



(CASE REPORT)



Integrative management of generalized anxiety disorder: A case study on subconscious energy healing therapy with emotional freedom techniques

Vijay Girdhar ¹ and Srishti Bhatt ^{2,*}

¹ Psychiatrist, GMSH, Chandigarh, India.

² Psychologist, Citizen Hospital and De-Addiction, Gurgaon, India.

World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2025, 25(01), 461-467

Publication history: Received on 26 November 2024; revised on 05 January 2025; accepted on 08 January 2025

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2025.25.1.0039>

Abstract

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is characterized by excessive and persistent worry that interferes with daily functioning. This case study explores the management of GAD using Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), a novel approach to stress management, in a 23-year-old female special educator. The patient presented with severe anxiety symptoms, including panic, chest heaviness, and crying spells, triggered by occupational stress. Her past medical history revealed earlier episodes of anxiety managed with benzodiazepines and stress reduction techniques. Physical examination was unremarkable. A diagnosis of GAD with differential considerations of panic disorder and adjustment disorder was made. The therapeutic intervention combined anxiolytic medication with EFT-based stress management. The patient demonstrated significant improvement, achieving relaxation post-therapy. This case underscores EFT's potential as a complementary tool in anxiety management. Further research is warranted to evaluate EFT's long-term efficacy and integration into clinical practice.

Keywords: Generalized Anxiety Disorder; Emotional Freedom Techniques; Anxiety management; Complementary therapy; Stress reduction; Psychotherapy

1. Introduction

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) affects approximately 3.1% of the global population annually, significantly impairing quality of life (Kessler et al., 2005). Traditional treatments include pharmacotherapy and cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT); however, alternative methods like Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) are gaining attention for their accessibility and minimal side effects. EFT combines cognitive reframing with acupressure through tapping, providing a unique approach to managing emotional distress (Feinstein, 2012).

GAD is marked by excessive worry accompanied by physical symptoms, such as palpitations and chest discomfort (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Traditional interventions, including benzodiazepines and CBT, are effective but may have limitations, such as dependency risks or accessibility issues (Baldwin et al., 2011). EFT, rooted in energy psychology, has shown promise in reducing anxiety symptoms by promoting emotional regulation and physical relaxation (Church et al., 2016).

Pharmacological treatments for GAD, such as benzodiazepines and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), are widely used for symptom management. However, benzodiazepines are associated with dependency risks and withdrawal symptoms, raising concerns about their long-term use (Baldwin et al., 2011). While SSRIs are effective in reducing anxiety, they may cause side effects such as weight gain, sexual dysfunction, and gastrointestinal distress, which can hinder patient adherence (Rickels et al., 2000).

* Corresponding author: Srishti Bhatt

CBT, recognized as the gold standard psychotherapeutic approach for GAD, focuses on cognitive restructuring and behavioural strategies to address excessive worry and anxiety (Hofmann et al., 2012). Despite its proven efficacy, accessibility issues, including cost and a shortage of trained professionals, limit its widespread application, particularly in low-resource settings (Olthuis et al., 2016).

The intersection of psychological well-being and alternative therapeutic techniques has garnered significant attention in recent years. Among the growing body of research, Subconscious Energy Healing Therapy (SEHT) has emerged as a promising method in addressing a variety of psychological and emotional concerns, including adolescent emotional distress, anxiety management, and pathological lying in individuals with narcissistic tendencies.

One of the central themes explored in the current literature is the integration of SEHT with other therapeutic modalities to address complex psychological issues. Girdhar.V and Bhatt.S (2024) conducted a case study examining the use of integrative psychospiritual techniques, including SEHT, in treating adolescent emotional distress and self-harming behaviour. This study underscores the value of combining psychospiritual approaches with traditional therapeutic techniques to promote emotional healing and self-regulation among adolescents.

In a similar vein, Banerjee.P,et.al.(2024) explored the use of SEHT in managing anxiety, particularly among young mental health professionals. Their research suggests that SEHT provides a holistic approach to anxiety management, offering benefits that extend beyond conventional therapeutic interventions. This study highlights the growing acceptance of SEHT in mental health care and its potential to support anxiety management in professional settings.

In addition to its therapeutic applications in clinical settings, SEHT has been linked to colour psychology and interior design, suggesting a broader potential for healing in environmental spaces. Bhatt.S,et.al(2024) examined the role of colour psychology in the design of geriatric spaces. Their study posits that the careful selection of colours in living spaces can influence psychological well-being, particularly in older adults, thereby enhancing comfort and mental health.

