

Spiritual
Inner Peace and Happiness with
Emotional
CORE
T H E R A P Y
Robert A. Moylan LCPC

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CHAPTER ONE

How ECT Works

They say that “money makes the world go round,” but that’s not true. Emotions do. As a matter of fact, you could easily come to the conclusion that having emotions (also called “feelings”) is what distinguishes us as human beings. What’s most remarkable, however, is the range of emotions. There are well over 100. I’ve listed below a partial list of feelings to show the varied names we use for expressing ourselves:

1. Loving
2. Wonderful
3. Joyous
4. Happy
5. Peaceful
6. Satisfied
7. Ecstatic
8. Content
9. Serene
10. Pleased
11. Elated
12. Excited
13. Overjoyed

14. Glad
15. Festive
16. Thrilled
17. Enthusiastic
18. Eager
19. Cheerful
20. Optimistic
21. Anxious
22. Fearful
23. Tormented
24. Nervous
25. Pessimistic
26. Depressed
27. Helpless
28. Disappointed
29. Upset
30. Bitter
31. Frustrated
32. Inflamed
33. Incensed
34. Tense
35. Irritated
36. Remorseful
37. Unsure
38. Rejected
39. Offended
40. Heartbroken

These emotions can literally make us ecstatical-

ly happy or depressed to the point of utter despair. It has no doubt been this way for all of human history, but today modern psychology has unlocked the secrets of how we process our emotions. Learning how to do so in healthy ways – rather than harmful – is at the heart of Emotional Core Therapy. What ECT demonstrates is that no matter how many different names you have for these hundreds of different feelings, they all can be broken down, or categorized into one of four authentic feelings. These are joy, grief, fear, or relief.

As you read this book you will come to understand that there is no single psychological technique that works for all people. That is because every individual is uniquely different and every mental health professional varies in their approach to therapy. As a matter of fact, I borrow heavily from a number of techniques from various schools of therapy to help my clients grow. For example, when I deal with addiction issues as the primary problem, I may try three or four different techniques from three to four different schools of therapy. I am not beholden to just one approach. The focus is always on the client's growth. So for an alcohol problem I may use techniques from multiple approaches such as:

1. Family Systems Therapy, which explores patterns from one's family of origin.
2. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, which can

focus on rewards and consequences to change behaviour.

3. Gestalt Therapy, which uses role playing to help clients to see outside of themselves.

We won't go into detail on these other techniques. I only mention them here to make it clear that there are a plethora of legitimate and effective approaches for dealing with emotional issues. Keep in mind that in graduate school, therapists are trained in specific specialties, and I'm not here to advocate one approach over the other or to denigrate or critique others' work. As an individual, you will of course have to discover for yourself what will work best in your own life. What I do want to emphasize is that, within the multifaceted mental health world, ECT utilizes fundamentally sound psychology techniques to treat a variety of common emotional ailments within a simple and effective framework.

Today, people are becoming more and more aware of the critical role that stress plays when it comes to both our mental and physical well being. Incredibly, we now know that stress is the number one killer of the human species. An overburdened psyche (filled with excessive fear) or a depressed psyche are not healthy for anyone long term. You simply cannot tax the central nervous system for too long without ramifications.

Yes, the link between stress and heart disease and all kinds of other diseases is well established. But the overriding question is what can we do about it? Forget the idea of completely eliminating stress from your life. That's impossible. Each new day brings with it the possibility of stressful situations. It simply comes with the territory when living in an imperfect world. There are always going to be things that we find stressful. Consider the game of golf (this is instructive regardless of whether or not you play the game yourself). Playing golf involves experiencing all four of what are termed the "four authentic feelings." These are joy, grief, fear and relief. My main focus in counseling golfers/athletes and other clients is to have them understand these four authentic feelings. Anger is a reaction to grief and is also analyzed in counseling sessions. All four affect your golf swing.

In simple terms all four true or authentic feelings evolve from entering and leaving relationships. Let's take a look at the following diagram. As you can see from this diagram, when you go towards something you like there is "Joy". What is Joy? In simple terms, it is a pleasurable state of arousal. Most people can understand this sensation if you ask them the question, "What are you most optimistic about?" Their answer will likely be directed towards a relationship they are happy about

entering into. An example would be seeing your favorite sports team win a close game. Another example would be hugging a loved one or someone you admire.

Grief is what happens when you leave a relationship that you enjoyed. For example, leaving your warm, cozy house on a rainy day. Or perhaps leaving a loved one, when you go off to work in the morning.

This diagram also shows what happens when you enter a relationship that you dislike. A relationship that you dislike will provoke feelings of fear. An example would be climbing inside a cage with a hungry lion. Or jumping into the ocean if you don't know how to swim.

Flow Chart of Four Primary Feelings



When you leave a situation you dislike, there is relief. For example, escaping out of a cage in which a hungry lion had been running after you. Or reaching the shoreline after almost drowning in the ocean.

This flowchart of four authentic feelings is critical to understanding Emotional Core Therapy. Please go ahead and test the validity of the four authentic feelings by substituting several of your own relationship experiences for those that we have listed here. Try several for each authentic feeling and you will see that the flowchart is an accurate depiction of what happens to us human beings throughout the day. Stress, in the form of fear and grief will be with us our entire lives. ECT is the only therapy approach that addresses this stress openly, honestly, and accurately.

To see how the full sequence of events occurs with Emotional Core Therapy, let us now look at another diagram. This time we will examine the eight logical sequences of events that occur when authentic feelings are aroused and released. This diagram takes us from beginning to end in the ECT process.

As the ECT Flowchart below highlights, it is relationships that cause the four authentic feelings of ECT to arise. Specifically, relationships with our

selves or others usually involve needs being met. For the sake of simplicity, I organize needs into four categories. These are emotional, financial, spiritual, and physical. Throughout the human lifespan humans will be challenged to get these four needs met in a satisfactory manner. Also, it will be a challenge to meet other's needs. Our five senses – hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, and seeing – are needed to help identify the four authentic feelings that arise when we enter or leave a relationship. These four authentic feelings send messages to the brain, which is part of the central nervous system. Oftentimes when one of the four authentic feelings are severe or debilitating, our body will feel uncomfortable with symptoms of stress such as muscle tightness, shaking, or fatigue.

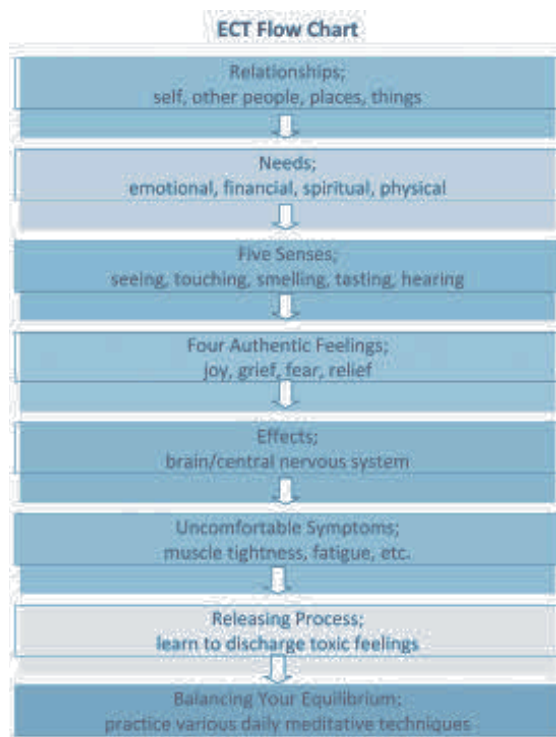
The benefit of ECT is that it simplifies the identifying of feelings thus allowing people to be empowered with their emotional being. ECT teaches one to cathartically release these feelings in an appropriate way. Furthermore, ECT works with clients to learn and acquire a calm, meditative state of being that is free from stress. That calm and meditative state of being is the 8th and final step of the ECT process and it is fully compatible with the practices of virtually all religions. Practicing ECT can teach you how to have a peaceful, loving relationship with your God throughout

the day. What religious person does not want that?

