



Tuesday September 01, 2009

THE ENERGY PSYCHOLOGY CRAZE

HEALTH

Photograph by Christopher Bucklow

For better or worse, psychotherapy has always been a hard sell for guys. Which is why it's curious that so many men—manly men—are drawn to a New Age treatment called energy psychology: It is touted as having all the benefits of traditional psychotherapy with none (or next to none) of the talking—or the Freudian exploration or the group sharing. In fact, if a reticent throwback guy could create his dream treatment, this might be it. But is it effective? Heres what you need to know. *Strawberry Saroyan*

1. HOW IT WORKS

The therapy is most easily understood as acupuncture for your feelings, with tapping fingers replacing needles and verbal mantras helping to rebalance your psyche (typically, patients simply state whats on their mind or repeat a mood-evoking phrase). One of the biggest obstacles you're likely to encounter is self-consciousness: Repeating a phrase like "zip-a-dee-doo-dah" and tapping yourself can make you feel awkward, and telling yourself you "love and accept" your individuality can seem like reciting one of Stuart Smalley's daily affirmations ("and doggone it, people like me!"). But no one will ask how it felt when your parents forgot your 10th birthday.

2. THE CLAIMS

If it sounds like a quick fix, that's precisely what proponents say it is—they suggest it can be used for everything from fear of commitment to anxiety disorders, PTSD, and addiction. Dr. Candace Pert, former chief of the Section on Brain Biochemistry at the National Institute of Mental Health, calls it "the most important development in medicine since antibiotics." Other advocates point to rising interest—more than a million people have downloaded

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the manual for the Emotional Freedom Technique (the most popular form of energy psychology)—as evidence that the therapy will gain mainstream acceptance in due time, just as acupuncture did.

3. THE CRITICISM

Can it really be this fast and easy? The board of the American Psychological Association is withholding its stamp of approval. Most rigorous studies have proved inconclusive, and critics note that promising results could be due to a placebo effect or simply to the distracting nature of tapping on the body, which takes one's mind off problems. "Overpromoting treatments before the research evidence is in—I don't think that's responsible," says Scott O. Lilienfeld, a professor of psychology at Emory University. "One of the big questions for these treatments is, Are they working for the reason that proponents say they're working?"

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Monday April 20, 2009

PRESCRIPTION-FREE ANTIDEPRESSANTS



Photograph by Bartholomew Cooke

Right now, the only people feeling upbeat are the consultants hired to do layoffs. But before you reach for the high-powered happy pills, try these natural mood-boosters. *Katie Hintz*

The Fix: Fish and Nuts

The Sell: These protein-rich foods are sources of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, which protect your brain and prevent mood swings. Plus, nuts and fish contain magnesium, which soothes the nervous system, according to Dr. Edward Murach of New York Natural Medicine. Those carbs you scarf down when you're stressed have the opposite effect.