In line with this, Puri.A,et.al (2024) further explored the transformative impact of colour psychology when integrated with SEHT for interior design. Their research emphasizes how colour can facilitate therapeutic outcomes, particularly for individuals undergoing emotional or psychological healing.

A notable contribution to this discourse is Gupta.S,et.al (2024) study on pathological lying in narcissists, exploring the role of SEHT in addressing this pervasive issue. Their research suggests that SEHT can be an effective tool in uncovering and healing the underlying emotional and psychological factors that contribute to pathological lying, providing a unique approach to understanding and treating narcissistic behaviour.

The work of Bhatt.S,et.al (2024) collectively reinforces the potential of SEHT not only in the therapeutic space but also in its broader application to environmental and spatial psychology. By linking psychological healing with environmental design, these studies offer an innovative approach to enhancing mental health through both personal and environmental interventions.

In recent years, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) have emerged as a promising alternative for managing GAD. EFT integrates cognitive reframing with acupressure by tapping on specific meridian points, offering a novel approach to emotional regulation and physical relaxation (Feinstein, 2012). Studies have demonstrated its efficacy in reducing anxiety symptoms. For instance, Church et al. (2016) conducted a randomized controlled trial involving 500 participants with clinical anxiety and found that EFT significantly reduced anxiety levels compared to standard care.

The study highlighted the rapid onset of symptom relief and the sustainability of the effects over follow-up periods. Similarly, Stapleton et al. (2018) explored EFT's impact on physiological markers of stress, such as cortisol levels, revealing a significant reduction following EFT sessions, further supporting its role in modulating stress responses.

The mechanisms underlying EFT's effectiveness are thought to involve the regulation of the amygdala and hippocampus, brain regions associated with emotional processing and memory (Feinstein, 2012). By combining cognitive and somatic elements, EFT appears to disrupt the link between distressing memories and physiological stress responses, thereby promoting a state of relaxation and emotional balance. Additionally, EFT's accessibility and minimal side effects make it an appealing option for individuals who may not respond well to conventional treatments or are seeking non-invasive and self-empowering strategies.

While the evidence base for EFT is growing, some criticisms include the need for larger-scale studies and greater standardization of protocols to validate its efficacy. Nonetheless, the existing literature supports EFT as a

complementary approach to traditional GAD treatments, providing patients with an additional tool for managing their symptoms. The integration of EFT into clinical practice could address gaps in current treatment models, particularly in addressing the diverse needs of patients with varying preferences and access to resources.

2. Methodology

2.1. Case Report

2.1.1. Patient Information

- Age: 23 years
- Sex: Female
- Occupation: Special educator teacher
- Education: Bachelor of Special Education

2.1.2. Presenting Complaints

The patient reported episodes of excessive anxiety, panic, suffocation, choking, chest heaviness, palpitations, tremulousness, and crying spells persisting for a month.

2.1.3. History of Presenting Complaints

Symptoms emerged after resigning from her job due to the stress of managing a grown-up ADHD child without adequate support from colleagues and persistent criticism from the principal.

2.1.4. Past Medical History

The patient previously experienced anxiety episodes, presenting with bladder control issues in high-stress situations. These were managed through a brief course of benzodiazepines and stress management techniques.

2.1.5. Physical Examination

General physical examination revealed no abnormalities.

2.1.6. Diagnosis

The patient was diagnosed with GAD. Differential diagnoses included panic disorder and adjustment disorder.

2.1.7. Therapeutic Intervention

The treatment plan incorporated anxiolytic medication for immediate symptom relief and stress management through EFT.

2.2. Therapy Session

The EFT session involved the following steps

- **Stress Awareness:** Identifying sources of stress and their physical manifestations. Acknowledge, Release, and Relax: Tapping on tension points while verbalizing calming affirmations. The patient reported immediate emotional relief and a relaxed state following the session.

3. Discussion

This case highlights EFT's role as a viable adjunctive therapy for anxiety disorders. Its benefits align with findings by Church et al. (2016), demonstrating significant anxiety reduction. While pharmacotherapy addresses acute symptoms, EFT provides a self-empowering tool for long-term emotional regulation. This case underscores the potential of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) as a valuable adjunctive therapy for managing anxiety disorders, complementing traditional treatment modalities. Its efficacy aligns with research by Church et al. (2016), which highlighted significant reductions in anxiety levels following EFT interventions.