Just about every person of faith knows how to focus on thoughts and images that bring tranquility to the mind. That's because spiritual leaders have been teaching such practices for thousands of years. Now, it is also true that many belief systems have developed beautiful and often quite elaborate ceremonies, rituals, and other very precise religious activities. The idea of ECT is certainly not to discourage any of that. At the proper time and place these traditions are indeed appropriate and they bring much meaning and joy to people's lives. However, when using ECT all you have to do is simply focus on those aspects of your faith that emphasize peaceful, loving imagery. You do not have to be rigid or formulaic in any way. There is no need to exert any effort at all, or to try to recite specific words or rituals while praying. This may differ in the particulars from one faith tradition to the other, but the goal is the same: to quiet the mind and to enter a serene state where daydreaming and reflection come to us in a way that feels natural and spiritually nourishing. This is how ECT bridges the gap between psychology and religion.

By using the ECT flowchart, adherents of every religion, as well as non-religious people, will be able to process their emotions in a healthy manner

that reaps enormous benefits in their everyday life. For those who consider themselves religious or spiritual, ECT will strengthen their faith while at the same time this technique allows future authentic feelings to be more easily identified and processed. I would suggest that you review the ECT flowchart and examine the eight concepts that demonstrate the ECT process from beginning to end.



After studying the ECT flowchart several times, try and envision a particularly traumatic event in your life. Did your experience resemble the sequence highlighted in the ECT flowchart? If so, how did your experience mirror that of ECT? If not, do not worry. We have the entire book to help you learn the ECT process.

When you enter a relationship that you like there is joy (this is not limited to relationships with other people, as it could be many things; think of eating your favorite ice cream). When you leave something that you like there is grief (saying goodbye to someone you love). When you go towards something you dislike there is fear. Imagine walking near a snake pit. When you leave a fearful event, there is relief. Ask any golfer and they will tell you that playing golf is in itself a relationship – a relationship with nature. The tougher the golf course, the tougher the test is emotionally on a golfer’s psyche.

Grief (otherwise known as loss) and fear (otherwise known as anxiety) are the two most debilitating feelings that golfers face when they play. Unfortunately, for most amateurs every round of golf is filled with these unwanted feelings. Golfers of every level need to get a handle on their emotions each

time they play – or face the consequences.

Hopefully, this is all starting to make sense to you. Yet, you very well might be asking, “Well, that’s great for problems on the golf course...but what about everything else in life?” My answer: ECT does indeed pertain to every area of our life. We all need to find healthy ways to process our emotions every single day, wherever we are and whatever we are doing. It doesn’t matter how old you are, your financial circumstances, your love life or anything else. Your emotions are always there. They are an integral part of who you are. It makes no sense to try to bury them or to ignore them. Even if you could, you wouldn’t want to, as it would be a shallow existence to live in a world without feelings. Some people try, through drugs, alcohol and countless other means – and they often fail and end up harming themselves even more. That’s precisely why it is so vital to learn how to best cope with toxic/debilitating feelings. Think of ECT as a lifestyle choice that will improve your mental health.

Like any lifestyle change, what you learn through ECT will not take root overnight, but over the course of months or years. It has to become integrated into your life. Let’s take a closer look at how one’s memory works. Most emotionally healthy people do various stages of Emotional Core Therapy without much thought given to the process. However,

for ECT to be of true value throughout one’s life, it is imperative to learn the process completely. The goal is to never forget the process of how emotions work. We spend a year in high school learning Algebra, which many of us forget a few years later. That’s OK if we go on to careers that never require Algebra. But we will always have emotions! So why not learn a process of emotional healing that will serve us our entire lives no matter where we live or what we do?

All of us humans know our dates of birth, our race, ethnicity, religion, etc. Why? We know these facts about ourselves because we learned them over and over again when we were young. We also were required to know these facts about ourselves at various times in our adult lives. It takes time and energy to learn these important pieces of information about our life. This information is useful and necessary as it serves to ground and center us as human beings.

ECT is also an approach that will allow you to be centered in life. As ECT explains, grief and fear are an inevitable part of life. In any given year it is likely that one in five people will incur a debilitating experience emotionally. Why not equip yourself for something so common in life? In order for one to gain use of the ECT process we are placing an ECT Flowchart at the beginning of the book and at the end of each chapter as a reference point. This allows you to gauge how much you have learned

about ECT after reading a chapter. A checkpoint of key ECT issues let's you focus on key concepts at a leisurely pace.

Remember to be kind to yourself and allow yourself ample time to read the entire book. It takes time to reflect on your own experiences as well those of others. If you were going to teach a child the ABC song, how would you do it? Would you be compassionate? Supportive? Would you give treats and rewards to the child when they learn portions of the song? Why not do the same for yourself when you learn ECT? Why not be kind and supportive and reward yourself for learning something as important as protecting your own mind?

The crucial point to remember is that the process of learning ECT is easier than it looks. In fact, many of us use some of the various steps of ECT without even knowing it! For example, most people use their five senses hundreds of times a day. Most people are bombarded by other's needs (emotional, financial, spiritual, physical) throughout the day. Also, most people have messages or information sent to their central nervous system throughout the day.

Consider the book, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People". This widely successful book was read by millions of people throughout the world.

Why was it so successful? It taught seven core principles that helped people achieve their goals. If millions of readers can learn these seven habits, why can't one learn the five major steps to ECT?

Remember, the ECT flowchart highlights eight concepts that typically occur in a relationship to cause us duress. The real work of this book is to understand five or six major concepts (understanding relationships and their needs, authentic feelings, mind and body distress, releasing feelings, and dutiful meditation). Two other concepts (learning how our five senses work and understanding how the central nervous system is affected) occur quite quickly and without much thinking. This book will only touch briefly on the two remaining parts of the ECT flowchart that occur rapidly to all of us on a daily basis.

Part of the overall ECT process we do instinctively anyway! For example, we enter and leave relationships all day long. So this is really not all that difficult for us to understand and follow. If you allow yourself the time to learn ECT, and are willing to commit the process to memory, be prepared to enjoy greater vitality and vigor. You are learning a process that will increase your enthusiasm and appreciation for life.

In order for ECT to be of real value, you need to be able to incorporate and apply the contents of this book into your day to day life. This can only occur when the ECT technique is learned and committed to one's long term memory, which only happens through repetitious work. In other words, practice, practice, practice. Over time you will enter the various steps into your short term memory. After repeated use, ECT will eventually become lodged into one's long term memory.

How Memory Works



Once a person has the technique in their long term memory, the process is learned and available for use. If you still have trouble understanding how memory works, think of remembering a ten digit

phone number. Usually it takes several tries to learn a long phone number. The ECT process requires that one monitor his mind and body for feelings and muscle response. This effort takes time to learn correctly. As you become aware of all four feelings, and their effect on you, rest assured you will start to become more emotionally balanced. In this book I will be using practical examples and cases where ECT can and would be utilized. By processing the various scenarios facing everyday common folks, you will begin to commit the approach to your long term memory. As you become more aware of all four feelings, and their effect on you, rest assured that you will become more balanced.

To help you understand ECT, let's examine how the four feelings are processed. It is our senses – seeing, touching, smelling, tasting, and hearing – that process all of our feelings. When an individual can sense fear (such as your boss yelling at you) a message is sent to the brain, which is part of the central nervous system. The central nervous system in turn transmits messages to the muscles throughout the body. This same dynamic happens throughout the day to all of us in various degrees whenever we sense fear.

As a therapist, my theoretical orientation is described as technically eclectic. This means I use a variety of psychological techniques from a variety

of schools of therapy. Over the years I have found that focusing on the release of authentic feelings has been helpful for client's growth and development. Much like getting caught in a thunderstorm, the vast majority of people get overwhelmed by emotions and lunge for the nearest umbrella. ECT, when practiced effectively, can downgrade a severe thunderstorm to just some minor drizzle. Emotional Core Therapy is effective because it filters out ambiguous words and negative thoughts by emphasizing and understanding the four true and authentic feelings.

