From a reflexology point of view, we may be heard, causing us psychological or physical to hold our hand over a fire. us, just as physical pain is there to teach us not to listen to a particular emotion and suppress it because it is uncomfortable, it doesn’t go away. It will keep coming back because it is still trying to deliver its message. In extreme cases, if the emotion is not listened to, the result may be a panic attack (an irrational and out of control state of fear) that can be triggered by a particular emotional blockage. In 1979 an American psychotherapist Roger Callahan, whilst treating a lady with a very severe water phobia, discovered that by tapping under her eye (stomach meridian) the fear of water disappeared and never returned. This was the discovery of the link between emotions and meridians.

Emotions are not just sensations that we get (good or bad); they are part of our intelligence, just like thinking. They are a form of perception — signals that are saying, “Pay attention to this.” The feedback we get from our emotions is a natural and vital part of our existence. Even if we don’t want to listen to a particular emotion and suppress it because it is uncomfortable, it doesn’t go away. It will keep coming back because it is still trying to deliver its message. In extreme cases, if the emotion is not listened to, the result may be a panic attack (an irrational and out of proportion reaction to a simple message that is not being heard).

If we are feeling bad, it is because there is something we need to notice about ourselves, our environment or our relationships. Emotional pain is there to protect and guide us, just as physical pain is there to teach us not to do something that will cause us harm.

Let’s first consider: what are emotions?

Emotions are our internal messages from the subconscious mind. They tell us what we need to notice and do something about. They are like a red light on the dashboard of our car. If we ignore the red light, we are likely to have an accident. Similarly, if we ignore emotions, we are likely to make decisions that will cause us harm.

This led to the development of Thought Field Therapy from which Gary Craig later developed Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). It is best described as “Psychological acupuncture” or acupuncture without needles. Gary Craig’s discovery statement says: “The cause of ALL negative emotions is a disruption in the body’s energy system.” The way to release this energy is to physically “tap” on the meridian to clear blockages. When the blockages are cleared, we start to feel different, better and more energized. Emotions change, thoughts change, and many other things change as a result.

So, how can we support healthy GABA and serotonin levels through food? In her book, Secrets to Controlling Your Weight, Craving and Mood (1), Maria Emmerich makes the following recommendations:

- Make sure you have protein with every meal and snack. Protein provides the raw materials your body needs to make GABA, serotonin and all your other brain chemicals; for example, tryptophan, is the key ingredient for serotonin. So make sure you have a portion of nuts, seeds, eggs, meat, fish or pulses such as chickpeas, or lentils every time you eat. Breakfast and snacks are where people are most likely to forget about protein, so add a spoonful of nuts to your morning porridge, boil a batch of eggs and keep in the fridge to snack on, or keep some hummus handy to eat with vegetable sticks or oatcakes.

- Eat foods high in B vitamins. The brain is made up of these fats and we need to keep eating them to keep it in good health and allow the neurotransmitters to zip around the place doing their job effectively. That’s one reason why people trying to eat a low-fat diet can struggle to stick to it – it’s not because they lack will power, it’s because they aren’t nourishing their bodies. It may seem counter-intuitive, but in recent years we’ve come to realise that you need to eat fat to lose weight, and omega 3 is a great place to start – you can find it in oily fish (salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, herring and trout), flaxseeds, walnuts and chia seeds.

Emotional Eating

Emotional eating is when we eat when we are not hungry. What role are we trying to fill with food?

Even if we know how to eat healthily, we can have our good intentions scuppered by the emotions we associate with food. These can come from childhood memories, ingrained habits and an often unconscious awareness of the quick win we get from particular foods – though this is often followed by a downside, like the boost from a sugary snack that’s followed by a slump as our bodies deal with the excess sugar.

Why does the brain prompt us to eat food that isn’t good for us? One reason could be that it’s not working properly because we don’t have the proper balance of chemical messengers that it uses to send information around the brain and to the rest of the body. These messengers are known as neurotransmitters and one example is gamma-aminobutyric acid – GABA for short. Low levels of GABA are linked with insecurity, excessive worrying, fear of new experiences, poor concentration and lack of impulse control, and this state of anxiety can lead to bingeing. Another neurotransmitter is serotonin, which at the right levels is associated with happiness. Low levels of serotonin have been shown to lead to carbohydrate cravings – but responding to these cravings with sugary snacks or foods made with white flour only gives a temporary reprieve. Soon serotonin levels drop again and the cravings return.

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If you would like to learn more about Foot Tapping Reflexology™, please visit [www.peterptomlinson.net](http://www.peterptomlinson.net) for information on our AoR CPD Approved workshop.

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