

# Eating Disorders

I have been privileged to deliver keynote speeches at several conferences on eating disorders. Why do you suppose the organizers of those conferences asked an EFT expert to address their audiences? Most attendees are professionals: psychiatrists, nurses, doctors, psychotherapists, or social workers. What could EFT have to offer these very experienced professionals that they don't already know?

The reason for these invitations is that the conference organizers and the attendees are painfully aware of the link between emotions and eating. Those suffering from bulimia don't purge for physical reasons; their behavior is usually driven by emotional pain. Likewise, binge eaters aren't packing food into their stomachs till they're stuffed because of physical hunger; they're propelled by emotional forces that override their body signals of satiation.

EFT can help those suffering from binge eating, anorexia nervosa, and bulimia to develop a healthy relationship with food.

Anorexia, a condition in which people starve themselves, can occur in men and women of any age, but it is most associated with adolescent girls. By itself, the term *anorexia* refers to a loss of appetite, while *anorexia nervosa* describes a psychological disorder.

Anorexia nervosa's most obvious symptom is extreme thinness, a body weight at least 15 percent below normal. Despite their thinness, those who suffer from anorexia nervosa have a distorted body image and see themselves as overweight. Three common ways in which they prevent weight gain are with excessive exercise, the use of laxatives, and by avoiding food.

A binge is any behavior indulged to excess, such as drinking, gambling, eating, or spending. Binge eating or bingeing refers to the practice of eating until one is beyond full. People who binge seldom notice what they are eating or how it tastes. This type of compulsive out-of-control eating is very different from the experience of appreciating, savoring, and enjoying one's food.

Bulimia, a binge-and-purge disorder, involves eating large amounts of food and then vomiting to remove it. An out-of-control appetite, feelings of anger and frustration, a history of fasting, the frequent use of enemas, purgative laxatives, or diuretics, and compulsive exercise may be additional factors. Often dentists are the first medical professionals to notice or diagnose bulimia because it harms tooth enamel and damages the esophagus. Bulimia also harms the stomach, can lead to dangerous metabolic imbalances, contributes to heart problems, and seriously

interferes with the assimilation of nutrients, leading to malnutrition.

Anorexia, binge eating, and bulimia are rarely problems in and of themselves. They are usually *symptoms* of unresolved anger, guilt, fear, and other harmful emotions. Until a sufferer makes peace with the emotions that underlie the behavior, the symptoms continue.

This is why you don't hear a lot of success stories when it comes to treating these problems. Some people struggle long and hard and are able to control their behaviors with the help of dedicated professionals. EFT gives both patients and practitioners new tools to resolve the emotions that drive much of this self-harming behavior found in anorexia nervosa, bulimia, and binge eating disorder. There are many stories on the EFT Universe web site, written by both patients and practitioners, of breakthroughs with these conditions.

These are serious conditions and EFT should only be used concurrent with expert medical advice and support. Talk to your doctor or licensed mental health professional about your desire to use EFT. They may have heard of tapping, and they're very likely to encourage you in your use of a self-help technique that can help you change your behavior.

In this chapter, we will explore some individual cases related to eating disorders so you can see the complexity of emotional issues that we often find underneath them. You will also see how experienced EFT professionals have used their creativity and experience to work through them.

Like the other chapters in the book and the other books in this series, this information is not intended to represent EFT as a cure for an eating disorder or any other medical or psychological problem. What EFT is is a stress relief tool, and it works reliably for that purpose. Mental health and medical problems should always be addressed with a competent professional such as a doctor or psychotherapist, and this is even more true with a complex issue like anorexia or bulimia. By all means use EFT to support your current treatment program after consultation with your primary care provider, but don't let your enthusiasm for your initial results with EFT compromise your regular care. EFT works best in the context of a treatment program that offers you a matrix of techniques to support your health and well-being.

We'll use several cases to illustrate how EFT practitioners approach eating disorders. The first is by Karl Dawson, an EFT Master and developer of a form of EFT called Matrix Reimprinting. Here Karl walks us through the intricacies of a successful anorexia case. As you will see, there were many related aspects and core issues that had to be handled before the client, Joe, could resume eating normally.

### **Joe Resolves His Anorexia—and More**

*by Karl Dawson*

At the time I was working with this client, there was very little on the EFT website regarding anorexia. I hope this article may help other practitioners tackle this issue. I did feel at the time that it was a

borderline case and I was in danger of going “where I didn’t belong.” But, after speaking to Joe, I knew he had given up on the health care professionals. And as far as his parents were concerned, “the professionals” had given up on Joe. So I knew I had to try.

Joe’s main problem was anorexia, having gone from 13 stone (182 pounds or 82.5 kilograms) to 8 stone (112 pounds or 51 kilograms) over a nine-month period, compounded by extreme anxiety, panic attacks, and self-harming behavior. Other issues that became apparent were an addiction to the artificial sweetener Aspartame, Attention Deficit Disorder, and feeling a loss of control in life.

Treatment consisted of eight two-hour sessions over a period of four weeks. Four of the sessions occurred in the final week of treatment, after Joe had been sent home from work because he passed out and was told to remain off work until his problems had been “dealt with.”