It all begins with learning to continually monitor the four feelings. We all embark on the process at a different point in life. In my years of using ECT, I've had clients who have come to me at various stages of growth. Some are very emotionally healthy and need just a few sessions to get back on track. Others may need help in only one or two areas of life. I have empathy and compassion for all of them regardless of the stage of life they are in. This approach offers hope even for those who have suffered the worst possible cases of trauma and abuse.

Traumatic and stressful events, as most everybody unfortunately knows, come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. The good news is that ECT is a helpful treatment option because of its inherent ability to authentically assess your problems in a sim-

ple, yet effective manner.

The goal of Emotional Core Therapy is to get clients to be as peaceful and emotionally centered as a healthy two-year old. The definition of having a peaceful, relaxing, and meditative state is to feel non-threatened, or effected, by the four authentic feelings. In other words, to have a relaxed and calm central nervous system. Envision an infant in a crib, smiling and relaxed. Just as an infant can sit in a crib in a blissful state, an adult can also achieve a calm and relaxed state of being. As you read this book you will learn techniques to achieve meditation throughout the day. Meditation, a calm state of being, is essential for people desiring to use Emotional Core Therapy. Once you learn and can comfortably practice a "calm, relaxed, sense of self, it becomes easier to identify the four authentic feelings.

Most people suffering from grief or fear (which, as we said, is also known as anxiety) come to my office in a sad state of affairs with little hope of feeling better. One technique I use is to have them reflect on a peaceful state of mind that they had sometime as a child. It may have been at school, on a beach, with a friend, etc. I then help the client realize that he can get back to that proper state of mind through utilizing many of my therapy techniques. This book will cover many of the most effective psychology techniques known to release

feelings.

Of course, none of this is to imply that we're dealing with childish problems, or even trying to trace the problems back to childhood. Instead, Emotional Core Therapy teaches techniques to help yourself to learn how to process emotions properly, and in ways that are healthy rather than destructive. Remember that the four authentic feelings ultimately all stem from either entering or leaving relationships. Take, for example, a man and a woman who are having a strained relationship. Basically, their problem is "working on the marriage." Marriage is a lot of work, as each partner has to learn about the other partner's needs. In marriage counseling, I often make a list of what the husband and wife need emotionally, financially, physically, and spiritually. Both have to grow and learn about each other. With Emotional Core Therapy, we pay attention to how each feels in the relationship. The wife (Sally) in this scenario tells the therapist, "I get scared when John comes home from work. I know John works hard at his construction job during the day. His working conditions are horrible as he has to deal with all the inclement weather and a mean and demanding boss! Still, I cringe when he comes through the door in his foul moods every day."

With ECT, we focus on the meaning of her feelings. In this case, both words she uses, "scared" and "cringe" are different vocabulary names for the authentic feeling, "Fear".

What Sally is saying is that this relationship she has entered into brings fear into her life from time to time. The wife is not saying she has a terrible marriage. She just wants to address her relationship with her husband and work towards a better resolution in this particular situation.

With Emotional Core Therapy, there is a primary belief that no one deserves to live life with unwanted and toxic feelings. Furthermore, ECT has at its core a belief that withheld or internalized feelings are harmful for anyone in the long term. ECT utilizes a wide variety of commonly known techniques to release feelings. One of the most common techniques out there is to "verbalize" one's feelings. By talking out your fears with a compassionate therapist, toxic feelings such as fear (otherwise known as anxiety) are released. This is called catharsis. Catharsis is the cleansing of the soul. With ECT, we are vigilant about cleansing our soul. Just like a young child learns to brush their teeth and wash their hands as a daily habit, your soul also needs this type of positive treatment.

There are other ways that Sally can learn to

cleanse her soul. She can journal, listen to music, exercise, meditate, etc. Throughout the book you will find examples of releasing techniques. If the wife comes in with lots of complaints of fear/anxiety because she is afraid to confront her husband for not listening to her, I may focus on her learning to be more assertive with her needs. In this example, the first step is identifying the fear.

This is similar to a golfer who says that he has a panic attack every time he has to hit out of a sand bunker. He has excess fear, which adversely affects his central nervous system, and in turn this change in temperament adversely affects his golf swing. Why? The golf swing needs to be free of tension and smooth to be effective. It needs to be able to be repeated over and over in a calm manner. When a golfer lets his feelings have a negative effect on his swing it is called “choking”. In other words, his nerves get in his way. A golfer will utilize a swing coach and perhaps a golf psychologist to help him through his emotional problem. Both the swing coach and golf psychologist will be supportive, caring, and allow an environment for the golfer to take risks, and to make changes with his swing. If the golfer feels excessive fear in part of his game, he needs to trust his coach to get him better. Do you see how this is similar to a woman suffering fear from her husband? That’s precisely why, when I use

Emotional Core Therapy I encourage clients to take risks and make changes if they are suffering debilitating feelings of fear and loss.

Another example might involve an angry father of two young boys who works a lot. He comes to therapy to get some parenting skills. He tells me, “I am overwhelmed by these two boys and hate that I sometimes yell or get angry at them.” Clearly, he chose his words carefully. The young father used the word “overwhelmed” because the reality is that he has too much fear! He’s fearful (worried, concerned...feel free to add your own) that he will “fail” to fully or adequately complete all of the many tasks and responsibilities expected of him based on his circumstances and position in life. The solution, then, is that he needs to be organized and structured in such a way so that he can feel a sense of accomplishment with these necessary parenting tasks.

This young man’s name is Abdul and he was born and raised in Jordan in a family with strong Islamic values. His parents always taught him that as the head of his household he would be expected to provide leadership. Abdul was honored by this responsibility, but the weight of it at times felt like it was too much for him. What would his parents think of him if they knew the inner struggle he was experiencing? The last thing he would ever want

would be to disappoint them.

And he certainly did not want to disappoint Allah. From childhood he had been taught that Allah watches over every deed of human beings. Abdul wondered if he would ever be able to measure up and be the kind of ideal dad that he considered his own father, the proud patriarch of a large family. These thoughts kept him awake at night and restless during the day, even when he knew he needed to be concentrating on his duties at work.

All of us adults can relate to this father as we all get overwhelmed from time to time. The dictionary definition of “overwhelming” is overpowering in effect or strength. Let’s consider what is really happening to this young man in terms of the four authentic feelings. Without a doubt, he is moving towards someone or something he does not like. Let me be clear, I am not saying that he does not like his children. In fact, part of his fear is that, because he loves them so much, he’s desperately afraid of failing them and his wife and his own parents. He fears that he might not be up to the task, however, because it includes so many things that worry him. For example, he may love to ride bicycles with his two children. But then the two boys invite their two friends, meaning Dad is now responsible for four kids. What then happens if they ride their bicycles

near a busy street? The situation, he fears, could very easily spin out of control. What was once manageable and enjoyable, is now overwhelming.

Emotional Core Therapy will help this young father by isolating the problem, assessing the cause, and providing appropriate relief. We see that additional fear creeps into his thinking about this new activity as more children are involved, and in a more dangerous situation. When you have too much fear, it’s important to reduce it somehow, if possible. A beneficial approach may be to highlight the new tasks and responsibilities involved in the four children scenario. By focusing on how Abdul feels (muscle tension, lack of sleep, headaches, etc.) we can get him to modify his activities with his children.

Moreover, as a man of deep religious convictions, Abdul can use his daily prayers as a way to relax his mind. By concentrating his spiritual energies on God, Abdul is no longer putting all of the focus (and therefore all of the burden) on himself for everything that happens in his life. ECT helps put him into a very quiet mindset where he can then process his feelings in effective and healthy ways.

One of the key tenets of Islam is that all things are in Allah’s control. Therefore, although Abdul will continue to do his best in raising his children,

by submitting himself and his family to God's will, he will bring peace to both his heart and to his mind. The daily prayers fit in perfectly with ECT, because both are helping Abdul to release the fear and tension that he had previously allowed to rule over his life. It's not even the words of the particular prayers that are truly important when it comes to using ECT. Rather, he is simply focusing only on God's loving and merciful plan for him and for the world.

