

# Study Shows EFT Significantly Reduces PTSD in Veterans

## Part 1 of 3

<http://www.examiner.com/article/study-shows-eft-significantly-reduces-ptsd-veterans-part-1-of-3>

BY: BETTY RUSSELL

A new randomized controlled study published on Friday, Feb. 1, in the [Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease](#) confirms that [Emotional Freedom Techniques \(EFT\)](#) is an effective treatment for veterans with [post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#). Fifty-nine veterans with PTSD participated in the study as part of the [Veterans Stress Project](#).

The veterans were randomly placed in one of two groups. One group received their standard care and six hour-long sessions of EFT. Experienced EFT coaches helped them tap on traumatic events they experienced in combat, in non-combat situations and at other times in their lives. Participants in the second group received standard care and were assigned to a wait list.

The veterans who received EFT found that their psychological distress and PTSD were significantly reduced following their EFT sessions. In fact, 90 percent of the EFT group no longer met the criteria for clinical PTSD compared with only 4 percent of the control group. The wait list group then received EFT as well. When the results of the two groups were combined, 86 percent of the participants improved so significantly that they no longer met the criteria for clinical PTSD. At a six-month follow-up, 80 percent of participants remained below the level for clinical PTSD.



Dawson Church, Ph.D., (left) of the Foundation for Epigenetic Medicine in Santa Rosa, California, is one of the world's leading EFT experts and researchers. Credit: Dawson Church

“This [study](#) shows that veterans don’t have to suffer with PTSD,” says the study’s lead author, [Dawson Church](#), Ph.D., of the Foundation for Epigenetic Medicine in Santa Rosa, Calif. “Just six sessions of EFT made a tremendous difference. We don’t have to see vets in homeless shelters or prisons, suffering with substance abuse, or facing drug addiction, unemployment and other difficult circumstances.”

It’s estimated that up to a million American military veterans who served in Iraq, Afghanistan and Vietnam suffer with flashbacks, nightmares, fear, anger, guilt, suicidal thoughts and other debilitating symptoms of PTSD. The costs of caring for these men and women is staggering.

“This study is hugely important,” Dr. Church says. “PTSD among veterans is a massive and costly social problem. We’ve shown that EFT is a fast, effective and drug-free way to help veterans get back to society. Their lives aren’t perfect after EFT. They still have their memories, but they are no longer disabling.”

Several other studies confirm that EFT helps reduce and in some cases eliminate PTSD symptoms in veterans. Dr. Church says that efforts are now underway to replicate the results of this study. In the future, he and other researchers plan to evaluate the effectiveness of group EFT sessions for veterans and to further study the biological mechanisms of EFT.

EFT is an innovative technique that involves tapping on certain acupuncture points while focusing on traumatic memories or painful emotions. Other studies have shown that EFT reduces the production of the stress hormone cortisol and increases production of serotonin and other neurochemicals. These biochemical responses help regulate the autonomic nervous system and create a sense of calm.

Currently, only a few Veterans Administration (VA) facilities offer EFT to veterans with PTSD. Dr. Church hopes that the VA will make EFT more widely available in the near future. Several members of Congress, including Senator Chuck Schumer, have called on the VA to offer EFT to veterans.

Veterans can find out more about how to participate in current or future PTSD studies or locate an EFT practitioner who works with veterans at low or no cost at the [Veterans Stress Project website](#).

[Part 2](#) of this series features an EFT veteran and practitioner who works with veterans with PTSD. In [Part 3](#), I'll introduce you to a veteran who suffered with PTSD for years and says EFT changed his life.

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## Veteran uses EFT to help other Vets

### Part 2 of 3

<http://www.examiner.com/article/veteran-uses-eft-to-help-other-vets-part-2-of-3>



Tom Porpiglia, a licensed mental health counselor and EFT practitioner, is a veteran who works with other vets as part of the Veterans Stress Project.

Tom Porpiglia, MS, a licensed mental health counselor and an [Emotional Freedom Techniques \(EFT\)](#) practitioner, can relate to the veterans with post traumatic stress disorder ([PTSD](#)) he works with as part of the [Veterans Stress Project](#). Porpiglia is a veteran of the Vietnam War. He experienced repressed fears and anxiety years after his experiences during the war and got limited relief through traditional therapy.

“Veterans often try multiple methods of coping,” Porpiglia says. “But current treatment approaches and medications don’t work for many vets.”

[Porpiglia](#) and other EFT practitioners involved with the Veterans Stress Project offer veterans something many of them haven’t had in years — hope. They use EFT to help veterans release the negative emotions they have about traumatic events they experienced in war and at other times in their lives. During EFT sessions, experienced EFT practitioners guide veterans as they focus on their traumatic memories in a safe way while

they tap on certain acupressure points. The tapping sends calming signals through the body and helps regulate the autonomic nervous system.

“After multiple EFT sessions, the veterans feel and function better, their relationships improve, and their symptoms are eliminated or reduced dramatically,” Porpiglia says. “It’s amazing.”

A randomized controlled study validating the effectiveness of using EFT to help veterans with PTSD was published on Friday, Feb. 1, in the [Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease](#). The study found that 86 percent of the veterans who participated no longer met the clinical criteria for PTSD after undergoing just six hour-long EFT sessions.

The study’s lead author, [Dawson Church](#), Ph.D., of the Foundation for Epigenetic Medicine in Santa Rosa, Calif., says, “This study shows that veterans don’t have to suffer with PTSD. America already has a solution.”