In the first session I concentrated on gaining Joe’s trust and mapping out some of the core issues that led a highly intelligent teenager from a good loving home to develop all of these problems. Joe insisted that his girlfriend sit in on this first session. This concerned me at first, but Emma was very helpful in encouraging Joe to work with me and happily tapped along, putting Joe at ease.

One of the first glaring issues was Joe’s (and Emma’s) addiction to Diet Coke, which is sweetened with Aspartame, a controversial calorie-free artificial

sweetener which some regard as highly addictive neurotoxin that is added to many diet products. Joe consumed up to fifteen cans of Diet Coke a day in order to suppress his appetite and maintain a daily calorie intake below 500 calories.

We all tapped on this addiction issue with simple Setup Phrases:

*Even though I have this addiction to Diet Coke, I deeply and completely accept myself.*

*Even though this Coke helps me suppress my appetite...*

*Even though I'm afraid I will eat more if I don't drink lots of Diet Coke...*

*Even though I'll feel hungry if I stop drinking lots of Diet Coke...*

Very quickly Joe reported a loss of interest in Coke and his consumption dramatically decreased over the next few days to the occasional can and then to 0.

This first success was critical in my view because it gave a quick positive example of the effectiveness of EFT, giving Joe belief in the process, and it also got him off Diet Coke/Aspartame, which turned out to be one of the triggers behind his panic attacks.

The following events happened around the time of our first few sessions and illustrate Joe's frame of mind at the time.

Joe's parents had hidden the scales in order to stop him obsessing about his weight. Joe found the scales and weighed himself just as his dad entered the room. Seeing that his weight had gone up a few pounds, in conjunction with his dad observing this (In Joe's mind he was letting his parents down again in the only area of control he had in life), sent Joe into a suicidal panic. Joe disappeared for a few hours and returned with cuts and grazes to his hands and face. When I spoke with him later, he was in a desperate state and just wanted to give up. "I'm sick of trying," he said, "I don't care anymore."

I got a call early one Saturday morning from Joe's mother asking if I could come round. Something had happened that I never got to the bottom of, but when I met Joe at his house, he was in a highly distressed state. For fifteen minutes or so I just tapped through the EFT points, occasionally repeating, "*This emotion, this anxiety, this panic.*" Joe eventually calmed down but was not in the mood to carry on with a session.

After talking to his parents for five minutes, I went to check on Joe before leaving. Joe was having his hair cut by Emma and was perfectly calm. Joe recently told me that earlier that day he had been "*only a slight breeze away from ending up in front of a train.*"

The dilemma was the eating issue. The last thing anorexics want to talk about or adjust is their food intake, but unless we consume at least 800 calories per day, the brain is starved of nutrition making any logical thinking difficult.

Joe had also grown wary of health professionals. He had already been treated by his General Practitioner, crisis team, psychologist, and anorexic specialists, all of whom he felt had abandoned him and let him down. Joe was under the impression that they were waiting for his weight to fall a little lower so they could hospitalize and force-feed him.

Knowing that staying away from the food issue was the only way forward, we talked about other things that were bothering him. I used EFTs favorite question:

*If there was an event in your life you wish had never happened, what would it be?*

It very quickly became apparent that a lot of Joe's problems had started around the age of six or seven at school. Until then he'd been a happy, carefree child. This I confirmed in a telephone conversation with his mother.

Joe's teacher that year was an elderly, old-school disciplinarian. From talking to Joe it was obvious he'd had some degree of Attention Deficit Disorder and/or Dyslexia, which had never been diagnosed. At the same time he was obviously very intelligent, leaving the teacher to draw the wrong conclusions.

In the first sessions Joe's memory of these events was vague to non-existent. In my subsequent talk with Joe's mother, she provided me with small amounts information, and we began to piece events together, sometimes just guessing what the teacher might have said in these situations.



The more we tapped, the more Joe remembered. Slowly at first, he started to recall memories which eventually flooded out, to the point where I had to write quickly to keep track on these issues to work on later.

I will let some of the Setup Phrases we used over the sessions tell the story of what had transpired between Joe and his teacher that year.

*Even though I found it hard to concentrate...*

*Even though I found it hard to do math...*

*Even though I had trouble reading...*

*Even though I didn't pay attention to the teacher...*

*Even though Mrs. Smith said I was stupid...*

*Even though she said I was a little monster...*

*Even though I felt out of control...*

*Even though I would panic and shout out silly answers...*

*Even though nobody wanted to be my friend...*

*Even though I was different from the other kids...*

*Even though I had to sit on my own away from other kids...*

*Even though the other kids laughed at me...*

*Even though I didn't fit in...*

*Even though my parents were called to school...*

*Even though the teacher told my parents I'm bad...*

*Even though my parents believed everything the teacher said...*

*Even though she said she tried to make me cry to get some emotion from me...*

*Even though my parents were angry with me for not trying...*

*Even though the harder I tried the worse I did...*

*Even though I let my parents down...*

*Even though I had terrible headaches...*

*Even though I gave up trying...*

There were also many mental movies we had to work through, each one having several intense emotional highs and many aspects. A brief description of these were;

One day Joe found a note in his desk and on it was a list of things he had done wrong. His teacher said it had been left there by mistake, but Joe was terrified his parents would get to see it.