In the future, once Abdul learns the technique, he can utilize ECT, along with prayer in other fearful, stress-inducing situations. Examples might be when he feels too much fear at work, or in other relationships. The point is, once you learn the techniques for processing your four authentic feelings, you will be amazed at how much this knowledge makes fundamental differences (for the better) in your everyday life and in the "big issues" (family, health, relationships, finances, etc). When I speak of "big issues" I mean "life events". Emotional Core Therapy has the ability, when used correctly, to alter one's outlook, for the better, on life.

Remember earlier in this chapter we used the analogy of a thunderstorm versus drizzle to compare how one can feel less overwhelmed when using ECT? We utilize a similar framework for understanding life events. There exist hundreds, if not

thousands of life events that can adversely affect the human psyche. Death, divorce, job loss, financial loss are just a few problematic life events. With Emotional Core Therapy we are compartmentalizing all of these life events into two categories: entering and leaving relationships. Emotional stress is caused by moving towards or away from a relationship you have with a person, place, or thing.

This represents a crucial step in ECT, because once you can categorize all of your life events into two categories instead of two hundred, or two thousand, you gain control over the stress. You empower yourself by recognizing that the event is separate from you. You gain confidence that this event is something you chose in your life, and (if you want to) you can leave it, by properly processing your feelings.

Let's look at a particularly stressful event in this manner. A young woman named Linda has just accepted a job offer in an adjacent state. Once she starts her new position, she discovers that her boss is a lunatic. She knows that she cannot work in this position very long without undue psychological stress. By utilizing Emotional Core Therapy, she recognizes that she has entered into a new relationship with someone. In this case, a new boss. She also recognizes that she has entered into a new rela-

tionship with a new community as the position is out of state and she is not familiar with her surroundings. Although she has a great deal of fear related to her current life predicament, she feels confident deep down. Why? Linda recognizes that she is not the problem. Yes, she will have to grieve the loss of moving, getting a new job, etc. Yet, she knows deep down that these feelings will pass. She recognizes that she can process these feelings appropriately through the various techniques that she has learned in her counseling. Utilizing ECT can allow for this very difficult life event to be manageable for this young lady.

In Linda's case, in addition to ECT, she has her religious faith to lean upon. She has been a devout Catholic her entire life, she was taught by the nuns in parochial school and hardly ever misses Sunday mass. So when she moved to this new town, one of the first things that she did was to find her new local parish. She introduced herself to the priest and after attending mass for a few weeks she volunteered to join the church choir. Music always had a way of calming her nerves and putting her into a more serene state of mind.

All of these activities made Linda feel less alone in her new surroundings. She gained a renewed sense of community knowing that she could devel-

op new relationships with people who shared her same beliefs and came from the same religious background.

Linda also joined a women's group that prayed the Rosary once a week as part of a devotion to the Blessed Mother. However, the precise words of the prayers were not her focus. Instead, in her mind's eye she would visualize a statue of Mary holding the Baby Jesus that her mother had given her as a gift upon her Confirmation. Growing up, just looking at that divine statue always brought feelings of love and tranquility to Linda's heart. Now, as she learned more and more about ECT she was discovering how such imagery, even by evoking it just by closing her eyes and using her imagination, could easily transition her into a calm and very pleasant state of mind.

Having always felt the love and protection of the Virgin Mary her entire life, this practice, along with ECT, helped Linda to make the many adjustments necessary in order to transition more smoothly into this new stage of her life and career. The craziness of her boss became less and less dreadful for Linda as she built up her faith and her confidence week after week.

Let's look at how our simplistic approach using

Emotional Core Therapy works in a different analogy. There are two teachers caring for two groups of children in a schoolyard. One teacher supervises four children. The other teacher supervises 150. Who has the easier job? The one who is watching only four children of course! Why? Less responsibility, less tasks, less energy. That is in essence why ECT can be most beneficial to people desiring to master the mind. It simplifies emotions so they become much more manageable to handle.

We are now ready to begin to explore the most commonly occurring emotional stresses in the life span of every human being. In the upcoming chapters we will examine hypothetical as well as actual cases where ECT can and has proven to be effective. As you read the various scenarios unfolding before your eyes, you can finally begin to learn the benefits of Emotional Core Therapy. In my work as a therapist, the most common psychological issues I see are depression, anxiety/fear issues. Most of these stresses to our equilibrium occur when we are with family, friends, at work, school, or in a relationship with a partner such as marriage. I will examine how ECT can help people from most walks of life. As you become more and more acclimated to the ECT process, you will begin the healthy journey back home to yourself. Think of the movie, “The Wizard of Oz.” The main character, Dorothy,

relates to the “Good Witch of the North” at the end of the film, repeating over and over, “There is no place like home.” This reassuring chant allows her to leave the fantasy world of Oz and return home to Kansas. This is the mantra that you need to learn to fully comprehend Emotional Core Therapy. Every person is lovable. Every person deserves peace. Every person can overcome their troubled emotional state.

Keep in mind that Emotional Core Therapy works if you allow the process to work. If you are willing to make a genuine effort to grow and develop as a human being, what you read in the following pages will be transformational in your life. Over time, ECT empowers the client by giving them the confidence that they can overcome many of the major traumatic events in life. There is simply no cure for the emotional trauma that life throws at us from time to time. From hurricanes, floods, financial losses, and the loss of human life, we are all tested from time to time. It is how we respond to these hurtful events that define us as human beings. ECT instills in the client a therapy approach that strengthens the mind and helps protect the spirit of the individual.

CHAPTER ONE RECAP

1. List Five Alternative Words Used To Describe the Feeling of “Joy”

- A) GLAD
- B) HAPPY
- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

NOTES:

2. List Five Alternative Words to Describe the Feeling of “Grief”

- A) DEPRESSED
- B) SAD
- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

NOTES:

3. List Five Alternative Words to Describe the Feeling of “Fear”

- A) ANXIETY

B) DREAD

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

NOTES:

4. List Five Alternative Words Used To Describe the Feeling “Relief”

- A) RELAXED
- B) REPRIEVE
- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

NOTES:

5. List Five Stressful Relationships (People, Places, or Things) In Your Life

- A) JOB CHANGE

B) FRIEND GETTING SICK OR ILL

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

NOTES:

6. List Five Ways You Can Relax In a Meditative State

A) SWIMMING

B) KNITTING

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

NOTES:

CHAPTER TWO

Using ECT to Treat Depression

We all hear a lot about depression these days. While not too long ago people didn't talk about it very much (other than songs about "feeling the blues"), recently there has been widespread recognition that depression is a real problem that affects millions. In fact, at some time or another, all of us feel depressed. It's just a part of life. The reasons for it are too numerous to mention. But the good news is, Emotional Core Therapy offers realistic, creative solutions for those who find it difficult to escape depression's grip.

Consider what might be a "worst case" kind of depression scenario. We all remember the catastrophic tsunami in Japan, and all of the misery that it brought to so many people. Imagine the case of a forty-year old woman in Japan. When the tsunami swept over her town, her husband died, she lost a child and her community was devastated. All of her money was lost. Now if ever there were cause for depression, this would be it. What could help this woman? Would she suffer for the rest of her life? How could she possibly recover?

I bring up an extreme example like this to challenge our thought processes. Why? The truth is, every month and every year people do survive and recover from tragedies such as this throughout the world. They even overcome these seemingly insurmountable troubles without the benefit of ECT or any other therapy for that matter. How do they do it? All it really takes is time and will for things to get better if one appropriately allows the normal occurrence of processing feelings to take place. With ECT, people are taught that all of us have the power to overcome any loss or devastation that life may throw at us. Yet, we also need to recognize that there are different levels of difficulty with whatever problems we may be facing (depression, anxiety, etc.) That is why it is important to try to rate the level of mental pain that a person is suffering. If we use a scale of one to ten, one would be when a person has virtually no problem at all, while at the opposite end of the spectrum ten would be when the problem seems almost unbearable. When there is an extremely serious problem, especially with something like depression, if it is a ten that person needs to seek immediate help in a hospital Emergency Room. However, for more moderate ailments, say a four, five, six, seven or eight, an approach such as using Emotional Core Therapy could be very beneficial.

