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A Journey of Healing from Crohn's Disease, Using Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)

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Introduction

I am 51 years of age, an elementary school teacher, a married mother to two teenage children, and an EFT practitioner. This is the history of my Crohn's Disease, and my profound healing journey of body, mind and spirit.

The history of my Crohn's Disease

All of my life I have had a sensitive gut, experiencing symptoms since childhood of motion sickness, noisy intestines, nausea and a lack of desire to eat during times of stress. My intestines have been my Achilles' Heel, so to speak. When I was a teenager I began experiencing abdominal pain, was diagnosed with a "pre-ulcer condition," and given meds (Donnatal) to relax my stomach. In 1981, while student teaching, I developed a *Campylobacter* infection (one of the main causes of bacterial food-borne disease in many developed countries) and spent two weeks in hospital with severe hemorrhaging. Strong antibiotics were the treatment of choice, and I recovered after several weeks.

A few years later, I began experiencing more abdominal pain, infrequent but severe enough to discuss the symptoms with my family doctor. I remember him smiling sympathetically at me during our conversation while suggesting, "It's just the stress of newly married life, dear." I felt that was an interesting spin to put on my physical symptoms, especially since I didn't believe that married life was particularly stressful, although my husband confessed that he did.

The pain over the next few years became unbearable, but I suffered through it. I remember once telling my teaching partner that I felt as though a knife was being stabbed into my gut

while I was working. Sometimes, after a day of teaching, I would throw myself into bed and sob. The intensity of the pain often increased throughout the day and by evening would reach 10 on a scale of 10 or more, due to spasming intestines. Breathing through the pain was my only way to cope. If, as my doctor had implied, it was just pain due to stress, nothing could be done, or so I believed in 1984. Also, I have had in my past a tendency toward stubborn denial. The concept of “keeping a stiff upper lip” is strongly engrained within some people in our society, including myself. My belief system for many years was that acknowledging my illness was a sign of weakness, and listening to people complain about their health was to be avoided at all costs.

Ironically, in spite of my past beliefs (or perhaps because of them), I have become an Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) practitioner and now feel inspired to help others who are suffering from various disorders. EFT is a remarkable healing tool that enables people to effectively resolve emotional and physical issues simply by tapping on acupressure points while tuning into their personal problems. It is an emotional, needle free version of acupuncture that is based on new discoveries regarding the connection between our body's subtle energies, our emotions and our health.

One day in 1984, I confided to my mom that I thought I was dying. The look on her face forced me to confront my illness, if not for myself, then for the people who cared about me. I found a new doctor, who recommended x-rays to determine what was going on in my gut. When my diagnosis came back with the label, Crohn's Disease, I was concerned but relieved. Finally the doctors could fix me!

I was not so lucky. I continued to experience greater pain than ever. Since having children, I can attest to the fact that childbirth pain (10 on a scale of 10) is nothing compared to Crohn's. (which can frequently reach an intensity of 10/10 or more). I once saw a newspaper ad that perfectly illustrates my experience of Crohn's – with a picture of razor blades and nails on it and the caption: “Imagine swallowing these. That is what it feels like to suffer from Crohn's.”

After my diagnosis in 1984 I couldn't eat and the new medication I was given, Salazopyrine (common name sulfasalazine), made me vomit, so I lost a lot of weight. I lived on baby food, my mother's homemade applesauce, and Ensure (a liquid synthetic food supplement), which also made me vomit.

In retrospect, I can see that my recovery began to occur after I adopted a golden retriever puppy the following year. I didn't recognize at the time how much healing may occur from a close relationship with a pet. Unconditional love, I believe, can be an amazing healing force.

My Crohn's went in and out of remission, but it always was there in my mind. Every stressful event that occurred in my life caused me to worry about whether the disease would once again rear its ugly head. I became my disease, although paradoxically, I refused to accept that I had it.

Baby years were difficult challenges. My daughter was born in 1990, and my son was born in 1992 after a complicated pregnancy. My Crohn's recurred for several months after my son's birth, but I continued to teach as well as parent. Although the pain was not significant at this time, feelings of exhaustion due to anemia overwhelmed me. My husband was the only one who heard of my health complaints. I guess I did whine... He felt annoyed and neglected, I suppose, and we experienced a crisis in our marriage. I stuffed my feelings of anger,

rejection and betrayal and focused on staying healthy so that we could resolve our difficulties. EFT eventually allowed me to accept, resolve and release these buried emotions years later when they resurfaced.

In 1999 we built a new home. Unfortunately, I knew little at that time of how environmental toxins could affect my health, and I was unconcerned about the building products which we chose to put in our home (paints, glues, carpets, etc). The stress of building did not send my health into a tailspin, but moving into our new home did. Within a few months I was sicker than ever. I kept teaching for as long as I could because working was my personal measurement for health. Besides, I love teaching. As long as I could teach I was NOT sick! I live only one block from my school. I was too weak to walk up the hill, but I insisted on working until eventually I was too weak to do that.

