FEATURE

Befriending Anxiety to Reach Potential

Strategies to Empower Our Gifted Youth

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Abstract: Gifted students can encounter anxiety-provoking stressors throughout their day. Developing effective anxiety management skills allows them to better navigate these challenges. Concepts from neuroscience help us better understand responses to anxiety and can assist gifted youth and those working with them in recognizing how and when to best apply anxiety management strategies. This article reviews these concepts and integrating them into the classroom environment to assist with this learning process. In addition, it examines an evidenced-based anxiety management intervention that has been found to be efficacious for gifted youth, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT). Results of recent EFT research are reviewed and the steps to learning EFT are outlined.

Keywords: anxiety, gifted students, neuroscience, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)

John is a bright, engaging high school student who loves science, spending long hours in debates with his older brother about the most recent astrological findings. You can often find him excitedly reading biographies about his favorite scientists, passionately playing his clarinet or deeply involved in a strategic board game with his friends. John does well in many areas until it comes to completing his English writing. At these times, John becomes sullen, frequently procrastinating in completing these homework assignments. He ruminates for days over what he will write and how best to express his thoughts. Often, John does not turn in his homework, resulting in poor grades in English and frustrated discussions with his teacher and parents.

> "What may appear as a lack of motivation, cooperation, or self-discipline could actually be the result of the gifted child's unmanaged anxiety."

At age 9, Sarah is a straight-A student with a passion for poetry and the outdoors. On weekends, she loves to hike through the local woods, notebook in hand, making observations and taking in the natural beauty that inspires her work. She can often be found having ardent conversations with her parents and their friends about environmental concerns that are having a global impact. She is actively involved in the local community garden and has organized a group of like-minded friends to spearhead conservation efforts at their local park. Recently, Sarah has been experiencing stomachaches that have caused her to miss school. In addition, she is having trouble falling asleep at night due to worrying about whether the conservation project is enough to contribute to making a global difference.

Both of these gifted students are experiencing anxiety. Anxiety can take many forms. Gifted children and adolescents have rich, complex personalities and often engage in multiple interests and activities, sometimes encountering anxiety-provoking stressors, such as multiple deadlines, demanding schedules, external and internal competiveness, and environments that do not recognize their asynchronistic needs. Understanding this anxiety and providing effective management tools is an important part of supporting their talent development and overall well-being. This article discusses some of the unique contributors to anxiety for gifted youth and suggests how to integrate concepts from neuroscience to best support teaching them intervention skills. Furthermore, it introduces Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), an innovative, evidence-based anxiety management strategy that significantly reduces anxiety for gifted students.

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Anxiety and the Experience of Gifted Youth

Anxiety is characterized by worried thoughts and feelings of tension or fear and can be accompanied by physical changes like increased heart rate or rapid breathing (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It may be episodic or chronic. Episodic anxiety is triggered by a specific event or concern or related to a particular moment in time. Chronic anxiety is more persistent and long term, often related to recurring worries or situations that are ongoing. It can also be the result of chronic stress when one does not have effective coping mechanisms. Anxiety is commonly experienced when taking on new tasks or unfamiliar challenges or moving through new transitions. It can be a healthy source of motivation to do one's best or a debilitating block that prevents one from achieving or interacting. For those who struggle with anxiety, developing effective management skills can make a difference.

Stress Factors Unique to Gifted Individuals

Scholars agree that the lived experience of gifted individuals contains anxiety-producing stressors (Coleman, 2012; Cross & Cross, 2015; Harrison & Van Haneghan, 2011). For example, gifted students often need greater stimulation and deeper discussion about topics of interest than their general-population peers. This sense of asynchrony can result in feeling out of sync academically or socially with their environments (Silverman, 2013). In addition, gifted children often recognize the complexities and nuances of concepts and individuals, leading them to vigorously question inconsistencies and interrelationships, while having limited to no power to make systemic changes (Roeper, 2009). Multipotentiality and a desire to explore a variety of interests can result in overcommitment for gifted students (Peterson, Duncan, & Canady, 2009), adding to these stressors. Concurrently, gifted children and adolescents receive mixed messages about their giftedness (Coleman, 2012; Fonseca, 2011); for example, it is good to be smart, but don't ask too many questions. This issue is further complicated for gifted girls, who struggle with conflicting messages about culturally acceptable traits for females, such as assertive intelligence being less socially acceptable for women (Reis & Gaesser, 2015). These challenges become more complex for gifted students when coupled with self-concept concerns, such as hiding one's giftedness to be more accepted in general education environments or having self-doubts about one's intellect in classes of similarly-abled classmates. Gifted students struggling with self-concept may be less likely to take academic risks (Webb, 1994; Whiting, 2006), leading to behaviors such as not answering questions in class or not advocating for their desired class project due to worries to avoid being socially ostracized, thereby intensifying their stress in school settings.