Time and therapy are an incredibly powerful

combination. Of course, it requires trust on the part of the client, and both client and therapist must view themselves as partners in the therapy process. This in turn gives power to the client. How better to give power to the client than have the client become their own therapist?

One of the most important things that we do is to identify the relationships that would benefit the client, like loved ones, friends, etc. What would be required to help them? For starters, often just being with a therapist helps, which is why the therapist needs to be accessible at various hours. Atmosphere makes a big difference too, so the office should have a kind and sincere ambience. It should also be remembered that grief does not always get resolved quickly. Trying to rush things would be counterproductive, which is why therapists always allow the unpacking of feelings to occur at its own pace.

There is, however, one big obstacle that too often gets in the way before the process can even begin. Human beings have a propensity to spend countless hours and far too much energy running away from debilitating feelings of fear and grief. But they are running in the exact opposite direction. In ECT, the goal is not to avoid our feelings, but to learn from them. For example, a very talented teenager twists her ankle doing a back flip in gymnastics practice. She is so traumatized by the pain that

she is shaken to the core with fear and decides to quit the gymnastics team. Think how much better off she would be if she analyzed her feelings rather than attempting to bury them. Instead of hanging up her shoes and ending her career, she could ask her coach, “How did I land improperly? What caused the injury? What can I do to prevent it from happening again?” If she had learned Emotional Core Therapy, she would have understood how to respect her authentic feelings of fear, and then release it by discovering how to improve her technique, rather than quitting the sport.

How can she do this (respect her authentic feelings)? By learning how to monitor her own body and the signals that it is constantly providing to her. That is a crucial facet of ECT, and it can in fact be transferred to all kinds of situations in life. The releasing of feelings can involve any loss in life, or any fearful event. Since we are all unique, none of us will release our feelings in the exact same way. It’s a bit of a discovery process. For example, I had one client who had a maid who would come by to clean his house. He would then have long conversations with her. She had four kids, and she would tell him about her problems and how she dealt with him. Having five children of his own, this turned out to be something that they shared in common and just talking with this woman helped him to release

his feelings.

A different client, in this case an iron worker, would release his feelings on the massage table while carrying on a conversation with his massage therapist. The point is, releasing feelings is a very natural process, and often takes place in unexpected places and usually unintentionally. It does not by any means always have to take place in a therapist’s office.

Another example could involve a young, shy 19-year old male. He falls head over heels for a girl at his community college. Sadly, after three months of intense dating, she abruptly breaks up with him. Emotionally devastated, he withdraws into a shell and does not date for four years. Now ask yourself, would it haven been much more emotionally healthy for this young man to instead honor his pain of grief/loss? I believe yes! Rather than stop dating women, he needs to accept the experience and view it as part of a learning process. Easy? No, not by a long shot. It takes time (often months and even years) to understand one’s feelings, which is why it is a continual learning process to learn ECT. But the benefits are real and often life-changing, as in this case where the young man could start dating again within a year or so of his loss, rather than languishing in turmoil and unresolved grief for at least four years.

As these examples illustrate, we can learn a lot by examining various real life scenarios of individuals struggling with the stresses of life, which is precisely the approach of the rest of this book. The goal is to help people learn how to cope effectively with debilitating feelings. Often times I see clients have “breakthrough” moments in therapy when they realize they can control entering and leaving relationships. Clients feel empowered by seeing that the relationships they enter are of their own choosing. Furthermore, these relationships will invoke one of the four authentic feelings to occur. All my clients tell me they would rather experience the feelings of joy versus fear or grief. It is helpful for clients to then work towards joyful relationships. Let’s go back to our analogy of a rowboat. Why would a rowboat choose rocky waters? Why would a person want fear and grief in their life? When I work with my clients to empower themselves to make healthy choices they become more confident.

Of course, the best way to learn something of value is to experience it oneself – but that is not always practical, not to mention desirable. For example, have someone go to the bank and withdraw all of their money. Then the person would take their life savings and burn it in an incinerator. Sure, that would most definitely cause tremendous grief and fear. We would then be able to demonstrate how

processing the four authentic feelings of ECT would help the person suffering this financial loss. But since pursuing such a reckless path would be completely illogical, the next best thing is to share the success stories of people just like you and me who have very effectively used ECT to recover from emotional trauma. One of the primary purposes of this book is to demonstrate several psychological techniques in a fun and relaxed manner. It can be quite a comforting process when we identify with the experiences of others.

At its core, ECT involves externalizing one’s feelings rather than internalizing them. There is a time and a place for releasing cathartic feelings, and common sense must be used. What we are trying to do is to get our feelings outside of us, and this is a process that takes time, like learning to ride a bike or to swim. For example, imagine if you lost \$50,000 in some kind of financial scam. Do you think that you would just bounce back from something like that overnight? Of course not. The feelings of anger and loss would be all too genuine, and properly releasing them would not come quickly. On the other hand, however, it would be quite regrettable to put this off too long, which would be very unhealthy for both your mind and body. Toxic beliefs, if internalized, can cause unnecessary stress and damage to the body. This in turn leads to body

function problems such as muscle tightness, hand sweating and trembling. Don't underestimate the seriousness of this. A person who is under stress all of the time is risking damage to their organs, which is of course extremely hazardous.

Let's look at the example of an insurance representative who came for therapy because she found that she was in a depressed state. In fact, this woman, Tina (like all examples in this book, a fictionalized name is being used to protect this individual's identity and privacy), was suffering from major states of depression such as agitation, bad mood, no joy, trouble sleeping, lack of energy, and feeling useless. I approached her as I do all of my patients, with a goal of recovery. Both of her parents had passed away, and she had made a decision a long time ago to have children to have more support and companionship in her life. Over the course of twenty years she dutifully raised her four children, while her husband, a successful lawyer, worked tirelessly at the office.

Unbeknownst to Tina, her husband had an affair with the office secretary. Later on, he pursued another affair for an even greater length of time. Soon, he and Tina began to live separate lives under the same roof. They slept in separate bedrooms, and only conversed when issues of the home or children came up.

When Tina came to my office her level of depression was about an eight or nine. She was already under a psychiatric doctor's care for depression. She found that the prescription medications she was taking took the edge off her feelings, but still did not change her despairing outlook on life. Tina came to me with complaints of being "unloved, unwanted, lonely, sad, tired," and crying a great deal. It was not difficult to assess her problem as too much grief or loss. Too much grief or loss is another name for depression. Tina also had several bodily symptoms including lack of sleep, trouble eating and feeling fatigued. In short, the hopelessness that she felt was so bad that it negatively affected her central nervous system.

Using Emotional Core Therapy we started to reframe some of her thinking. She began to recognize that most of her thoughts were due to leaving a long-term relationship. In this case, her husband of twenty years. Her overwhelming feelings of psychic pain began to lessen over time as she learned to isolate the problem. As she became more and more aware of the four authentic feelings, she recognized that she had too much grief in her life. Over the course of eight to ten months, she began to release her feelings both in therapy and in her daily life. Every client is unique. I often have to try several different techniques before we have success in re-

leasing feelings of grief. In Tina's case we had great success using psychology techniques that involved role playing. I would pretend to be the husband and we would reenact some of the situations that caused her emotional pain. By doing this in a non-threatening environment of the counseling office, Tina was able to finally express herself properly. She was finally able to release her psychic pain. Another technique we used was to have Tina talk to an empty chair. The empty chair was a non-threatening way for Tina to get her anger (otherwise known as grief) out of her mind and body. Sometimes the pretend person in the chair was her husband. Sometimes we had Tina talk to her "pretend self" using the empty chair technique. By having Tina approach herself in a kind manner she began to have compassion and empathy for herself. Tina learned to be kind to herself by using healthy and upbeat language to address to herself how she was feeling.