My doctor scheduled another barium x-ray and discovered my intestines were so narrowed and damaged that surgery was my only option. Under protest I was rushed to see a surgeon. Because Dr. Hamilton seemed so compassionate (and because he had a picture of a golden retriever on his wall) I grudgingly agreed to let him operate on me. He replied, "That's good, because your class needs their teacher, your children need their mother and your husband needs his wife again." So you see, I was given a purpose for getting well...

In November, 1999 I had a hemi-colectomy at Lion's Gate hospital in Vancouver. I was terrified, but I was able to stuff my feelings exceptionally well by using my most effective coping skill - humor. Doctors removed a foot and a half of intestines around my ileum, along with my appendix, which was fused and mangled with my intestines. (See Appendix A - medical report) The aftermath of the surgery was grim, and recovery painful, but I was so motivated to be well again! Doctors gave me strict orders not to return to work until January, but I rebelled and went back to teach part-time. I wanted to experience the Christmas "spirit" with my class, since teaching children is another healing factor in my life.

Pentasa was the new drug of choice. This is an aminosalicylate anti-inflammatory drug, which may decrease symptoms such as stomach pain, diarrhea, and rectal bleeding caused by irritation and swelling of the colon and rectum. No one told me that there was anything further I could do to maintain a healthy body. So for four years I ate and drank whatever my heart desired. I felt like I had been released from a prisoner of war camp and the whole world was a smorgasbord!

As healthy as I felt, anger issues began to take hold of me, although I was not consciously aware of this fact. A doctor recently wrote that if you were to hold a gun to the head of a patient with Crohn's and state that you would shoot if they did not divulge their anger issues they would not be capable of complying with your demand even to save their life. Emotional issues are stuffed that deeply in some of us!

In 2003, my mom died of cancer. Alcohol had consumed Mom during her senior years. We had always been close and she had always taken care of me whenever I was sick, but I had no understanding or compassion for her addiction. I was angry that she chose alcohol over her family and I was disappointed in my lack of ability to affect her desire to give up drinking. I felt that if only I could find the right ticket, she would quit. These were issues which would also later be successfully released with EFT.

Mom died in late August after a short battle with cancer. Again, I stuffed my emotions, I

certainly never cried, and I went right into a new school year. This was a particularly difficult year at school, a year filled with tension, misunderstandings and conflict. My profession has always brought me tremendous joy. There was no joy for me that year. I internalized feelings of anger, frustration and helplessness and my health once again began to deteriorate.

Other people's need for power and control at my expense used to trigger enormous anger in me, although often I did not acknowledge or even recognize the emotion. That is another issue which has since been successfully resolved with EFT. I once spent an entire EFT session (100 dollars worth) tapping on a specific incident regarding conflict in my workplace. Now whenever anyone "pushes my buttons" I can quickly and effectively tap away my anger and easily have a conversation with the person with whom I am experiencing conflict without any negative emotions whatsoever. It is a wonderful, peaceful feeling.

Throughout this time my health began deteriorating once again. Blood tests showed that I had virtually no iron in my blood. I began taking iron supplements, which made me sick, and I felt nauseous enough to wear seabands all the time, which gave me relief through acupuncture. Finally, after over a year of declining health, I had a colonoscopy which showed that my Crohn's had returned. After a night out for dinner with a couple of Mike's Hard Lemonade I had a massive hemorrhage. This was in September 2004.

Once again I stopped eating and spent most of my time on the couch, but Fear took over. The pain I could easily deal with, but not the sight of blood and the thought of what must be happening in my intestines. Every time I went to the washroom, my anxiety hit a 9/10.

My path of healing

Fortunately I have been blessed with many caring friends. One of them gave me a book entitled, "Listen to Your Gut" by Jini Patel Thompson. Jini is an amazing woman who has successfully healed her Crohn's without the use of drugs or medical intervention. Jini's book became my bible. For the first time in my life, I accepted that I had Crohn's and I began to take responsibility for my health. I purchased all the natural supplements she recommended and even dabbled in some mind/body therapies such as Healing Touch and Craniosacral Therapy. However, my fear of food was intense and for months I lived on a strict diet of avocados, rice, applesauce, asparagus, zucchini, protein shakes, fish, chicken and bananas.

I finally called Jini for a consultation because no matter how hard I tried to heal I continued to experience many symptoms of my disease: gas, bloating, pain, and the like, and I was becoming discouraged. There was no more appearance of red blood in the toilet, but tarry stool samples showed that I continued to bleed. My current doctor recommended I have another colonoscopy. I refused.

