

Why I love telephone tapping

By Judy Byrne, EFT Master

Yesterday I heard one of the most beautiful sounds I have heard in more than 15 years as a therapist. It was distant yet distinct. It was "wow." A telephone client had put the phone down and was walking round the room to test how the sensations in her legs had changed after just a few rounds of telephone tapping. She was not telling me what she thought I wanted to hear. She probably did not realise I could hear. She was just reacting honestly, expressing her surprised delight at the change. We had not even mentioned her legs. They had responded to clearing an old emotional issue.

It was a brilliant session with a client whose legs would not easily have carried her to my office but who was so quick on the uptake and eager for resolution that it left me reflecting on how my feelings about doing telephone work have changed.

Once I thought it was a commercially smart move – the advantages of a client base without geographical limit do not need to be spelled out. But to me it seemed a more sterile approach. How could I build rapport without eye contact, body language, that sense of the whole person that a therapist builds up with someone in the room? How would I work without all those clues? Did I even want to?

What I don't think I recognized as easily then was my sub-text. How could I get as much of a sense of satisfaction of a job well done and a difference made if I was not in the room with the client, energetically connected, seeing and feeling it as well as hearing it? I did not really admit that consciously into my calculations then. I recognized it only after experience had proved me wrong

I never really thought about working on the phone. The first time I even considered it was when I was ticking boxes to list myself as a practitioner on the emofree site (www.emofree.com). I looked at what other people were doing. Most had ticked it. So I did, too, mentally promising myself I would not actually go looking for telephone work.

But, I have to be as good as my word. Once I had said I would do it there was no going back for me. Gradually telephone work began to find its own way into my practice.

I am an EFT trainer. When Gary Craig set the syllabus for content-approved practitioner training working on the telephone was on it. I was glad, by then, that I had done enough to be fairly positive about it. I set an exercise in which the students work in pairs holding their mobile phones and sitting back-to-back so they get no cues except

auditory ones. Some enjoyed it. Some remained convinced they would never want to do phone work. Almost without exception they reported there was some surprise learning and insights from the exercise, whether it changed their minds about doing phone work or not.

I would recommend anyone who is starting phone work to give themselves some “listening” practice both to hone their skill at picking up auditory cues and to increase their confidence before they start. You can do it with an EFT buddy sitting back-to-back. Or “watch” television programmes with your back to the screen to discover just how much you can pick up. People being interviewed can be good practice material.

Some of the first clients I worked with by phone were existing clients for whom travel was difficult for some reason. One, who was regularly making a long journey to work with me, rang one day to say he had been delayed and would have to cancel. Or would I consider doing the session by phone? Another moved and coming in person was no longer possible. It was clients like these who alerted me to the first positive advantage of telephone work.

Sometimes the relative anonymity and privacy of working by phone enables people to broach issues that they would be too inhibited to go near if you were in the room with them. Or, such issues would take much longer to come up.

Of course this would just be an impression I could not back up had I not had the experience of working with the same person both ways. For example, a man whose sessions had revolved around difficulties he was having in his business on the first phone session spontaneously opened up about some really raw and damaging childhood issues he had glossed over when we were working face-to-face. So well did he do it that, although I suspected there was a missing piece, I had no idea of what it actually was. With no one looking at him, he went there quickly of his own accord. We made more headway in the first phone session than in the previous three or four sessions face to face.

I have an interest in working with serious long-term diseases such as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. And that was where my second realisation came from. Of course, I could work out in my head that people who found it difficult to travel might need either to have someone who would transport them or visit them or to work by phone. But until several people sought me out and we did phone work together, I did not really get it at gut level that even being transported would mean, for some people, that they would have much less energy for therapy after a journey, even one made easy for them.

And it was from such clients that I learned the second big aha! of my telephone therapy experience.

An hour on the phone is longer than an hour working face-to-face.

Okay. I know it is not. But there is something concentrated about the nature of telephone work that means an hour goes much further. I have looked at logical explanations – saving the time taken bringing clients in from the door, taking coats, waiting while they use the bathroom if they need to, writing the cheque at the end of the session. The actual therapy time gained is that – and then some. There is something for both client and therapist about the special focus of getting all the clues and cues from a voice alone that makes the work more concentrated.

I found, too, that there is a more undiluted focus on listening for underlying, core issues and for clues to the specific events that may have caused or exacerbated them. That concentration is probably a contributor to this sense that an hour goes further.

For a time, I was uneasy that phone sessions do seem to become, on average, more issue and less client focussed. EFT, for my money, needs to be a sensitively-judged (for each different client) blend of both. But I have come to realise that a strong issue focus is an option, but an option only. Some clients who ask me to work on the phone are other EFTers who have done and are still doing a lot of EFT study and work on themselves. They want someone to help them explore what they might be missing, and to be a catalyst for them to move forward on their own again. They want a quick review and preview of issues. And from sessions like those I learned another big plus of telephone work.