Moreover, during this time Tina rekindled an interest in Buddhism that she had begun back in college but had never developed as fully as she had once intended. She was now coming to understand what an important role these beliefs could play in helping to treat her depression. Buddhism emphasizes the importance of meditation and as Tina studied more about the religion, she felt drawn toward a particular practice called Vipassana which, roughly

translated, means "mindfulness." This is a method of keeping oneself in the present moment rather than letting fear and depressing thoughts pre-occupy your thinking. It was an excellent fit with the approach and goals of ECT that Tina was learning. In fact, the more she learned about ECT, the more she came to understand that such meditation could be an important addition to her toolbox of techniques that she was compiling for finally dealing properly with her depression issues.

During meditation, Tina would sit in a comfortable chair and begin by concentrating only on her breathing, in and out slowly through her nostrils and feeling the gentle rise and fall of her abdomen. When her thoughts would begin to wander, she would merely return them to the simple act of breathing. This brought about the desired effect of bringing stillness and quietude to her mind. It put her into a mental state that was non-judgmental (a key Buddhist concept) and detached from distracting thoughts of self-criticism or feelings of being hurt by the past actions of others. This helped Tina to process her emotions in a much more healthy way, just as she was discovering by learning and using the ECT process.

Tina also had a marvelous sense of humor so we used humor on a number of occasions to release toxic feelings of loss. She would often joke about

what it was like to be in a dead end relationship. For example, she'd say, "Being in a dead relationship is like having a dead horse in your living room." She would then pretend she had a horse lying around in the house. Tina was able to cathartically release psychic pain by using humor to let go of unwanted feelings of loss.

Another way that Tina and I were able to combat her depression was by working to bring more joy into her life. We made a list of twenty attributes that she liked about herself. As we discussed this list of twenty joyful characteristics a main theme continued to pop up. Tina was a very good and devoted mother to her four children. Over the course of therapy of under a year, we highlighted how Tina was able to bring joy to her children's life, and in turn to her own. She also started to do things that brought her joy herself. For example, she began to power walk for exercise and stress reduction, along with making new friends who were much more respectful of her needs. Tina was able to reduce her level of depression from a seven or eight level to a three to five level over the course of our therapy, which utilized some ECT techniques.

Tina chose to stay married for the next few years to provide stability for her youngest child to go off to college. This meant that she had to sacrifice her own needs and wants. Whenever one sacri-

fices something, there exists a chance for grief. Years later, Tina came by to see me and she looked much better. She finally was able to get her own needs met as her husband moved out of the house.

Prescription medications numbed Tina's pain but did little to change her underlying condition of a poor relationship. She began to decrease her medication as she saw it as a form of escape or addiction to be on three to four medications. Accordingly, she was able to reduce her prescribed medications to just one anxiety tablet versus three to four. Thus, Tina was able to reduce her self-described addiction to prescription drugs and begin to change her life for the better. Using ECT along with Buddhist meditation was giving her a whole new outlook on life. She came to know herself on a deeper level and thus was now better equipped to cope with reality in ways that were beneficial rather than self-destructive.

Many clients try to self-medicate, which can take myriad forms. Some like going to the casino and playing the slots, or maybe having a few beers. They are using these things as a way of trying to avoid loss or grief. What they fail to recognize, however, is that these feelings are a natural and normal part of life. When using Emotional Core Therapy to treat depression, clients must learn the proper coping mechanisms for processing grief. The

time varies from person to person and from one situation to another. The severity of the situation makes a big difference. Losing a five-dollar bill is not going to cause as much as grief as finding out that you have cancer. The real problem with drowning your pain away or numbing yourself is that it does not work. It only delays the inevitable: at some point you have to fully grieve the loss.

Another major problem is that addictions dull the five senses, which then hampers our ability to identify the four authentic feelings. Take for example someone who has lost his job and then goes out and drinks eight beers a day for a month. This dulls ALL FOUR of the authentic feelings. Not only grief, which is what they intended to dull, but also joy, fear and relief. The whole body, including the muscular and skeletal system, will be adversely impacted. There is less chance of learning to identify authentic feelings, or to learn your body's responses, or how to relax. You can't work towards bringing more joy into your life, because you are numb. You also cannot effectively process feelings of grief. Day in and day out I hear of people, especially the young, who are told, "Take this drug or that drink and your pain will go away." ECT demonstrates the fallacy of this poor advice. The truth is, you are sabotaging your chance of recovering.

Emotional Core Therapy teaches us to calm the

body by staying in a peaceful, meditative state throughout the day. By remaining this way for a prolonged period you can identify all fearful and toxic events in your life. This includes drugs or alcohol. A person that understands how a hot stove works would not touch it because they understand that it causes burns and pain. The same can be said for drugs and alcohol. Why would you use something that could cause legal and financial trouble? Why would you use something that could cause sensory deprivation?

None of this is to suggest that the causes of addiction, or treating them, are simple. There are many reasons why people do drugs: some do it for experimentation, others use it as a mild form of relaxation and there are many other reasons beyond those. With alcohol, a small amount can even be good for you, as can a glass of lemon tea. Yet there is a dramatic difference between four glasses of wine and four glasses of lemon tea! The wine drastically dulls your ability to experience the four authentic feelings. This is doubly destructive, because the more one dulls the senses, the less success ECT can achieve.

A relationship with drugs or any addiction can be very dangerous and can cause long-term damage to your system, especially highly addictive drugs such as cocaine. How to alleviate the dangers? The

more information one has about illicit drugs or alcohol, the less likely they will be to use them. Would someone really want to use methamphetamine (also known as “speed”), for example, if they knew the harm that it could cause to their body, or heroin, if they fully understood that an overdose could kill them? As if that weren’t bad enough, with illegal drugs nobody knows exactly what is in it, meaning it often includes toxic substances that can be deadly. You need to notify your medical doctor when you have any mental health problems, but especially problems with addictions, because medical doctors have a good understanding of these issues (especially when harmful chemicals are involved) and how to address them. Over the years I have worked with a variety of addictions. This includes addictions to prescription drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, narcotics, pornography, and junk food. ECT is a very helpful approach to addictions because it forces the client to examine all the relationships they are choosing to enter in their lives. When a client sees they are bringing fear and grief into their lives by acquiring an addiction they are more responsive to changing their behaviors. Why bring pain and suffering to your body along with possible legal and financial trouble? Why not work towards relationships that can bring you joy? An important point in treating addictions is to be kind and com-

passionate to the client suffering addiction. Anger pulls people away from communicating. When a therapist can bring up the dangers of a toxic relationship (such as most addictions) in a calm manner, the client is more receptive to learning. Oftentimes people need to get valuable information about addictions to make informed changes. It is very empowering for clients to make their own healthy decisions away from an addictive lifestyle. I often tell my clients that a healthy and supportive relationship with friends or family that can bring you joy is a great way to live. We will cover the topic of addictions in detail later in the book.

Getting back specifically to ECT’s treatment of depression, it can be very creative in the ways that it supports patients. For example, one woman I talked to remembered the classic song by The Fifth Dimension called, “One Less Bell to Answer.” It’s about a woman whose husband has died and she is emotionally devastated, in her despair agonizing over why did he have to leave me? We talked about that song, and sometimes we even play songs in therapy as a tool. There is something soothing not only in the singer’s heart-rending voice and words, but also in the song’s rhythmic chorus and hauntingly smooth music. It helps relieve some of the grief to talk about whatever it is that hurts us, and it’s a great way to help release feelings.

One of the reasons that music is such an excellent technique to release feelings is the sheer magnitude of songs. Some artist has recorded a song for nearly every possible type of relationship issue or problem. All four authentic feelings have hundreds, if not thousands of songs that people can relate to in every culture and virtually every personal situation. For example, consider the song, “All My Sorrows, Sad Tomorrows,” by the group, The Marmalade. Its lyrics allow one to daydream and reflect on their own sorrowful past in a calm but sad manner.