In her "infinite wisdom," the teacher thought tying Joe to his desk would be an excellent way to stop him fidgeting.

Joe had seen one of the other children dotting ink on his hands. He told a few of the other kids that the boy had measles. When the teacher heard Joe, she made a huge deal out of it and took the kid with the spots out of the class, telling them she was going to call the doctor and the boy's parents. Joe was left shocked and afraid of the consequences of his joke.

One day Joe and his brothers were being picked up from school. In a rush Joe's mum handed him a check and told him to hold it. Joe absent-mindedly put it in his pocket. His mother forgot she gave it to him and frantically looked for it for days. He did not remember having it until he found it in his pocket at school a few days later. He again felt he had let his parents down and was afraid to tell them, as they might think he had been bad again.

We also tapped using the Movie Technique on several recurrent nightmares he'd had at that age. He hated night-time, due to intense headaches and the fear of these nightmares.

In the main dream, he was alone inside his house and there was something dark and threatening trying to get inside the house and attack his sleeping family. (It struck me that these repeated dreams would also likely be trapped in his energy system. Would his subconscious have been able to differentiate between these nightmares and reality?)

It took a lot of tapping and reframing to bring the intensity of these dreams down. Again, at the start his memory was sketchy, but as we cleared one area, a new part of the dream would open up, and they were indeed scary.

Eventually Joe was able to go through the whole nightmare without emotion. He even gave his understanding on the dreams meaning. The exact understanding escapes me, but it had something to do with

being petrified of having no control over events in his life and the effect his behavior had on his family.

Around this time in the EFT newsletter there was an article by Rebecca Marina describing the “Volcano Technique,” in which clients are encouraged to feel and express their anger about situations that upset them. Because Joe often experienced extreme anger, we used this technique several times. As described in the article, anger can be a very empowering emotion. Giving clients license to really vent their anger—while tapping—helps to bring out and explode many other emotions. I found this method very powerful and have used it many times since.

Joe at 18 is a very polite, well-mannered young man. Even so, I think some of the language he used while we experimented with the volcano technique can be left to the imagination.

By our seventh session, Joe was ready to forgive his teacher, putting the way he was treated down to a misunderstanding on her part. He was also willing to forgive himself!

We did our last session over the phone. It was our fourth session that week, Joe had been very brave and had put a lot of effort into the sessions and was also doing a lot of tapping on his own. This was critical, especially with Joe. Self-empowerment of clients to me is one of the key elements and benefits of EFT.

It was our first and only telephone session. Something was on Joe’s mind this evening, but he would not say exactly what it was. Joe had cleared an

incredible amount of personal baggage, having undergone huge cognitive changes, in the process regaining a lot of self-respect and much more personal freedom.

In retrospect, I realize Joe was toying with the idea of seeing if he was capable of relinquishing his need to control his eating as his only form of control in life. Metaphorically I had a sense Joe was trying to reach the pivotal point of a seesaw. If he could find the faith to get past this point, his struggle would be an easy downhill ride—but he would have to let go and trust himself. We talked and tapped for an hour and he said he felt better. We set up an appointment for the next day.

Joe called me early the next morning, saying that he had decided to start eating again and that he wanted to cancel the appointment. Although obviously pleased, I was also concerned. That weekend I kept in contact with Joe's parents, and they confirmed he had started eating properly. Like me, they were cautiously optimistic.

Two weeks later Joe returned to work. He called me a few days before returning, saying he was slightly worried about facing the people at work, scared that the pressure and the attention he would get from them might be too much for him. He said he would tap on it.

A few days after he called to say he had gone to McDonald's with everyone from work to prove that he was okay now. But he gave the Diet Coke a miss.

I spoke with Joe this week for the first time in over four months. He now weighs 12 stone (168 pounds or 76 kilograms), is happy with his weight, and could never imagine so much as going on a diet. At the same time, he is worried he eats a little too much “crap food.”

I wanted to ask him if it was okay to write this case study. He said, *“I believe your help and EFT saved my life. If it can help others, please write anything you want.”* He said he is still tapping—when he needs it. At times he feels a little compulsive, such as when he feels under pressure, but EFT always helps.

He and Emma are saving up, as they want to travel round the world next year. He said he still thinks about what happened to him earlier that year and it scares him when he does. But now he says he feels 130 percent confident most of the time and can’t believe how things got so out of control. “It seems like it happened to someone else,” he says. He says he wishes he could get his mum and dad to do some tapping. *“It’s about time they started dealing with some of their issues!”*

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We all overeat from time to time, especially at Thanksgiving and other holidays. In social situations that encourage overeating, it’s hard to resist a second or third helping or another dessert. But when overeating occurs frequently and becomes a cause of shame or embarrassment, or when it becomes a darkly guarded secret,

it moves from being an occasional indulgence to being a compulsion, a psychological disorder over which you have no control.