That felt wonderful! I had learned, through Jini, to listen to my body. The thought of being sedated while surgeons inserted a large scope through my rectum up to my small intestine just so I could be informed of the seriousness of my disease would not be conducive to my healing. My doctor is a wonderful, open-minded physician who understands my desire and motivation to take responsibility for my own health. He respected my decision to leave my gut alone.

When I spoke again with Jini, she strongly recommended two things which could help me to

heal. The first I immediately tried. By taking a natural antibiotic, oil of oregano, along with expensive Natren Brand probiotics (helpful bacteria), she believed I could replace an abundance of harmful gut bacteria with healthy ones and consequently relieve my symptoms. She also insisted I learn EFT to help me deal with stress.

I downloaded Gary Craig's EFT manual. It looked interesting, but a little too "out there" for me. However, the first time I tried the setup statement, "Even though I have this Crohn's Disease, I deeply and completely love and accept myself," I experienced a revelation. Until then I had had no idea that people with chronic illnesses probably DON'T love themselves. At least I didn't.

I tried a little tapping, mostly discreetly at school when children were pushing my buttons. But, unaware of the many layers of my disease and how EFT could help with years of stuffing emotions into my gut, I left it alone for a while. I was beginning to feel great physically, and that was enough for me! My healing journey began as a physical one, and with Jini's program, I became about 65 percent "healed".

My emotional and spiritual journey lay ahead.

In the last week of 2006, to my complete dismay, I saw signs of significant bleeding in the toilet. I had been wrestling with some personal issues at this time.

I found Jini's book, opened her chapter on EFT and discovered the name and number of her EFT practitioner, Andy Bryce, an exceptionally skilled EFT Master. I immediately connected with Andy's sense of humor and kind manner and for the next several months I tapped with him over the phone on a variety of emotional issues. Anger, guilt, fear, loss, death, betrayal and rejection were all themes that became focal points for our sessions. Through tapping I was able to revisit and heal so many of my life's experiences.

I also began to open my mind to new ideas. Until EFT, I had always believed that it was my minds' job to control my emotions, and I felt extremely proud that I had managed to achieve this task so effectively. Andy once asked me, "If it wasn't your mind driving you, or your emotions, what might it be?" I was at a loss for an answer. When he suggested the answer to that question might be my spirit, or soul, it became the catalyst for spiritual healing. I remember reading "The Power of Now" and feeling elated to discover that I was not my mind! Throughout my entire life my mind has been incredibly effective at beating my self up and keeping me feeling less than worthy. Not so now....

With EFT I was able to accept and let go of events in my past that I believe contributed to my inability (or unwillingness) to shed my disease. I forgave Mom for her addiction, as well as an assortment of other people in my life whom I have judged and blamed, including myself.

Death and the sadness surrounding it was also a prominent theme for tapping. I revisited the story of a young man I'd loved at the age of 20, who had been thrown from a speed boat and killed by the propeller. I also tapped on a close family friend who had drowned after being tossed from his canoe in churning rapids at the age of 16.

With Mom there were many feelings to be resolved. After my first hemorrhage in 2004, Pamela Runkle, a friend of mine, who was beginning her career as a Healing Touch Practitioner, offered to help me. She has gifts beyond those of healing touch, and after the

first session she told me that Mom had been in the room with us. That was a new and interesting concept for me to contemplate. Through our sessions, I came to accept that people who loved me and had died were really not that far away from me after all.

In January 2005 I spent three weeks on a liquid diet, trying to rest my intestines. While Pam did the Healing Touch, I was privately wondering what solid food I should choose to eat first. She gently informed me afterwards that Mom had been by the bed holding out a basket of apples... Mom had always made homemade apple sauce for me whenever I felt sick, but Pam did not know this.

Once I started working with Andy Bryce, I did a lot of tapping about Mom. I made an appointment with myself to take out all the unopened cards and tokens from her funeral, which I had stuffed into a bag and into a closet to be forgotten. I allowed myself to cry my heart out privately one day while I tapped and I grieved. Some weeks later, I realized I had finally forgiven Mom. I tapped and told her I was well... that she needn't stay around to take care of me any more... that I would be fine. I told her I understood her pain... that I forgave her and I loved her... and then I let her go. Mom had always been with us during my Healing Touch sessions, but the next time Pam visited she told me that Mom was no longer there. With EFT I was able to bring peace not only to myself, but to my Mom as well.

I spent time learning to tap on the physical symptoms of Crohn's, including pain, gas, diarrhea and an inability to digest a variety of foods, as well as on my emotional issues. Now, whenever I feel a symptom in my right side, I visualize my intestines as a peaceful, free flowing river and tap on that metaphor. It's a very effective way to calm my gut, as well as to bring me peace.