Unlike pharmacotherapy, which primarily focuses on alleviating acute symptoms, EFT empowers individuals with a practical tool for long-term emotional regulation and self-management. This self-help approach fosters a sense of agency, enabling patients to actively participate in their healing process and develop resilience against recurring stressors.

Furthermore, EFT's ability to combine cognitive reframing with somatic elements offers a unique dual-action mechanism, addressing both the psychological and physiological manifestations of anxiety. By tapping on specific acupressure points while processing negative emotions, EFT facilitates a calming effect on the nervous system, potentially mitigating the chronic stress responses often associated with anxiety disorders. This holistic approach not only complements pharmacological and psychotherapeutic interventions but also serves as a standalone strategy for individuals seeking non-invasive, cost-effective solutions.

Despite its growing evidence base, the integration of EFT into clinical practice remains underexplored. More robust, large-scale studies are needed to validate its long-term benefits and elucidate the underlying mechanisms driving its effectiveness. However, the current findings strongly suggest that incorporating EFT into therapeutic protocols could enhance the comprehensiveness of care, offering patients a versatile and accessible means of managing anxiety.

3.1. Way Forward

Future studies should investigate EFT's efficacy across diverse populations and its integration with conventional therapies. Longitudinal studies could assess sustained benefits and mechanisms underlying EFT's effectiveness. Future research should aim to expand the understanding of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) by exploring its efficacy across diverse populations and contexts. To achieve this, the following steps should be considered:

3.2. Population Diversity

EFT's effectiveness has primarily been studied in specific groups, often within controlled clinical or experimental settings. Future studies should focus on diverse demographic and cultural populations, including varied age groups, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and individuals with unique psychological and physical health challenges. This would provide insights into how cultural and individual differences influence the applicability and outcomes of EFT.

3.3. Integration with Conventional Therapies:

A growing interest lies in integrating EFT with traditional therapeutic approaches, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Psychodynamic Therapy, or pharmacological interventions. Research should explore whether combining EFT with these methods enhances treatment outcomes, particularly for complex conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety disorders.

3.4. Mechanisms of Action

Despite its growing popularity, the precise mechanisms underlying EFT's effectiveness remain poorly understood. Longitudinal studies focusing on neurobiological, psychological, and emotional changes associated with EFT can shed light on how tapping sequences and cognitive reframing impact stress regulation, emotional processing, and overall well-being.

3.5. Sustained Benefits and Long-term Efficacy

Current studies often assess EFT's short-term benefits. Future research should prioritize longitudinal designs to evaluate the durability of its effects over months or years. Such studies could determine whether periodic "booster" sessions are necessary and assess the potential for relapse or diminishing effects over time.

3.6. Application in Non-clinical Settings

EFT's potential extends beyond clinical use into settings like schools, workplaces, and disaster relief programs. Research should explore its applicability in these environments, focusing on stress reduction, resilience-building, and improving interpersonal relationships.

3.7. Comparative Effectiveness

Studies comparing EFT to other emerging techniques, such as mindfulness-based therapies or somatic experiencing, can help establish its relative efficacy. These comparisons would assist practitioners in tailoring interventions to individual client needs.

3.8. Technological Integration

The use of apps and AI-driven platforms for guiding and monitoring EFT practice holds promise. Research should assess the feasibility and effectiveness of these digital tools, ensuring that technology-driven EFT interventions retain the method's therapeutic essence. By addressing these areas, future research can enhance the scientific foundation of EFT, foster its acceptance in mainstream psychological and medical practices, and broaden its reach to benefit a wider array of individuals.

4. Conclusion

This case illustrates EFT's potential in managing GAD, offering immediate emotional relief and promoting relaxation. Integrating such techniques into clinical practice could enhance holistic care for anxiety disorders. This case illustrates EFT's potential in managing GAD, offering immediate emotional relief and promoting relaxation. Integrating such techniques into clinical practice could enhance holistic care for anxiety disorders.

The inclusion of EFT in therapeutic interventions not only addresses the immediate symptoms of anxiety but also empowers patients with a self-help tool to manage stress independently. By incorporating such complementary approaches, clinicians can offer more personalized and integrative care, accommodating the diverse needs of patients. EFT's minimal side effects and accessibility make it an appealing option for widespread use, particularly in resource-limited settings.

Continued research into its mechanisms and applications could pave the way for broader adoption, ensuring a more comprehensive and effective treatment paradigm for anxiety disorders. This case highlights the significant potential of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) in managing Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), demonstrating its capacity to provide immediate emotional relief and foster a sense of relaxation.