Binge eating has many emotional roots, many of which are often outside the person's conscious awareness. In this report, Dr. Carol Solomon shares her process with Carla's binge eating, then Carla shares her experience with food as a result of those sessions.

### **EFT Success for a Binge Eater**

*by Dr. Carol Solomon*

To a binge eater, having one experience where you feel comfortable in your own skin is a success. Throwing away food because you didn't want it is a major breakthrough. A day without bingeing can feel like a miracle.

I have worked with Carla for four sessions. She had a traumatic childhood because of an abusive father. She associated food with survival, the only thing she could give herself for comfort. As a child, she promised herself that when she grew up, she could have whatever she wanted, whenever she wanted.

Carla already knew that EFT worked, since she used it to eliminate her need for her asthma inhaler. But she had not been able to stop binge eating. This problem can permeate everything you do. Carla had her life on hold. She wanted to build her business and start a new relationship, but everything felt too risky. The world was not a safe place.

First, we tapped on her belief that she can't have what she wants, so she substitutes food.

Then we tapped on her fear of promoting herself, of making mistakes, of the consequences of those mistakes, and her fear of being judged.

Finally, we tapped on one specific traumatic event, her sense of feeling unsafe in the world, and using food to ward off feelings of emptiness.

Here is Carla's letter to me:

Hi there Carol—Just wanted to update you that I seem to have had a breakthrough with our last session, although elements of earlier sessions are now accessible all at the same time!

Have not binged since Saturday's call without white knuckling (!!!!!) and I have in fact been having three regular (full of real food, but not grotesque quantities—just regular sized full of variety) meals!!!

For the first time in my *life* I threw chocolate away. On Monday night, I was given a chocolate at the end of Christmas meal with friends at a restaurant and I put it to my mouth to take a bite (habit—it was in my mouth before I thought about it) and it was too sweet and I was too full ...and I held the last two-thirds of it in my fingers for over ten minutes as we were all saying good-bye, and I threw it in a bin (*threw it out*) on the way to my car!!!



I watched all the team at work pig out on candy-colored donuts at 9:30 a.m. and couldn't imagine anything worse so joined them without eating, without feeling like I cared what they thought (and they didn't!), and I was totally comfortable with it—*comfortable!*

I have re-tapped to Saturday's recording several times. I have also been tapping on more words around the language you have given me, such as, "That was then, this is now," which is really powerful. Lots of tapping with words coming to me easily around the promise I made to myself that was so strong through my childhood—my daily survival mantra—that when I grew up I could have whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted it. I really believed to my emotional core that food was the path, and only path, to my happiness.

It has "clicked" in me that actually that was then, and it was a little muddled, albeit well intentioned, and I can still honor my promise, just in a way that leads to my happiness by allowing me to be open to the things I want.

The tapping also seems to have kind of wired me up to comfortably connect with the new thought that salad and fish or salad and steak (*salad* and *meat* and *no dessert*—what is going on?) is actually the path to my happiness. I have always been able to physically feel better eating regular sized meals and easily digestible foods but

my emotional drive to eat fast food fast, and lots of it, has always outweighed my physical discomfort every time.

These last few days feel profoundly different to me. My words to you are not sufficient for explaining right now—but they will give you an idea of how I feel so different!

I am nervous it won't last, so am tapping on that too. But that is the point, I am tapping (not refusing to tap), allowing myself to buy and prepare food, go to bed on time, and do the things that I want to do rather than assume it is too hard or scary and cop out and eat instead.

Today, I have the energy that comes from not being fueled only by junk food—amazing—so in itself, it is a relief.

It is unbelievably exciting—because I am not “trying.” Today is Thursday, we spoke Saturday, and it has sort of just happened. It also feels like I have had a “click” in that I have been allowing myself to distract myself from the habit of constantly calculating the calorie restrictions needed for 40 kilos to come off in just a few weeks so that I magically get thin fast. I am feeling I can focus on just living and for three days have had no problem with taking time off from work or activity to have a proper meal. No Coca Cola in sight.

And on and on I could go...Much love and appreciation,

Carla

As practitioners, we have this driving need to help people, and it's easy to forget how much difference we can make in people's lives and in the world. When I receive letters like this from clients, I remember, and I am grateful for EFT and all of the wonderful practitioners who have dedicated their lives to helping others.

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After that letter from Carla, we might assume that four sessions was enough to tackle her binge eating. However, as Carol and Carla kept working, deeper issues continued to surface. The following is a second report of Carla's journey after eight more sessions. Listen in as Dr. Solomon helps discover, and resolve, several core issues.

## **Binge Eating Recovery**

*by Dr. Carol Solomon*

My client, Carla, was aching to stop binge eating so that she could become more slender. As much as she wanted to lose weight, Carla viewed thin people as vulnerable, exposed, and weak. She somehow feared that she would "blow away in the wind" if she became thin. She thought she was being "shallow" in her beliefs about thin people, but it turned out to be

much deeper than that and, as we worked, several core emotional issues emerged.

