

PANIC ATTACKS LINKED TO CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

A young man aged 22, whom I shall refer to as X, came to me recently wondering if EFT would help him. He was initially experiencing panic attacks about once a month however now the frequency had increased to an average of twice a week. He had sought medical help in the past but the medications prescribed had not helped. With the increased frequency that he was experiencing the attacks, he was desperate to get help.

I asked him to describe when the attacks started and where he experienced them and what the symptoms were for him:-

X related that, as far as he was aware, the first panic attack symptoms he experienced were around the age of 15 or 16. In the beginning X experienced the attacks at a rate of one per month. His doctor had diagnosed the condition as 'panic attacks' and could offer him only strong medications to control them. X explained that there was nothing he could think of that triggered the attacks.

He said that the attacks were preceded by a feeling of anxiety around his stomach area; that his pulse would race, his breathing became constricted and he would feel extremely hot and sweat profusely.

To get a better idea, I got X to describe in as much detail as he could, how he experienced the panic attacks.

"The panic attacks always occur when I am in bed, and there is someone familiar with me". The feelings always start from my bellybutton upwards to my head. I start to feel very hot and sweaty in my upper torso and I'm not aware of my lower body".

I asked X to think about the last time he had an attack (while I tapped on his EFT points) and focused on the bodily feelings he experienced. After several rounds of having X repeat the phrase, 'even though my body has learned to over-react in some situations I am a good person', 'even though I don't know why I'm having these panic symptoms, I accept my self', we didn't seem to get anywhere.

At this point I decided to change course and try something else. So I asked him the 'magic' question 'what event or person in your life could you skip if you had to live over again?'

He hemmed and hawed and then said "well, maybe it was the experience of being sexually abused at age 9, however I have dealt with it and it doesn't bother me now". Here was my cue, I felt, and leapt upon it.

Since he claimed he had already resolved it, I asked him if it was all right to briefly revisit the event, in case something might tie it into the panic attacks. He agreed to tell his story:

His parents had owned a motel and hired people to clean the rooms. One day, for some unknown reason he went into one of the rooms that was being cleaned. The man who was there (a family friend) invited him to lie on the bed. The man closed the door and proceeded to cover X up with a blanket from his waist up and over his head. He then removed X's pants and perform oral sex on him. All this was done without any words spoken while X was lying on the bed covered from the waist up by the blanket. When the man was finished, he put X's pants back on and took off the blanket and tidied him up and went on with his chores.

The similarity between the panic attacks and this event are striking.

We tapped on all the aspects surrounding this abuse and the most significant insight that X had was the association between the panic attacks and the physical, emotional and mental panic he experienced under the cover up of the blanket.

We tapped on forgiveness for himself, his parents and the abuser,

We tapped on the fact that X was only 9 years old and he was curious and he felt guilty that he somehow invited the abuse.

We tapped about the fact that at age 9, X didn't know how to express his thoughts and feelings or whom to tell.

We tapped on the physical feeling of the panic attack; the weight on his chest, the hot flushes from his waist upwards, and his racing thoughts.

During the following session X said that he could clearly see how the event was linked to his recent panic attacks. When he felt vulnerable and stressed his body was recreating reactions from the early trauma.

It's only been 32 weeks since I worked with X; however there have been no signs of further panic attacks. I will be in touch with X on a monthly basis to keep track of any changes.