

Defense Mechanisms

As EFT practitioners we are in the fortunate position to help people break through limitations, release trauma and make progress in virtually all areas of their life. As responsible practitioners we will be certified and hopefully work within ethical standards as traditionally set by professional bodies and, more recently, enhanced by meridian energy/energy psychology organizations. As EFT practitioners we basically help people make the changes they want to make.

During our EFT sessions, how often does our work dissolve the resistance to or discomfort of addressing a core issue? With EFT we know we have a versatile tool. As pioneers of EFT we have mastered the techniques, understood the impediments to progress and are able to address the issue we are presented with whilst creating minimal discomfort to our client.

We have also learned strategies to take when EFT just does not seem to be working, or when it seems to be taking a long time. We know that it might take a few sessions (and indeed likely will) before an issue (especially a complex one) is resolved completely. The changes that occur after a short period of using EFT can be life altering and freeing. And we often read of such results, see it for ourselves and are motivated to carry on the good work.

But what about those sessions that just doesn't seem to be going smoothly, despite the techniques, strategies and great detective work? We do know that Gary Craig said that EFT might not work for *everyone* and like all therapies we understand this to be true. And as professionals we need to accept that. Perhaps we need to refer to another professional. If we give thought to all of the above there are two lessons that can, in my opinion be learned.

The first is to remember to *step aside* from our own need of an outcome. How often do we as practitioners want to see things get resolved in a way we think it should or could? What's to say that is what the client wants or needs? Stepping aside from the desire of an outcome is wholly beneficial. It stops the practitioner from transferring their own needs on to the individual, and it helps generate the 'healing space' for the client. Part of that healing space is about being wholly present with the individual. If we (even subconsciously) desire an outcome how we want it, then we cease being present and that deeper level of understanding is lost. In counseling terms we could think of it as being sympathetic rather than empathetic. The former is about us feeling what the client is feeling and wanting that to be resolved to address our own discomfort. The latter is understanding the client's experience and wanting them to have the release that they want, that is best for them. And whilst we may bring EFT into the coaching or counseling arena, EFT is not counseling. We understand that. And still we can learn from other professions (perhaps our own) that stepping aside from our own needs means that attention remains fully on the client and are helped to have the release as is meaningful to and desired by them.

The second lesson is to *recognize some of the defense mechanisms* that might be in place. Defense mechanisms are part of our protection. They have a purpose of saving us from pain. Understanding defense mechanisms and how they may show up can expedite the session and allow EFT to work on a deeper level more quickly. Having this understanding also makes us more proficient practitioners as we are able to understand and empathize with the client rather than having our own defenses triggered.

There are seven major defense mechanisms:

1. Repression: this can be thought of as motivation forgetting. A client may offhandedly state that they kept forgetting to mail an invitation to a family member to visit. The client may laugh it off and state something like 'oh I am so forgetful'. But it might be worth doing a little detective work. For example, who was the letter to? It might just be that this mention of the oversight is actually linked in with the reason for their visit.
2. Regression: can be considered a developmental retreat. A client may revert back to an earlier behavior because of emotional disturbance. An example would be the child who wets the bed in their later childhood. What is it that has disrupted their sense of safety and emotional stability?
3. Reaction formation: basically this is when we believe the opposite. An example could be the young teenage male who has a disregard for females. This may be reaction formation and he may be actually trying to deal with his strong sexual urges toward girls.
4. Projection: this is projection outward. Someone who likes to have things done for him or her might be quick to judge others as lazy.
5. Rationalization: giving justification to a belief, emotion or behavior. For example, a university student gains a C in a chemistry test and is convinced the poor grade is due to the teacher's harsh attitude following cheating by other students. They believe they should have gotten an A because they achieve this in the other classes.
6. Displacement: the redirection of impulse. A client may be acting or reacting toward others in ways which they were treated by a parent.
7. Sublimation: finding a socially acceptable substitute. Examples are aggression being channeled into sports activities or the child who pulls wings off flies or jabs insects with needles may become a dentist or a surgeon.

So above are seven defense mechanisms. Although EFT practitioners may not be psychotherapists or counselors and it is *vital to never work beyond one's scope of practice*, having an understanding of the above can assist in the detective side of the EFT session and may yield swifter results. It may also explain certain behaviors or expressions during the session. Such as the client who needs to stop and use the bathroom or get a drink of water every time they mention their job or the client who is habitually late for the session yet always has a good excuse. These are prime areas to do some detective work. There may just be a tappable issue in there.

An example of the above is with a client I had a few years back who came to me because she had a dentist's phobia. During the session she talked about the new clothes and toys she'd bought for her daughter and mentioned she made the appointment earlier in the afternoon because she was taking her daughter to riding lessons. She went on to tell me that she always

drives her daughter to school because she has heard of another child being called a name in the same school a few years back! While this client had come to me due to her fear of the dentist, I had decided to probe a little further as there may be something going on (my awareness of reaction formation highlighted client's seeming overprotective-ness and overindulgence of her daughter). After some gentle detective work the client told me she had never wanted a child but her husband was against an abortion or adoption. And although she had grown to love the child she held a deep resentment and regret for her. Some very tappable issues. We worked on these issues over three sessions and addressed the dental phobia in the fourth. The example highlights how helpful it is to understand defense mechanisms and how they may show up.

Writing this article has the objective to alert practitioners to the importance of responsibility and accountability. EFT is such a versatile and useful tool and there are many practitioners who are great at what they do. Yet, it is important to get proficient in understanding the different ways resistance shows up, such as with defense mechanisms. Furthermore, rather than being concerned about the above terms and definitions it is useful to understand they exist and how they might show up. Having this kind of knowledge can help direct the detective work as well as knowing when to call in a psychology professional. And as we all appreciate, it's vital to know when expert use of EFT is appropriate and when we may be going beyond our own scope of practice. Expanding our awareness can help define our boundaries and uphold ethical practice as EFT professionals.

Blessings always,

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