*Even though I think thin people are weak, and I don't want to be like them, I love and accept myself completely.*

*Even though I'm afraid I'll blow away in the wind if I don't eat enough...*

*Even though I think thin people are exposed and vulnerable...*

*Even though I'm not sure what this means, or how I came to believe this...it feels threatening...like I might not even exist if I don't eat enough.*

#### Reminder Phrases:

*Thin people are weak.*

*Thin people are vulnerable.*

*Thin people are exposed.*

*They can't protect themselves.*

*I don't want to be like them.*

*I might blow away in the wind.*

*It doesn't feel safe to lose weight.*

*I don't know what this means, but it feels like some scary times I had in my past...like my very existence was threatened.*

Through this sequence, Carla made some important connections. As a child, Carla's parents made her eat three meals per day, so that she wouldn't get "too thin," but restricted her from eating junk food.

Carla often felt deprived, so she would binge-eat in secret, and then eat her meals anyway, so her parents wouldn't suspect that she was bingeing. Whatever she was deprived of...that's what she craved. As an adult, Carla could not restrict herself to three regular meals without feeling deprived.

As a child, Carla had been abused. She "waited" to get through childhood, promising herself she could have and do whatever she wanted. As an adult, she refused to constrain her food choices and hated being told what to do. (She had a little five-year-old inside, who was stomping her feet and refusing to compromise.)

*Even though I've been waiting my whole life to get through childhood, so I can have whatever I want and do whatever I want...*

*Even though I HATE being told what to do...no diet is going to tell me what to do...*

*Even though I don't like to wait...I want to have it right away...and I'm afraid it won't be enough...*

*Even though I refuse to be "without," even though it's costing me...*

#### Reminder Phrases:

*I don't like to wait.*

*I have to have it right now.*

*I might not get through the day.*

*It won't be enough.*

*I refuse to be without.*

*I WILL have what I want.*

*No one is going to tell me what to do.*

*You can't make me.*

At this point, Carla began to describe her childhood abuse, in which she endured numerous instances of being hit herself and also witnessing her brother being hit by her father. Like many trauma victims, Carla would dissociate during the abuse. "I could disconnect my head off my shoulders," she recalled. "I could leave my body and be really still."

Carla knew that "being really still" was the key to her survival. As much as the abuse hurt, struggling or running would have made it worse. Carla's survival mode was to imagine that all of her weight was going down into her feet. Being "weighted down" would keep her from running and minimize the abuse. She even imagined herself wearing leaded boots that would anchor her.

Carla also believed that if she kept a layer of padding (extra weight) on her body, the abuse would be less painful. If the padding wasn't there, she would have no protection. As an adult, she still thought that the "padding" kept her safe. It didn't feel safe to lose weight.

Carla was incredibly relieved to make these connections. After addressing several of the specific abuse events from her childhood, her binge eating is greatly decreased, and she can now eat three healthy meals per day without feeling rebellious.

I have worked with Carla for twelve sessions. She was astounded by her progress using EFT compared to traditional therapy. Her question to me at the end of this session was, "How can I have accomplished more in twelve EFT sessions than I have spending thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours in traditional therapy?" That's EFT!

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While this next article by Dr. Solomon has a binge-eating focus, its concepts can be used for many kinds of success blocks. As she explains, "Since our work together, Johnna has gone from binge eating several times per month to zero binge eating for the past two months. Success! No reverting back to old patterns. This process, of course, can be repeated for other avenues of success."

## **Treating Self-sabotage Eliminates Binge Eating**

*by Dr. Carol Solomon*

My client, Johnna, was incredibly capable, but she found herself continuously sabotaging her success. She would get close to her goal, whether it was weight loss or creative endeavors, and suddenly revert back to old behavior.

This was particularly obvious with her binge eating problem. Several times per month she would go "over the edge" and eat everything in sight. She made several attempts to overcome this problem but, alas, she reverted back every time.

It was as though a wet blanket was thrown on her drive toward her goal. Her inner critic would then show up, and she would have self-talk such as, “Who do you think you are?” Johnna did not believe that she was allowed to be successful in anything, binge-eating control included.

Johnna recognized her pattern of self-sabotage. There seemed to be some fear of success, but she couldn’t identify the source of the problem. Keeping in mind her lack of success with binge eating, we started with some general EFT statements:

*Even though success does not feel safe, I deeply and completely accept myself.*

*Even though success does not feel good, I deeply love and accept myself anyway.*

*Even though success feels threatening, I choose to love and accept myself completely.*

Then we used some general Reminder Phrases to tap around the body:

*Success doesn’t feel safe.*

*Success doesn’t feel good.*

*Success is threatening.*

*Part of me doesn’t want to succeed.*

*Who do you think you are?*

*I’m not allowed to have it.*

*Part of me doesn’t want to change.*

*It just doesn’t feel right.*



At this point, Johnna remembered that whenever she was successful, her parents would no longer help her. When she learned how to bake cookies, for example, her mother was happy and relieved. She would withdraw her support and turn that responsibility over to Johnna. It made Johnna feel alone, lonely, and overwhelmed, since she was saddled with more and more adult responsibilities.

She was always expected to handle these responsibilities. It was what her parents valued in her. But for Johnna, success meant losing contact with her parents, feeling alone and unsupported.