Another tool might be to talk about movies, maybe a medical one. For instance, a client talked about a movie in which a man had to endure his young son’s terrible illness, trying to find a cure for most of the movie. This drama was called “Lorenzo’s Oil,” and it was such a sad movie that it would bring tears to the viewers’ eyes with the tragic sequence of events that unfold for the little boy. Another movie, “Ladder 49,” was about a man dying in a fire. He was a very well liked fireman who was devoted to putting out fires. In this movie the rest of the firefighters, as well as the man’s family and community, are devastated by the loss of his life. When a viewer watches this type of film it is possible to evoke some hidden feelings of loss. This kind of reading of toxic feelings happens to most of us daily in some fashion when we maybe watch a

soap opera or perhaps listen to a sad song on the car radio. None of this is meant to be morbid. The point is, hiding from grief does not make it go away and it does not cure depression. To the contrary, identifying the feelings of loss, is the first step in coping with those feelings, and sometimes things like songs and movies can help us put our finger on the problem spot.

The one common factor in all of the examples we are discussing is that they are all about loss. But simply knowing that is not enough. We need to explore deeper, to get to the roots of what these relationships were truly about.

Another client, Tony, was dealing with a different set of circumstances. He did not have a great voice in his family, and consequently never really had anyone to confide in. His father was a hard driving workaholic, so Tony worked hard too. He took a job position out of state, spent a lot of night hours at work, and didn’t have many friends (and the few he did have worked regular day hours). Worse yet for Tony, he lived in a secluded subdivision that did not have many young people living nearby. So his issue coming to therapy was isolation and despair, which are terms otherwise known as loss or grief.

Using the authentic nature of ECT, I was able to

show Tony how his feelings of grief were connected to his lack of friends and support. In therapy, I was able to draw a small picture of how the four authentic feelings work and Tony was able to see that his pervasive feelings of sadness were situational to his job, relocating out of state, and moving away from friends. When Tony began counseling with my office he was near a nine on the one to ten point scale of sadness ratings. This was however a temporary state. We discussed Tony's childhood where he was often very happy playing ice hockey with friends back in his hometown. He was able to see his feelings of grief were tied to entering a new relationship (new job in new town)

As part of our therapy, Tony made a list of ten things that would bring him joy. His top five wishes were a new house, new car, a vacation in Hawaii, a new girlfriend, and new friends. Over the course of the next 14 months, Tony began to work towards those five dreams that would bring him joy. He was able to achieve two to three of his desired ways to bring joy into his life. His level of grief plummeted from an eight or nine to two to four as Tony began to feel more supported and loved in his life.

In therapy, he was honest about his feelings. He genuinely wanted to get better. One of the first big decisions he made was to move closer where there were more people. In his new home nearer to

town he could walk around, go to shops, and be near people. This made him feel more connected not only to the community, but to life itself. You see, it was important for Tony to build a support network so that he would not feel so isolated.

A big part of that support network snapped into place when Tony joined the local Lutheran church. He had grown up as a Lutheran, but as a teenager became less interested in his religion. It simply didn't seem very important to him. He was just too preoccupied with so many other things in his everyday life.

But now, as he attended services every week, he started recalling what a strong emphasis Lutheranism places on the Word of God. Almost every sermon included a reminder to "be in the word." After all, it was Martin Luther and others who came after him who urged followers to read the Bible for themselves and learn valuable lessons and insights from it.

Tony began doing just that, and he found that after reading the Scriptures, especially some of the Psalms that emphasized God's loving presence, he felt less alone. He felt as though the Lord were speaking to him directly and as a result he began to experience the tranquility that had been missing

from his life.

He also came to a deeper understanding of what the Bible means when it speaks of the Body of Christ. He started looking upon his fellow churchgoers as his brothers and sisters. A true extended family, something that he needed at this point in his life more than ever before.

And as Tony used the principles that he was learning through ECT, it seemed to buttress the various lessons that he would acquire through the minister's sermons each week and through his own personal Bible reading. ECT affirmed Tony's sense of self-esteem and of focusing his mind in healthy ways. One day he was reading the Epistle to the Philippians (in the New Testament) and the Apostle Paul said: "whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is any virtue and if there is anything that is praiseworthy—meditate on these things."

Wow! These words sounded very much like what he was learning through ECT, and Tony felt sure that, although he still had a long way to go, he now was at least on the right path.

Emotional Core Therapy uses various tech-

niques to help people help themselves to get better. In this case, Tony needed to know that he was worthy to be loved. We helped him to recognize what he wanted out of life. He wanted a girlfriend, a house, a new car, a vacation and a family of his own. At the time, he had none of these things, but he recognized that he could work for them and – most critically – he had the power to get them.

The ECT therapist is like a cheerleader: very supportive of the patient. They go at their own speed and of their own volition. It wasn't the therapist's role to tell Tony what to do. He, like every patient, has to work that out on his own. The therapist is there to support him, trying different things, to assist him in his journey to recovery. In Tony's case, he went online and found a partner after joining a Christian dating service. He started to feel much better. It helped when he started volunteering, which led to him feeling a better quality of life and happier.

The therapist helps the patient to not be fearful about obtaining what they want from life. In ECT, we talk about basic feelings so if there is something that you are afraid of, we want to explore that. We teach people to be respectful of themselves and to acknowledge that they are indeed worthy of working everything out. No, it doesn't come overnight. For example, in Tony's situation he was able to

achieve two of his goals, but not all of them – at least not initially. But what really matters is that he was able to bring joy into his life. That was missing when all of his focus was on his depression and he felt utterly powerless to do anything about it.

A third client named Julie was a woman who worked as a Claims Processor. She loved her work. Or, more accurately, she loved spending time with friends at work. The time that she spent on breaks, lunch, etc., were at the center of her social life. That was when she would talk with her friends about anything and everything, and she truly relished those special moments.

But then something quite unexpected happened. The company closed down and all of the employees – i.e., Julie and all of her friends – had to look for other jobs. For her it was devastating, like the loss of a partner or a child. She really cared about these people, and losing them caused her tremendous grief. We worked on ECT therapy for two or three months on how to process that grief. Julie’s husband didn’t have the training to help her with this, and she realized that she needed outside assistance. ECT allowed her to tell the stories of her pain and to process her feelings in ways that were healthy and promoted mental healing. Julie began to identify and label her authentic feelings of grief in therapy. Early on sessions were filled with crying and

feeling angry with her company for sending everyone termination notices. Julie spent hours talking about how much fun she had with her coworkers on her coffee breaks and at lunch. As I explained to Julie, there is no magic cure or pill for grief. It is a necessary part of life. We can only learn from the pain and become better individuals in the future. In Julie’s case, she decided that she needed more female companions outside of work. She did not want to experience this devastating loss ever again in her life.

Using and processing authentic feelings of joy and grief in therapy, Julie recognized that she needed to build her female support network outside of work. One way in which she did this was to become more involved with her local church. A Baptist from childhood, Julie had gotten into the habit of pretty much only attending services on holidays or other special occasions. But she then joined a group of volunteers (mostly women) who served the homeless at a church sponsored soup kitchen. The sense of camaraderie amongst women who shared her faith and her commitment to helping others brought a good deal of happiness into her life. Amongst other things, it helped her to realize that people experience all kinds of hardships in this world, but the companionship of good friends or even the kindness of complete strangers can help to

turn things around.

The lessons that she was learning in Bible study were also crucial to her improving mental outlook. She especially focused on stories of redemption where God rewarded believers for their faith and never giving up when it came to hoping in Him for their salvation. Her outlook improved whenever she meditated on these promises from the Lord.

She was able to learn from her debilitating feelings of sadness and have more hope for the future. Just as our aspiring gymnast in an earlier example was better off learning from her painful ankle injury, Julie was in turn better off for processing and identifying her four authentic feelings of joy, grief, fear, and relief. She was able to recognize that the foreign feelings her body was manifesting as symptoms (fatigue, lack of sleep, trouble concentrating) were signs that her relationship with work was out of balance. Julie's central nervous system was reacting negatively to the relationship (job termination) that she was experiencing leaving. She was determined to make better decisions about when and where to make friends.

