot of work to do to 'clean up' the debris of early traumas and difficulty.

It's not fun for the client or the therapist, but it's necessary work and it's essential to do a thorough job.

Unfortunately some EFTers (and I imagine other kinds of therapist) rush over the necessary wound cleaning to apply the positive bandage. When a 'negative' emotion shows the first signs of clearing they rush into reassurance and positive thinking.

"One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular"

Carl Jung

Premature reassurance is unhelpful for three reasons.

1. **It's disrespectful to your client.** They are sharing their deep inner experience, it's very personal, tender to them and the therapist seems to want to gloss over the pain and go straight to the happy ending. How can your client accept and work with their experience if the therapist can't?
2. **If there are still painful emotions and beliefs to be worked with they need to be dealt with.** If that work is not complete, you are leaving important work undone. Gary Craig rightly

works to get the intensity of issues down to zero so that his clients can have emotional freedom from that issue.

3. **Most difficult emotional situations are highly interrelated.** One of the joys of EFT is that one emotional clue will take you to another important fact of the problem and take care of that as well. Stopping the tapping early cuts off the possibility of a more thorough healing because those roots are never exposed.

If Premature Reassurance is so unhelpful why do therapists do it?

1. **Fear:** Specifically the therapists fear that the client, immersed in painful emotions, is going to go out of control and you, the therapist, are not going to be able to stop them. This is not helpful to clients who also have this fear and at least the therapist ought to be confident that they can contain the client's distress.
2. **Discomfort:** Some emotional states are very uncomfortable to be in and very uncomfortable to witness. If the client's pain triggers the therapist's pain then the therapist might feel highly motivated to get out of their shared misery.
3. **The need to fix:** It's possible that the reassuring therapist might believe that the client is broken, the therapist has to 'fix' them and they, the therapist, know just what they need. This is 'poor you I know just what you need'. It's a condescending attitude and it doesn't help. Remember how you have felt when someone has tried to 'fix' you (even if they had good intentions), it's not a good feeling.
4. **Faulty positive thinking:** Many EFT therapists (and others) are immersed in a New Age / Positive Thinking culture that promotes the supremacy of positive thinking. The belief being that positive thoughts are good and must be encouraged, 'negative' thoughts are bad and must be avoided, denied, suppressed. Simplistic reading of the 'Law of Attraction', books and films like 'The Secret' have given some people the impression that negative thoughts are to be feared and avoided so that you don't stray too far from the light. If that's your understanding, you might feel obliged to get the client into a positive state as quickly as possible (for their own good of course).

What can you do if you think you suffer from Premature Reassurance

1. Tap on your fears about clients going out of control (in whatever way that frightens you). Tap on any memories where this happened in the past. If you have memories of family members or friends flying out of control tap on those memories as well.
2. You need to be able to hold a space for someone else's pain without going to pieces yourself. Practice abiding with the discomfort of your clients. Tap on any previous discomforts you may have experienced.
3. Check and neutralise the need to fix. Say out loud "I have to fix my clients" or "I need to fix my clients". If either of those ring true for you get tapping. Being free from that attachment to that outcome will save you (and your clients) a lot of pain.
4. If you suspect you are attached to the positive you might like to start tapping on your "fear of the dark". Are there emotional states that scare you? Are there states you feel compelled to avoid? Being accepting of so-called 'negative' states is not the same as supporting them and won't lead you to be seduced by the Dark Side of the Force. Quite the opposite, being comfortable with them as the therapist demonstrates to the client that these feelings can be handled in a positive, accepting way.

To be clear about this: I'm not arguing that there is no place in EFT for the positive, that it's all doom and gloom. Quite the contrary, there is an excellent place for the positive – it's after the negative has been resolved and there is room for it to go in without opposition.

After all, if your child came to you with a cut or a graze you would clean the wound thoroughly before you applied the bandage, wouldn't you?