It was such a well-entrenched, unconscious pattern that as an adult, Johnna became anxious whenever she neared success. If she lost weight, she was afraid there wouldn't be any support and that others would expect more of her.

She routinely sabotaged her success in order to feel less anxious. Yet, she felt frustrated knowing that she was repeating the same vicious cycle over and over again. It was only during EFT sessions that these patterns became clear.

Once the patterns were clear, we identified some events from her past that were clearly causing these blocks to her success. Using more EFT, we resolved the emotional aspects of those events and Johnna soon started to feel the freedom.

Since our work together, Johnna has gone from binge eating several times per month to zero binge

eating for the past two months. Success! No reverting back to old patterns. This process, of course, can be repeated for other avenues of success.

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Once again, Dr. Solomon shows us how effective EFT can be with overeating once you find the core issues.

### **Is It Safe to Drop Those Pounds?**

*by Dr. Carol Solomon*

Sue was a binge eater who seemed to sabotage herself at every turn. She tried everything and lost weight many times, only to gain it back and more. She described her eating as being “like a runaway train.” She ate to relieve stress. She ate to celebrate. She ate for every emotion she ever felt. And she felt like a failure.

Sue’s mother always struggled with her weight and died of lung cancer at an early age. Right before she was diagnosed, she lost twenty pounds and looked great. She stopped dieting, but continued to lose weight. Sue recalled that her mother remarked, “Gee, I stopped dieting and I’m still losing weight.” But the weight loss happened because she had cancer. She died soon afterwards.

Food was comforting, but Sue wanted to feel more in control, to stop bingeing, and to use food for nutrition, not as a drug. She lived alone and felt scared at night. She was afraid of dying, of going to sleep and not waking up. Every day, she ate sensibly.

Every night, she blew it. She found herself circling the pizza place, telling herself, “You’re tired, you deserve it, you can start tomorrow.” She was medicating herself to get to sleep.

Every time Sue started to lose weight, she got scared. She felt vulnerable. *It just didn’t feel safe.* Food gave her that false sense of comfort because food and comfort were linked in her mind. Her grandmother fed her to comfort her. Her mother died when she lost weight. Part of her was afraid to lose weight, even though consciously, she desired it.

Strong associations can impact our behavior. In Sue’s mind, food was associated with comfort and safety. Weight loss was associated with fear, loss and death. She was afraid that if she lost weight, something terrible would happen. Losing weight wasn’t safe.

Binge eating is a coping behavior—a reaction to life’s problems. It’s easy to feel consumed by your emotions. Binge eaters often get into circular patterns of not sleeping well, overworking and feeling tired, and then being more vulnerable to bingeing.

Fears tend to surface at night, so Sue tapped at night whenever she felt afraid and/or felt the urge to binge. She tapped on her feelings about losing her mom, her fears of losing her co-workers, her fear of not waking up. Within three nights, she was able to feel more calm and relaxed and get more sleep, thus interrupting the vicious cycle. When her fears were

resolved, there was no need to soothe herself with food. Within a week, she was no longer bingeing.

It's been a few months now and Sue's last note to me simply said, "I can't remember the last time I binged, and I've managed to lose ten pounds in the process."

\* \* \*

Brazilian therapist Sonia Novinsky spends her time using EFT and affirmations to go straight for the emotional causes—and in the following bulimia case there are many of them, as you will see. The result of this emotional focus is a complete cessation of the client's symptoms.

You will note in Sonia's message that English is not her first language. Further, she had to write in a hurried state between appointments. Nonetheless, her conviction, caring, and skill come across quite clearly. Since writing this report, she has worked with at least five other clients with compulsive eating disorders, and all were treated successfully, with no recurring symptoms. Sonia's success is echoed by reports from other eating disorder professionals who have incorporated EFT into their treatment programs.

### **Bulimia in Brazil**

*by Sonia Novinsky*

Shelly is my bulimic client. She is a personal trainer, thirty-four years old, married, with one child.

I worked with her for three months, once a week, from June to September, 1999. Then she came till

January once a month, only for checking, and the symptoms didn't come back.

Symptoms started in her early twenties (she got married at twenty-four). From menstruation phase (eleven years old) till age twenty-four, she wasn't allowed to date, go out, take a shower, or dress herself beautifully. All day in the bedroom, crying most of the time, feeling shame of being fat. Almost no memories of these years. Very severe depression after delivery of her child.

When she arrived she was taking Reductil (a weight-loss prescription drug) and two anti-depressants, Prozac and Tryptanol. When she left she was free from these drugs.

Symptoms: She ate compulsively, till no place was left in the stomach, mainly in the evening. Then she vomited or ran 10 to 30 km (6 to 19 miles) for sweating out all the calories.

Then she started eating again. Was obsessive about losing weight. Not fat at all. Three lipoaspiration surgeries in the belly and in the buttocks. In addition, compulsive shopping until bankrupt.

Using EFT and affirmations, I helped her work with the following family issues.

1. Her mother has been very sick since adolescence with a very rare kind of leprosy, no cure available. Very disagreeable spots in the skin. Shelly never felt permission to develop her own femininity. Guilty of being beautiful.