You can make copious notes when you are working on the phone. This has enormous potential benefits in this context.

If you have covered a lot of ground because an hour goes further your memory may be more taxed if you leave it until later to make notes. For clients who might contact me once every few weeks, or even months, I would be wasting some of their time if I could not get myself back up to speed on where we had gone last time fairly easily. It saves me asking questions they have already answered (unless by design). It reminds me what I may want to check out from the last session. Did this effect hold? Did other feelings come up about that? Is that memory still a zero on emotion?

Another benefit of writing - uninhibited by the desire not to break eye contact - the words clients use, is that you can use their exact words back to them more easily, more often, more accurately throughout the session. This in turn helps a client feel heard and builds rapport. I always try to use a client's words and phrases about things that are important to them. Your ability to use their actual words is enhanced by your ability to take notes. This process can also enhance rapport-building.

When you cannot use body language to enhance rapport the way you do automatically when you have a client in the room with you, concentrating on using

their language more can be a way to substitute for the smile, the nod, the look of concern, even the tears springing into your own eyes – all the ways we build a therapeutic and energetic connection when we are working face-to-face . This is a way to substitute for the smile, the nod, the look of concern, even the tears springing into your own eyes... all the ways we build a therapeutic and energetic connection when we are working face-to-face.

And a third benefit of being able to use clients' exact words is that language is processed mostly in the left brain (for almost all right-handed and many left-handed people). Emotions are often more accessed in the right brain. The more we paraphrase, the more we take clients back into their left brain processing mode to translate. The more we use their words, the more they can stay with feelings and the energetic resonance of those feelings.

From all the telephone work I have done, I have come to understand one thing I had never anticipated.

The information clients can transmit over the phone is not just verbal and vocal. There are still sighs and yawns and hesitations. And sometimes I know there has been an energy shift and have no idea how I know it. We are more connected than I would ever have expected. It doesn't require that we are in the same room – or even on the same continent.

Practical hints

For anyone branching out into telephone work for the first time, here are a few practical considerations:

Payment. If you do not have a credit card facility, you have the options of Paypal, direct payment into your bank, or a cheque in the post. Decide whether you are going to insist on payment in advance, especially when you are dealing with strangers. Existing clients you might feel more willing to trust.

Call cost. I have clients ring me. That can be Skype or any other way they choose. If you have Skype you can offer to call them if they do not. Your choice. It is extremely inexpensive to ring any landline anywhere in the world, or free if you are Skype-to-Skype . (Go to www.skype.com for free software download. It is quick and easy to get started.)

Hands free. If you find holding the handset hard work, you can go for a hands-free phone. With Skype you can use a hands free headset and microphone. Avoid doing a lot of phone work uncomfortably. Leaning a phone against your shoulder is a shortcut to repetitive strain injury.

Check the volume of the phone or system you intend to use. Some people speak very quietly when they are upset and it is not rapport-enhancing to have to keep asking them to repeat themselves. Some phones have adjustable volume.

The points. Even if someone is already an experienced EFTer, they may not be using the same sequence as you are or using points accurately. I have a printable chart on my website and ask people to bring it up on their computer if they are by it when they phone, or print it off for themselves in advance. (I am happy for anyone who wants to use it. Go to www.judybyrne.co.uk and click the EFT chart button on the left side of the home page.) You could also post a chart in advance.

Talking through the points. I like still to talk people through the points. As you cannot see what they are doing, you need to be as sure as you can be that they are getting them right. Practise describing them.

Tap with them. I like to tap with clients both because it seems to settle into a more comfortable rhythm that way and because I feel and believe I am more energetically connected if I do. **If you have not tried it, it is probably easier than you think to hold the handset in your left hand and tap with your right on the karate chop point of the left hand (or vice versa).**

Keeping up with one another. I identify each time I move to a new point. So I might say: "Top of the head – this guilt in my stomach", "eyebrow – this...." It feels a little awkward at first but quickly becomes automatic. (You can tell someone who does a lot of telephone work because sometimes they find it hard not to say it!)

Check the law in your state. This is not relevant in the UK but I understand in some states of the US it is not legal to work with a client in another state. Better safe than sorry. Be familiar with your licensing and local regulations.

No shows. If a client doesn't ring as arranged, check that your line is clear. I learned the hard way once that I had not put the phone back on its base accurately. By the time I thought to check there were several frustrated messages from the client. Fortunately he was an old one and we have a good relationship. For another client, that could have been seriously distressing.

Email follow-up. I often email clients afterwards with a note of something from the session, like homework, or something we have discussed. These emails contain information that I would have given to them in writing if we had been in a face to face session.