The School Experience

Concurrently, Moon (2002) suggested that inappropriate placements at school can create greater internal conflict for gifted students. Within the school setting, a mismatch between a child's learning style and a teacher's teaching style can further contribute to the anxiety-provoking stressors experienced by the gifted child (Hébert, 2011). Gifted students may be misjudged due to their intensity about a topic or community issue, as well as their sensitivity and compassion toward others. Referred to by some experts as overexcitabilities (OEs), these traits can enhance talent development and resiliency with the right supports (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009). When not understood within the context of their giftedness, research has indicated that teachers may refrain from referring students to gifted programs (Strohm, 2017). OEs also contribute to higher levels of anxiety and insomnia for gifted youth (Harrison & Van Haneghan, 2011). Similarly, scholars noted a lack of appropriate supports for twice-exceptional students (Nicpon-Foley, Allmon, Sieck, & Stinson, 2011), those gifted students with coexisting disabilities (Baum & Olenchak, 2002). Without individualized programming that addresses their unique needs, school can become a source of increased frustration and anxiety for these students. In general, inadequate training and misunderstanding on the part of school personnel regarding how to best meet gifted students' academic, social, and emotional needs can lead to a deficit of support and guidance for high ability students, exacerbating their levels of stress and anxiety (Peterson, 2015).

Self-Concept Challenges

In addition, developing a sense of self can be a challenge for gifted children and adolescents. Scholars have indicated that the gifted experience impacts self-concept in several ways. Some studies have shown that gifted students have a lower academic self-concept (Becker & Neumann, 2016) and higher test anxiety (Ziegler & Stoeger, 2004) when in classrooms with other high ability students. (Note: Other researchers have found that gifted students have higher academic self-concepts when enrolled in gifted programs (Rinn, 2007) or have found mixed results when measuring gifted students' academic self-confidence in different grouping arrangements (Ziegler, Chow, Chow, Luk, & Wong, 2004).) If students do indeed have a lower academic self-concept in these situations, they more often question their ability for reasons such as having more competition to excel or finding work more challenging due to its increased rigor. Students with low academic self-concept experience lower self-confidence and increased expectations of future failure, contributing to a lowering of their effort to succeed (Hodapp, 1989; Zeidner & Shani-Zinovich, 2015). Furthermore, due to greater failure expectancies and low self-esteem, these individuals may engage in more self-defeating behaviors, such as not studying for tests or completing homework assignments, adding to increasing levels of test anxiety (Covington, 1992). Test-anxious students can exhibit greater emotionality and worry (Zeidner & Schleyer, 1999b), as well as lower achievement (Arens, Becker, & Möller, 2017). In addition, lower grades, increased irritability, work avoidance, mood swings, or study sessions with many tears may be indicative of students experiencing these challenges.

Paradoxically, gifted students experience a higher academic self-concept in general population classrooms, but lower levels of personal, social, and physical self-concept (Zeidner & Shani-Zinovich, 2015). While a higher academic self-concept can be predictive of better grades, it does not insure strong achievement in school when co-occurring with social anxiety (Zeidner & Schleyer, 1999a). Hébert (2011) noted that gifted students sometime experience socialization stressors as they attempt to develop meaningful friendships, trying to balance identity versus isolation. Vacillating between genuineness and inauthenticity, gifted students may feel pressure to hide their giftedness due to fears of bullying (Peterson & Ray, 2006) and/or a desire for peer acceptance (Cross & Cross, 2015). In addition, gifted girls may be reluctant to reveal their giftedness due to social and relational norms, such as the belief that girls shouldn't be smarter than the boys they date (Kerr & Multon, 2015). Sometimes erroneously judged as lacking motivation, gifted students underperform to avoid feeling anxious and/or to be viewed more favorably by their peers.