2. Grandmother living in the same house, taking care of Shelly's mother and the children. A very authoritarian person, violent, seducer and intrusive (including in sexual issues)—feelings of hate and guilt. The grandmother used to say that Shelly and her brother were responsible for the spots on their mother's body. Shelly yelled, "You are not my mother!" She felt guilty all the time and wore only male clothes.
3. Her father (a compulsive eater, maybe bulimic also, she thinks) felt in a trap. He didn't know the mother had this terrible leprosy before marriage. Violent conflicts at home all the time. She feels her father at the same time looks at her in a sensual way, and with contempt. Once she put her hand on his shoulder and he screamed, "I am not your boyfriend!" Very ambivalent situation. Feelings: Shame, guilt, and a lot of passion and rage.

Whenever she felt better, thinner, or beautiful, and her father said a compliment, like, "You look beautiful today," this immediately triggered a deep tension and the compulsion to eat and throw up the food. And she start gaining weight again while feeling that food is in a bad place in the body and has to be thrown away in some way (through vomiting or aerobic activity). Feelings: Fear of being beautiful, fear of not being able to set limits, fear of becoming a whore.

4. Marriage issues: Limits issues with her husband and his family.

*Results:*

1. She is more comfortable when visiting her mother and father. No tension felt anymore.
2. No compulsion at all (0 on the 0-to-10 scale) for buying and eating food. No need to eliminate food from the body or to fast (she used before to fast some days to eliminate food).
3. She started wearing more feminine clothes. Shame and guilt = 0
4. She now can look in the mirror and love herself. Rage = 0
5. She is now setting limits and protecting herself from her husband's intrusive family. Being able to say, "I don't want you here today," for example.
6. More healthy relationship with job and career, attracting more stable clients.

\* \* \*

Six month later, Sonia sent in an update to this case. Her client Shelly still had no traces of bulimic symptoms, though she did develop other challenges with eating in response to new emotional stresses in her life.

**Six month follow-up:**

Shelly came today. Very interesting.

Shopping compulsion: Never more.

Bulimic reactions: Never more.

Job as personal trainer: Seven clients per day (earning money).

But something happened with her eating compulsion.

After our last session, I called asking for permission to tell her story to a magazine that invited me for an interview. She agreed immediately, but this phone call triggered a very anxious feeling: *"I can't deal with a success. I can't sustain a success, I prefer to leave forever, there is no durable success for me."*

After this she never tapped again and never called me back again. She just forgot me. It's a pattern. Whenever she has a success with someone or receives some public recognition, and she gave several examples, she leaves immediately and cuts the person off.

Then she was involved in a big stress in February because her husband went bankrupt, and she had some serious dental work. When this occurred, she gained 3 kilograms, or 7 pounds. She had been a constant 62 kilograms or 136 pounds since our treatment. Now she felt some compulsion but not a bulimic reaction. She is working very hard and has no time to indulge in a big compulsion!

I notice now a dissociation: A part of her wants to be 58–60 kilograms (127–132 pounds). Another part still can't sustain victory or success.

We will start another piece of treatment. She will pay me only if she maintains 58 kilograms (127 pounds) for a while.



Although some core issues remained untreated, including a critical one that allowed her to sabotage our connection and EFT, the bulk of our previous work is fine. She never threw up food anymore, never went to a mall to buy things on impulse, and she is very responsible in money issues, earning and sustaining her house practically alone now.

\* \* \*

Later Sonia submitted a final update. She described improvements in her marriage, a lack of triggering in response to her mother's demeaning comments, the ability to reframe negative events in a positive light, and noticeable improvements in various other parts of her life.

### **Final follow-up:**

I think my work with Shelly just finished today. She is feeling great. I will see her next week for the last time. Today she told me some important feelings she had last week that give evidence she is okay:

1. She is dressing herself in a feminine way almost everyday. Previously she wore men's clothes because of her shame.
2. Someone said, "*How thin you are!*" And she liked this and did not feel the urge to eat compulsively after that.
3. Her mother said, "*The way you are using your hair is like whores use it!*" And she smiled and translated for herself, "*I am beautiful, my hair is beautiful, and I don't feel ashamed or guilty.*"

4. She is in a wonderful moment with her husband. And when they were having sex and he passed his hands over her body, she felt appreciation for her weight, which is something really new for her.
5. Just before menstruation, when she normally succumbed to cravings, she realized she could eat a piece of chocolate and then stop immediately.
6. During the weekend (when she used to eat a lot), she now talks to herself as follows, "*I want to have the pleasure of being skinny, so I will not have the pleasure of eating a lot now. I can postpone my pleasure.*" And she is playing with this new possibility in her life, to postpone pleasure sometimes. For example, she postponed the pleasure of reading a magazine she wanted to read as soon as she bought it, choosing instead to read it later while alone and in a peaceful moment, and so on.
7. She was alone Saturday night (a good moment for the compulsion) and she didn't feel any emptiness inside. She called some friends, drank a juice, watched a soap opera, and fell asleep. EFT has completely changed her life.