By incorporating EFT into clinical practice, mental health professionals can enhance holistic care for anxiety disorders, addressing both the physiological and emotional dimensions of the condition.

The inclusion of EFT in therapeutic interventions not only alleviates acute anxiety symptoms but also equips patients with a practical, self-administered tool to manage stress independently. This empowerment fosters greater self-efficacy, enabling individuals to navigate stressors effectively in their daily lives.

Moreover, EFT's accessibility and minimal risk of side effects make it a particularly appealing option, especially in resource-limited settings where traditional therapies may not be readily available or affordable. Its ease of implementation allows for seamless integration into existing treatment protocols, thereby expanding the range of therapeutic options available to clinicians.

By adopting such complementary approaches, practitioners can offer more personalized and integrative care tailored to the diverse needs of their patients. Importantly, the simplicity and adaptability of EFT do not detract from its potential impact. On the contrary, these qualities underscore its value as a low-cost, scalable intervention capable of reaching a broader audience. To ensure its broader adoption and acceptance within mainstream therapeutic practices, continued research into the mechanisms underlying EFT and its diverse applications is essential. Such efforts could pave the way for a more comprehensive and effective treatment paradigm, ultimately improving outcomes for individuals with anxiety disorders and enhancing the overall quality of mental health care.

The integration of Subconscious Energy Healing Therapy (SEHT) in treating emotional distress, anxiety, and complex psychological behaviours like pathological lying, along with its application in colour psychology for interior design, marks a significant shift towards a more holistic approach in mental health. The reviewed studies demonstrate the potential of SEHT to foster healing across various contexts, from clinical therapy to the design of healing environments. These advancements underscore the importance of combining psychological, spiritual, and environmental factors in promoting mental well-being.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

References

- [1] American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC.
- [2] Baldwin, D. S., et al. (2011). Benzodiazepines: Risks and benefits. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 199(2), 93-97.
- [3] Church, D., et al. (2016). Clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) improves multiple physiological markers of health. *Journal of Evidence-Based Integrative Medicine*, 21(3), 150-160.
- [4] Feinstein, D. (2012). Acupoint stimulation in treating psychological disorders: Evidence of efficacy. *Review of General Psychology*, 16(4), 364-380.
- [5] Kessler, R. C., et al. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62(6), 593-602.
- [6] Bhatt, S., Puri, A., Shelat, S., Gupta, S., Gauba, B., Aneja, K., Alam, S., & Pandya, B. (2024). Colour psychology in interior design for geriatric spaces. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*.
- [7] Girdhar, V., & Bhatt, S. (2024). A case study of integrative psychospiritual techniques in addressing adolescent emotional distress and self-harming behaviour with Subconscious Energy Healing Therapy (SEHT). *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*.
- [8] Puri, A., Shelat, S., Bhatt, S., Gupta, S., Aneja, K., Gauba, B., Alam, S., & Pandya, B. (2024). Unlocking the secrets of colour psychology for transformative interior design through SEHT. *Journal of Psychology and Spirituality*.
- [9] Banerjee, P., Sindhu, B., Puri, A., Bhatt, S., & Gupta, S. (2024). Unmasking deception: Pathological lying in narcissists and the role of subconscious energy healing therapy. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 24(2), 1719–1724. <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.24.2.3477>
- [10] Banerjee, P., Sindhu, B., Nayar, P., Bhatt, S., Puri, A., & Gupta, S. (2024). Subconscious Energy Healing Therapy (SEHT) in anxiety management: A holistic approach for young mental health professionals. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 24(02), 1725–1729. <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.24.2.3478>
- [11] Banerjee, P., Sindhu, B., Bhatt, S., Puri, A., & Gupta, S. (2024). The role of subconscious energy healing therapy (SEHT) in enhancing relationship counselling outcomes. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 24(02), 1730–1737. <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.24.2.3479>
- [12] Puri, A., Nayar, P., Sandhu, S., Sandhu, B., Bhatt, S., & Chhabra Arora, M. (Year). Assessing Narcissistic Patterns: A Comprehensive Approach with the Narcissistic Personality Patterns Test (NPPT). <https://ijsra.net/sites/default/files/IJSRA-2024-2187.pdf>
- [13] Puri, A., Bhatt, S., & Akanksha, P. (2024). Construction and standardization of a test of narcissistic personality pattern test. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 13(1), Article 2036. <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijsra.2024.13.1.2036>
- [14] Bhatt, S., Jogi, S., & Puri, A. (2024). Development of an app for diagnosing autism. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 12(01), 2406–2410.
- [15] Bhatt, S., Jogi, S., & Puri, A. (Year). Integration of Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Autism Therapy. *Journal/Publisher, Volume (Issue), pages. DOI/*.
- [16] Karthikeyan, B., Puri, A., Mathur, R., et al. (2016). Internet of Things (IOT) based attendance and intrusion detection system. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Computer and Communication Engineering*, 4(3).
- [17] Banerjee, P., Puri, A., Puri, A., et al. (2018). Challenges faced by non BPD spouse and family: a case study. *EC Psychology and Psychiatry*, 7(12).

