



TO YOUR Health

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Counselor Greg Warburton of the ABC House in Albany shows how he uses a teddy bear to teach children a method of stress release that involves tapping pressure points on the body.

David Patton | To Your Health

Tapping into healing

Technique stimulates pressure points to help manage stress

By KATHERINE ROUSE

Greg Warburton's job is to help kids who've been through trauma move on with their lives.

As a counselor at the ABC House in Albany, a center that works with children who have been abused or neglected, he is constantly helping kids deal with the worst memories they have. And for the past 12 years, through a method called "tapping," which combines physical tools with traditional talk therapy, he's found a tool that can help kids "get on with growing up," as he puts it.

The problem with traditional counseling, Warburton has found, is that merely talking about the problems and abuse kids have endured sometimes can make things worse.

"When you're talking about a traumatic event, the thinking part of the brain can shut down," he said. "Blood flows to the emotional part of the brain then, for self-protection."

Clients often find themselves having a full **flight-or-fight** response going on physically, even though they're sitting in the safety of a counseling office. Often, it's not just when talking about their problems — for many *clients*, every time something comes up that reminds them of their past, extra energy floods the body and makes it difficult to function.

"Tapping is essentially a stress-management tool," Warburton said. "It's a dependable way to relax the body and calm the mind when stressed!"

Tapping technique

Tapping borrows from the acupuncture field the idea that pressure on certain points of the body can help release trapped energy.

Warburton often starts out by showing children a teddy bear with buttons **sewn on its** body at



Buttons on the teddy bear show kids where the pressure points are.

certain points — above the eyebrows, on the sides of the eye sockets, on the sides of the hands, and at multiple other locations. Then he shows them how to tap the energy points using their index and middle finger together. "Hard enough that you can hear it, but not so hard that it hurts," he says. Eventually, he asks patients who are *willing* to tap on their own pressure points.

Warburton said that he's seen kids use the technique successfully. For child clients who have to testify in a court process about abuse they have suffered, Warburton asks them to picture testifying while tapping on certain stress-relieving points until they can think about it without "getting tied up in knots!"

A 10-year-old patient of Warburton's wrote in a statement about tapping that she uses it when she is sad, or when she has headaches or stomachaches, and especially when she thinks about the death of her grandfather.

"Ever since I learned it I **have felt** better about Poppy and I haven't been crying so much," she wrote. "I'm starting to un-

derstand that Poppy's gone."

Marken Arends, another counselor at the ABC House, said that she was initially skeptical about the tapping technique. However, after trying it, she says she saw its benefits.

"It Works, it really calms you down quickly," she said.

She also noticed that some of the techniques *are similar* to things many people do naturally for stress relief, without any knowledge of energy flow or pressure points.

"A lot of people will often rub their foreheads when they are stressed," she said. And when my daughter was little, before I knew about this technique, I used to rub the points just above her eyes to help her go to sleep."

Energy psychology

Warburton said that tapping is a part of the mental health field called energy psychology, which has been around for about 30 years. The tapping tool is also called "Emotional Freedom Techniques." He describes it as the mental health field meeting the acupuncture system.

ABOUT ABC HOUSE

The ABC House is a center aimed at providing a safe, respectful, and healing environment for children who are the victims of abuse. Since 1997, children in Linn and Benton counties have come to the ABC House for medical evaluations and investigative interviews, rather than being taken to the police station or the hospital.

A staff that includes medical doctors and counselors works with children and their families to help them get through the legal process and assist them in recovery.

To help raise money for the center, the ABC House is planning its first half-marathon. The Runaway Pumpkin Half is planned for 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 19, in Lebanon. For more information or to register for the race, visit mndriv.runaway.purripkinhallog.org.

For more information about the ABC House, visit www.ahchouse.org.

He said that although there have been decades of supportive anecdotal evidence of its effectiveness, as well as some recent formal research into the method, it remains *afraid* that has drawn skepticism from some in the medical community. He credits the leadership of the ABC House for being open-minded about a technique that he feels is a powerful tool for kids.

For those who may not feel comfortable tapping on their own face and body out in public when they're feeling stressed (lull's a little socially awkward," he admitted), he sometimes teaches patients to massage pressure points instead.

"I try to keep it as simple as possible," he said.

The goal of tapping, Warburton said, isn't to erase memories of painful events. In stead, it's to train the mind and body to deal with them without panicking.

"It's to clear out that emotional charge," he said

And without those negative emotions weighing them down, it's easier for kids to get on with growing up.