I recognize that any symptoms I experience now are often connected to an emotional issue. So while I tap, I have a gentle conversation with myself pertaining to what I perceive is going on inside my body. I use a setup statement such as the following while I tap on my karate chop point (on the little finger side of my hand):

"Even though I have this Crohn's Disease... and I have some grumblings on my right side... and I am feeling _____, I deeply and completely love and accept myself."

Sometimes I add forgiveness and gratitude to the setup statement: "And I forgive myself (and anyone else) for anything I may have done to contribute to this problem... and I am grateful to my intestines for any messages they may be giving me right now".

I continue to tap on the other points referred to in Gary Craig's EFT manual while tuning into my symptoms or emotions. Once I begin to feel a shift in my emotions, I use positive affirmations while continuing to tap:

"I choose to feel healthy and happy... I deserve to be healthy... I love feeling healthy... Every day I am getting better and better... I am so grateful for the healing that is taking place in my body... My body is in perfect, radiant health." Then I visualize the image of a river: "My intestines are like a beautiful free-flowing river... calm and peaceful... lovely clear water... stable banks... well formed logs... my intestines flow

calmly and peacefully throughout my body... I love my intestines..."

I became so inspired by EFT that I began teaching it to the children in my class, with wonderful results. Over the past two years I have used EFT to help my students with test anxiety, separation anxiety, social difficulties, anger, frustration, guilt, fears, aches and pains, lying, stage fright, dyslexia and ADHD. It is an especially effective tool for enabling children, especially those who are perfectionists, to stop beating themselves up for making mistakes. Some children are harder on themselves than anyone else in their lives will ever be, and this creates huge anxiety issues for them. EFT alleviates anxiety better than any other technique I have ever seen used in schools.

I also decided to take the Levels One, Two and Three EFT training with Andy Bryce to develop my skills as a practitioner. An enormous testimonial to the effectiveness of EFT is the fact that six of my friends paid for and accompanied me to the Level One course just because they had witnessed such a powerful transformation in my own physical and emotional health.

I attended the Level Two EFT course over a year ago, intending to deal with a flying phobia which was preventing me from enjoying traveling (10/10). I volunteered in front of the class with Andy, and my fear of flying was resolved in less than 20 minutes. Since then I have enjoyed a trip to London, Nova Scotia and to Mexico and I can't wait to travel again!

At this Level Two course I also worked with Karen Hodson, a skilled EFT practitioner. She helped me to resolve some remaining aspects of my disease, including my unconscious tendency to punish myself with disease and pain. When she asked me what was in my gut that was causing the Crohn's, I told her that there was a little man with a pick axe in there. She asked why he was there, and I confessed, "Because I deserve it..." "Where did that come from?" I wondered. We tapped on some of my biggest regrets, including childhood acts of unkindness toward others.

Through visualizing and reframing, I came to thank this little man with the pick axe for the gifts he had bestowed upon me with this disease. I exchanged a smile of understanding with him. Then he put down his pick axe and we shook hands. This was an inspirational session, for it enabled me to realize that sometimes our greatest difficulties in life come disguised with gifts in hand. My Crohn's was inviting and enabling me to heal my emotional and physical self with understanding, compassion, acceptance, trust and love.

I worked once more with Karen, during a teleconference, regarding my fear of food because I continued to make very careful, limited choices about my diet. Right after a session in which we tapped on eating a colorful array of food, I happened to be invited out to lunch with friends and had the most delicious, colorful meal I'd eaten at a restaurant for years, including halibut, wrapped in a whole-wheat tortilla, accompanied by a beautiful assortment of grilled vegetables. These were items that previously would have caused severe flareups of my Crohn's and I would have avoided eating at all costs.

Now, I no longer fear food. I make healthy choices because I love and respect myself. In the past, when my friends would ask, "Can you eat this?" "Are you allowed to eat that?" I would answer, "No." Now I happily reframe such inquiries with, "I can eat it if I want to..." There is no more fear. There is no more anger. There is no more pain. Life is great... I have never felt healthier or happier or more at peace.

When Gary Craig asked me the other day if I had medical evidence that my intestines were healed I was rather at a loss for words. For myself, I don't require medical proof. Medicine couldn't measure the healing of mind and spirit which has taken place along with my physical healing. My healing journey has been ever so much more than a physical one. Crohn's has turned out to be a blessing in disguise that is allowing me to heal my soul.

Appendix A. Medical report 26 April 07

SPECIMEN [LARGE BOWEL] DATE [991108] LAB [1gh]

SUMMARY:

TERMINAL ILEUM AND CECUM, RESECTION.

A) ILEOCOLONIC FISTULA TRACK

B) ACTIVE CHRONIC INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE CONSISTENT WITH CROHN'S DISEASE

C. NEGATIVE FOR EVIDENCE OF MUCOSAL DYSPLASIA

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