- [18] Puri, A., Navya, N., & Shammi. (2019). Malaise of Domestic Violence: Scarring Children's Well Being. Vol. 7 No. 1 (2019): Volume 07, Issue 1, January-March, 2019. DOI: 10.25215/0701.067
- [19] Puri, A., Bamel, P., Sindhu, B., et al. (2023). Recent advances in psychotherapy in the Indian scenario - subconscious energy healing therapy: S.E.H.T for infertility counselling. *J Psychol Clin Psychiatry*, 14(6), 182–194. DOI: 10.15406/jpcpy.2023.14.00750
- [20] Puri, A., Sindhu, B. D., Puri, A., et al. (2023). Hypnotherapy as an intervention in infertility treatment. *Art Human Open Acc J*, 5(3), 214–218. DOI: 10.15406/ahoaj.2023.05.00211
- [21] Puri, A., Nayar, P., Bamel, P., Puri, A., & Kumar, A. (2024). Invisible Grief During A.R.T.. In Indian Fertility Society (Ed.), *Counseling in Assisted Reproduction Technology (A.R.T.)* (pp. 23).
- [22] Bamel, P., Puri, A., Nayar, K. D., Singh, T., & Jogy, S. (2024). Use of Interest-Based Technology for Patient Care. In Indian Fertility Society (Ed.), *Counseling in Assisted Reproduction Technology (A.R.T)* (pp. 83).
- [23] Puri, A., Nayar, P., Bamel, P., Sindhu, B., & Puri, A. (2024). Implementing Distress Screening and Psychological Assessment at the A.R.T. Clinic. In Indian Fertility Society (Ed.), *Counseling in Assisted Reproduction Technology (A.R.T)* (pp. 63).
- [24] Bamel, P., Sindhu, B., Sindhu, S., Puri, A., & Singh, T. (2024). Recent Eclectic Approach to Psychotherapeutic Interventions in the Indian Context - Subconscious Energy Healing Therapy (S.E.H.T). *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 12(2), a434-a442. <http://www.ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2402052.pdf>
- [25] Puri, A., Mathur, R., & Sindhu, N. (2024). Harnessing the Power of AI in Healthcare: Benefits, Concerns, and Challenges for Medical Personnel Training. *Art Human Open Acc J*, 6(2), 90-91.
- [26] Banerjee, P., Sindhu, B. D., Sindhu, S., et al. (2024). Exploring the intersections of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in psychology and astrology: a conceptual inquiry for human well-being. *J Psychol Clin Psychiatry*, 15(1), 75–77. DOI: 10.15406/jpcpy.2024.15.00761
- [27] Puri, A., Banerjee, P., Nayar, P., et al. (2024). Understanding the impact of environmental pollutants on infertility counselling: insights from the Indian scenario. *Art Human Open Acc J*, 6(1), 35–37. DOI: 10.15406/ahoaj.2024.06.00218
- [28] Puri, A., Mathur, R., & Sindhu, N. (2024). Enhancing assisted reproductive technology with AI: Addressing concerns and challenges. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 12(01), 745-747. <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijsra.2024.12.1.0859>
- [29] Puri, A., Mathur, R., & Nayar, K. D. (2024). AI-powered fertility assessment tool. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 12(1), 742-744. <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijsra.2024.12.1.0860>
- [30] Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62(6), 593–602.
- [31] Olthuis, J. V., Watt, M. C., Bailey, K., Hayden, J. A., & Stewart, S. H. (2016). Therapist-supported Internet cognitive behavioural therapy for anxiety disorders in adults. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (3).
- [32] Rickels, K., Rynn, M. A., & Stein, D. J. (2000). Pharmacotherapy for generalized anxiety disorder. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 61(Suppl 7), 11–17.
- [33] Stapleton, P., Sheldon, T., & Porter, B. (2018). A randomized trial of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in the treatment of food cravings. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 10(3), 361–380.