\* \* \*

Eating disorders such as bulimia are often complex and may take many sessions to resolve. Once in a while, however, we get a "one-session wonder" and major progress occurs within one hour. Such is the case in this

report by Therese Baumgart. Note how Therese gets to the emotional drivers behind the disorder.

## Two-Year Bulimia Problem Improves in One Hour

*by Therese Baumgart*

Linda is a vibrant, athletic career woman and mother. Prior to her first appointment she told me on the phone that she had a food issue, but she was not specific. When she arrived in my office she said she had never told anybody before, but she had been bingeing and purging for two years. What began as a twice-a-month event had now increased to twice a week. As she related this problem, and through most of our session, Linda was very emotional. I used her information and often her exact wording to construct her EFT Setups and Reminder Phrases. Linda mirrored my tapping on herself as we worked together while saying:

*Even though I feel ashamed and disgusted with myself, I deeply and completely accept myself.*

*This is a secret I never told anyone...*

*I'm so humiliated and embarrassed...*

*Bingeing and purging is my secret, and I'm so ashamed...*

*If they found out, they would say it's so disgusting...*

*They would say, Linda, how could you do that?*

*The worst thing in the world is for them to find out...*

*They would criticize, reject, and judge me harshly...*

As Linda was getting ready to leave, she mentioned that she was most tempted to binge and purge in the afternoons. So for additional support during the two weeks between our first and second sessions, I recommended that every morning before starting her daily activities, Linda “set up the day” with EFT.

I also told Linda to follow her own thoughts and use them for her EFT Setups and statements.

I believe that part of Linda’s rapid progress is due to her high motivation to help herself and her complete acceptance and enthusiasm for EFT. She started our first session extremely distressed and crying and ended the session with a huge confident smile, saying that she felt “wonderful.”

Two weeks later, Linda reported that she had not had any bulimia episodes and had been faithful in doing her set-up-the-day phrases as well as tapping daily on whatever issues came up. She had even attended her family’s Thanksgiving dinner and felt a little too full but had used EFT to handle the situation successfully.

During her second appointment we identified a core-issue incident from her childhood involving her mother, which echoed some of the emotions and thoughts around her bulimia. We used EFT to release these related core issues from 10 down to 0. Linda

is now optimistic and confident about her continued success, and so am I.

After her first session, Linda wrote, "As I reflect on the last one and a half weeks since we met, the overall sense I have is that the torment is gone from my relationship with food. Before I came to see you and had my first EFT session, I had definite feelings of inadequacy, hopelessness, and helplessness about bingeing and my weight. I did not realize the amount of shame I felt about my actions in the area of bingeing.

"I have to say for the first time," she concluded, "that I feel like I have a healthy home inside myself, a place I can go, through tapping, that soothes, comforts, and cares for me and my feelings. I hear the torment and I 'go home' to the comfort and compassion of the tapping session. It is truly a relief and grace for me. I look forward to our next session."

\* \* \*

In this next report from Aileen Nobles, one professionally applied session brought relief to a client who went from bingeing and purging twice a day to zero occurrences in the following six weeks.

### **A Bulimia "One-Session Wonder"**

*by Aileen Nobles*

About a month ago a client came to me with major anxiety issues. She had reverted back to a bulimic pattern that she has had on and off since she was a teen.

She's in her late thirties now. She fully understood the dangers of this behavior but had been eating and purging twice a day for the last four months.

She was very clear as to when it first started. Her mother had been at a birthday party with her and she had eaten too much cake and didn't feel so well. Her mother told her that if she could make herself throw up she would feel better. She did...and, indeed, she felt better!

She also said that she was teased at school about her body, yet if she looked at a photo of herself at school, she saw that she wasn't fat.

We did a basic round on:

*Even though my mother suggested I throw up if I've eaten too much, I can still completely accept myself.*

*Even though I'm trying to throw up all of my anxiety, fear, and ugly feelings about myself, It's okay. I can still completely accept myself.*

*My mother didn't always suggest the best things for me, and throwing up after eating is one of them.*

I chose to use "is" instead of "was" to bring these events into present time. We did another round on:

*My mother drank too much and didn't feel good about herself so she put a lot of pressure on me to look and perform a certain way.*

The client had been a child actor.

I then suggested that she relax and imagine all of the negative images that came from her mother and the children at school. We started tapping on her issues of anxiety and fear and brought those levels way down.

We went back to:

*Even though I can't get rid of my fear and anxiety by throwing it up, I deeply and completely accept myself.*

*Even though it would be much better if I don't overeat in the first place...*

We went on to issues of not liking the way she looks. I asked her to tell me what she disliked and liked about her appearance. She focused on disliking her legs, thighs, and behind. She suddenly remembered very vividly being called "fat ass" in school. It still triggered a strong reaction as she thought about it. We tapped on:

*Even though I have a fat ass, I don't need to throw up.*

I threw in a reframe about the size of Serena Williams' rear end and how it was revered by thousands. (My client actually has a nice fairly small curved rear end.)

It's been six weeks now and, so far, she has had no desire to binge. Please recall that, before EFT, she was bingeing and purging twice a day. She taps on herself for the anxiety and fear. I just love it when EFT works this well.