“It’s significant that the results were so impressive,” says [Marilyn McWilliams](#), an EFT Research Coach with the Veterans Stress Project. “The research opens the door to changing from an America which is desperately seeking a solution to help its veterans suffering with PTSD to an America that realizes it has a solution and implements it.”

Currently, only a few Veterans Administration Centers offer EFT despite calls from several members of Congress to make EFT widely available to veterans with PTSD.

Porpiglia welcomes people's skepticism about EFT. He didn't realize how effective the technique was until he suffered a traumatic experience when snorkeling while away at a conference. He got so exhausted that he couldn't swim back to the boat and had to be rescued by the boat captain. EFT practitioners who were nearby immediately began tapping on Porpiglia.

"It was so profound," he says. "I was feeling a 'volcano' of terror. After a few rounds of EFT, it was gone."

Veterans can find out more about how to participate in current or future PTSD studies or locate an EFT practitioner who works with veterans at low or no cost at the [Veterans Stress Project website](#).

Click [here](#) to read Part 1 of this series. Part 3 features a veteran who suffered with PTSD for years and says EFT changed his life.

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## Veteran With PTSD Says EFT Gave Him His Life Back

### Part 3 of 3

[http://www.examiner.com/article/veteran-says-eft-gave-him-his-life-back-part-3-of-3?cid=db\\_articles](http://www.examiner.com/article/veteran-says-eft-gave-him-his-life-back-part-3-of-3?cid=db_articles)



David Smith-Barry, 38, suffered with PTSD for years. He says EFT gave him his life back.  
Credit: David Smith-Barry

Researchers involved with the [Veterans Stress Project](#) published a new randomized controlled study on Friday, Feb. 1, in the [Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease](#) that confirmed that [Emotional Freedom Techniques \(EFT\)](#) is an effective treatment for veterans with post traumatic stress disorder ([PTSD](#)). The study found that 86 percent of the veterans who participated in the project no longer met the criteria for clinical PTSD after six hour-long EFT sessions. Eighty percent of participants continued to measure below the level for clinical PTSD six months after they completed their EFT sessions.

The study offers hope to veterans like David Smith-Barry, 38, a Texas resident who tried traditional treatments for PTSD with little success. Smith-Barry proudly served in the United States Army for six years. In an exclusive interview, he talked about spending more than half of his active duty time in Iraq and Afghanistan where he was part of a group imbedded with Iraqis to train them to handle certain aspects of military operations on their own. He experienced the unimaginable on a regular basis.

"I lost combat buddies, was shot at by snipers and much more," he says.

Smith-Barry says he didn't realize the toll these traumas took on him.

"Everything seemed fine when I came home," Smith-Barry says. "But 18 months later, my wife said I was a different person. My life was in shambles. I thought of suicide daily and had nightmares, flashbacks, daily migraine headaches and personality changes. I was a textbook case of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)."

Smith-Barry sought treatment through the Veterans Administration (VA). He went to a veteran's group nearby and had some therapy. Eventually, he was taking five different medications for his symptoms.

"The medications helped somewhat, but they had a lot of side effects," he says. "It was hard to get up in the morning. They took too much out of me."



Marilyn McWilliams, an EFT practitioner, has been working with veterans with PTSD for years as a research coach with the Veterans Stress Project. *Credit: Marilyn McWilliams*

Smith-Barry started looking for a holistic alternative and heard about the Veterans Stress Project, which offers free EFT sessions to veterans who participate in clinical studies. He worked with [Marilyn McWilliams](#), an EFT Research Coach with the Project.

"The first thing she did was work on my migraine headache, which was a 10 on a scale of 1-10," he says. "By the time we were done with our first session, it was barely noticeable. It was the first time I'd felt relief in a long time. No medication had ever ever done that."

Smith-Barry completed all six sessions and says EFT gave him his life back.

"I have a future because of EFT," he says. "I have pep in my step. I sleep at night without medication. I feel happy. I get up every morning looking forward to my day. I deal with stress

and conflict normally. I'm not afraid to face the world. I know I can handle anything. I feel so much better and safer. I use EFT all the time. Not everything is solved with medication."

Smith-Barry's marriage didn't survive his PTSD. But today, he is engaged and has a great relationship with his three sons.

His results are not unique. But many veterans are not aware of the new study or the benefits of EFT. Currently, only a few Veterans Administration (VA) facilities offer EFT to veterans with PTSD.

Smith-Barry says several of his combat buddies committed suicide when they couldn't find a way to cope with their pain.

"So many veterans would benefit if the VA would offer EFT," Smith-Barry says. "This is a tool that's very effective. I feel so much better and safer."

"This study shows that veterans don't have to suffer with PTSD," says the study's lead author [Dawson Church](#), Ph.D., of the Foundation for Epigenetic Medicine in Santa Rosa, Calif. "America already has a solution."

"It's significant that the results were so impressive," McWilliams says. "The research opens the door to changing from an America which is desperately seeking a solution to help its veterans suffering with PTSD to an America that realizes it has a solution and implements it."

The [Veterans Stress Project](#) is looking for more veterans with PTSD to participate in a study to replicate the results of the newest study. The project also provides veterans with a list of practitioners who work with veterans at no or low cost.

Click here to read [Part 1](#) of this series. [Part 2](#) features some of the EFT practitioners who are helping veterans with PTSD.