Oftentimes clients like Julie need a hug, tissue, and a non judgmental atmosphere to release their foreign feelings of sadness. To Julie's credit she was a visual learner. We were able to diagram her

supportive relationships and identify and isolate her feelings of loss. Both the visual and verbal means of expression allowed Julie to cathartically release her sadness over a period of a few months. The goal was to help her work towards making new friends, both in and out of work so that she could strike the proper balance in her life.

Julie began to garden to regain her sense of calm and peace. By gardening, Julie was able to begin her process of self care and self soothing. Early in this book we mentioned how gardening can be a way to relax and meditate. For Julie this worked like a charm. It is important to again reiterate that what works for one client as a form of relaxation may not work for another. Julie's mind was allowed to daydream and relax when she gardened. Other people may find gardening a chore and mentally taxing. It is an important step in Emotional Core Therapy to find a way to allow the mind a way to daydream and flow freely.

For Julie, ECT reinforced many of the things that she was learning from her renewed interest in her faith. The minister at her church spoke often of having a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ." Julie loved this concept, because as she came to feel closer to Jesus, she felt less alone. He was always there for her and oftentimes she would speak to

Him not only in her mind, but out loud in actual spoken words. Processing her emotions became much easier when she could share with the Lord everything that was in her heart and on her mind. She could share all of her fears and anxieties with Him, which felt like an enormous burden lifted off of her shoulders. Practicing ECT can teach you how to have a peaceful, loving relationship with your God throughout the day. What religious person does not want that?

One other case that demonstrates ECT's effectiveness in treating depression involved a construction worker named Gary, a twenty-seven year old man who had a girlfriend that he loved and adored. He worked for the family business, and the idea had been that he was supposed to make a lot of money following in his father's footsteps. But his father whom he worked for was very demanding. Moreover, the young man worked outside in the cold a lot, which he didn't really like at all.

In ECT therapy, we let him talk out his feelings. He shared things about himself, such as that when he was in high school he was a very good athlete. He was able to recognize and identify the things in life that brought him joy. These included working closely with people; he actually preferred to be working inside, not outside. As a matter of fact, he

found great satisfaction working with customers.

Gary could not shake his depression until he changed several of his relationships which were causing him grief. He was sad that he had to work underneath a demanding and mean spirited father. Gary was also sad that he had to work in an isolated job as a construction worker which meant he had to work more outside in cold weather with objects versus working with people inside in a warm office.

When Gary came to see me his level of sadness/depression was at an eight or nine! Fortunately for Gary, he had the time and determination to alter his relationships that were causing him grief. Over the course of twelve months, he was able to quit his job and go back to school to be retrained. Gary came back to visit me a year after therapy ended to report that he had proudly earned employee of the month at his new, much happier job. His level of depression dropped from a nine to a one or two in just over a year.

Let's now try and examine Gary's case of depression through the eight step ECT Flowchart. The first step of the ECT Flowchart is realizing that entering and leaving relationships is what causes one stress. Relationship stress can occur with the relationship we have with ourselves, other people, places, or things. For Gary, step one was recognizing

that he entered into some new relationships with his father at work in the construction industry which were causing him stress.

Step two of the ECT process is understanding that each relationship we enter into has various needs that have to be met. These needs are what cause stress. The four categories of needs are emotional, financial, spiritual, and physical. Some relationships require only one or two of the four needs. Others may require all four needs. In Gary's case, the needs of the job were excessive for him. He was required to work long hours (physical) outside in the cold. He was yelled at (emotional) often by his father who didn't pay him very well (financial).

Step three of the Eight Step Flowchart is understanding how our senses perceive stressful needs. Our five senses are hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, and seeing. This step happens quite automatically for most people, including Gary. Gary recognized his stress through hearing his dad yelling at him, touching the cold, and seeing his finances dwindle over time.

Step four of the Eight Step Flowchart is examining which authentic feeling (joy, grief, fear, or relief) arises with the new relationship you have entered. In the case of Gary, he had immense grief from his working relationship with his dad's company. Although there were many aspects of the

work relationship that caused him grief, the cold weather, lack of pay, and anger he felt from his dad, were all primary sources.

Step five of the ECT Flowchart is when these emotions get sent to our brain, which is part of the central nervous system. The central nervous system sends messages to our muscular and skeletal system. This step happens automatically for almost all people, including Gary.

Step six is understanding how these uncomfortable symptoms affect our body in the form of muscle tension and tightness, etc. Gary recognized the sinking feeling in his chest, the loss of hope, and crying spells as signs of stress.

Step seven of the ECT process is the releasing process. Learning to discharge toxic emotions. In Gary's case we used many types of techniques to release emotions. One that was very effective was daily journaling, where he wrote down exactly what he felt.

Step eight of the ECT process is balancing your equilibrium and practicing your daily meditative exercises. For Gary, praying to God or other spiritually-centered exercises would not have been appropriate. He was a secular minded person who did not have any strong religious affiliations or religious beliefs. His concentration was more on the here and

now details of everyday life. This perspective is completely compatible with ECT, too, and it works just as well as religious approaches do for people who are devout. In Gary's case, he used daily swimming at the health club as a time to regroup and calm himself down. When Gary swam, he was able to get his stress out of his body and feel warm and relaxed.

As I mentioned earlier in the book, the ECT process and Flowchart can be used successfully to identify and process any future stress you encounter in life. There has rarely been a human encounter that I can't comprehend using ECT. On rare occasions, the external relationships we enter into are multiple in a short period of time so it is hard to distinguish exactly which needs caused you stress. For example, jogging on a hot, humid day and stopping off for a burrito. When eating your burrito you put extra hot sauce on it and down a liter of Pepsi. Afterwards you feel terrible and have excess grief. It may not be possible to pin down exactly what caused your stomach to be upset and for you to feel grief. The important aspect to remember is that your true feeling is grief so you won't be repeating that behavior anytime soon.

Once you learn ECT you will have the confidence needed to pick healthy relationships in your life. It takes repetition and practice but the benefits

far outweigh the effort needed to learn ECT. As you read the cases presented throughout the rest of the book, keep the ECT process in your mind. Try and visualize each step that the characters in the book are engaging in in their stressful scenarios. ECT can also be used to examine any routine stress such as throwing out your back lifting a heavy object or missing a free throw in basketball. As a reminder, ECT is the only psychological approach, religious teaching, or educational approach that can successfully release the root cause of relationship stress without redirecting your emotions away from how you truly feel. Our four true emotions help us navigate our way through life. The more we can learn about these four emotions. The easier time we will have choosing healthy relationships that make us happy. With ECT, we now have a process that can successfully treat the situational stress that weakens human beings from time to time. ECT can treat this stress effectively because it addresses the root cause of the problem which is the arousal of one of the four true feelings.

Of course, no two people experience depression in the exact same way or for the exact same reasons. Therefore, we always need to treat people as individuals with unique problems and solutions that de-

pend upon their own particular circumstances. However, Emotional Core Therapy offers solutions based on abilities that all of us innately possess. The therapy is successful because it works with your emotions rather than treating them as some kind of enemy or outsider. Depression and sadness, after all, are natural aspects of life, but the sooner and more precisely we understand what brings them about, the closer we are to moving on to a happier and more peaceful frame of mind.

CHAPTER TWO RECAP

1. List Five Relationships That You Have Exited That Have Brought You “Grief”

- A) MOVING OUT OF STATE
- B) FAILING A CLASS AT SCHOOL
- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

NOTES:

2. List Five Ways You Can Release Feelings of Grief

- A) JOURNALING
- B) SINGING
- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

NOTES:

3. Symptoms of Depression

- Crying spells for no apparent reason
- Loss of interest or pleasure in normal activities
- Changes in appetite
- Fatigue, tiredness and loss of energy
- Feelings of sadness or unhappiness
- Irritability or frustration, even over small matters
- Indecisiveness, distractibility and decreased concentration

4. List Five of Your Own Symptoms Of Depression

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

NOTES:

This is a sneak peak of the publication “Spiritual Inner Peace and Happiness with Emotional Core Therapy” written by Author, Robert A Moylan.

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