Perfectionism

Perfectionism can be another concern for gifted youth (Schuler, 2002). Currently, there is much debate among scholars about the degree to which perfectionism is adaptive versus maladaptive (Flett & Hewitt, 2006; Owen & Slade, 2008; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Greenspon (2012) noted that perfectionism is driven by anxiety. Furthermore, perfectionistic concerns were found to be a predictor of increases in adolescent anxiety (Damian, Negru-Subtirica, Stoeber, & Băban, 2017). Research has also indicated that gifted students showed higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism in fifth grade and higher levels of anxiety in sixth grade than their nongifted peers (Guignard, Jacquet, & Lubart, 2012). In one study with gifted middle school students, Parker (1997, 2002) identified three different typologies of perfectionism–nonperfectionism, dysfunctional, and healthy. Low scores on personal standards, parental expectations, organization, and conscientiousness were characteristic of nonperfectionistic students. Students in the dysfunctional perfectionistic group scored high in the areas such as concern about making mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubts about their own actions, neurosis and openness to experience, but low in agreeableness. Students in the healthy perfectionistic group tended to have low scores on concerns about making mistakes, parental criticism, doubts about actions and neuroticism, but high in extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Similarly, Schuler (2000) suggested that perfectionism existed on a continuum of normal to neurotic behaviors and thoughts. For students in the normal range of perfectionism, order and organization were important in achieving their personal best. Paradoxically, students experiencing neurotic perfectionism were limited by a constant state of anxiety due to fear of making mistakes. In addition, concerns about making errors increased for gifted girls during their middle school years (Siegle & Schuler, 2000). Behaviors such as procrastination and difficulties starting and/or finishing tasks can be indicative of neurotic or maladaptive perfectionism.

Societal, parental, and self-expectations and actions all influence the degree to which perfectionism develops. Furthermore, perfectionism can be self-oriented or societally prescribed. Gifted students often have early experiences of academic mastery with little effort, as well as no previous experiences of academic failure, which are two factors that contribute to self-oriented perfectionism (Neumeister, 2004). Research suggests that self-oriented perfectionism was positively related to intrinsic motivation, whereas socially prescribed perfectionism was positively related to extrinsic motivation (Miquelon, Vallerand, Grouzet, & Cardinal, 2005; Stoeber, Feast, & Hayward, 2009). More recently, results of research suggest that perfectionism can also impact students' achievement motivation (Fletcher & Speirs Neumeister, 2012). Scholars who interviewed gifted high school students about their perfectionism found that parental expectations and role modeling were influential elements in the extent and ways in which perfectionism manifested for the youth (Speirs-Neumeister, Williams, & Cross, 2009), suggesting a critical role parents can play in learning and modeling effective anxiety management techniques themselves. Driven by perfectionism and a desire to meet societal stereotypes about gifted individuals (e.g., accomplishing with ease, having no struggles, being able to do it all), gifted youth may mask or not share concerns, resulting in feelings of loneliness and isolation (Peterson, 2009; Silverman & Conarton, 2005). In addition, some gifted students may avoid challenging tasks altogether as they worry that they cannot complete them perfectly on their initial attempt. Empowering perfectionistic students, their parents and teachers with effective anxiety management tools can assist them in maintaining a healthy balance toward well-being and motivation to excel.

What Teachers, School Counselors, and Parents Can Do

Using Neuroscience to Support Learning Management Skills

Gifted students have a passion for deeply understanding the whys and hows for the activities they undertake and tools they use. As educators teach gifted youth management strategies, it can be helpful to begin by sharing information with them from neuroscience about the brain's response to stress and anxiety. For example, teaching students that their brains can more easily take in and assimilate new information when they are in a relaxed state can help students become more engaged in a quick brain break activity designed to release stress and restart our neurological readiness to learn. A focused awareness activity such as massaging one's own fingers and hands or standing and stretching up to the sky while paying attention to the texture of the skin and the gentle stretching and releasing of the muscles is an example of one such downregulation exercise that can be used (Desautels, 2016). With this knowledge, gifted

students can then become empowered to readily take charge of their body's stress and anxiety cues and engage in learning skills to more effectively manage anxiety.

Anxiety is a result of perceived threat in the environment. The biological response is similar, whether the threat is a saber-toothed tiger, a math exam, multiple deadlines, or a transition to a new environment. Anxiety triggers a stress response within the body that historically has helped us to survive. This response is a result of physiological and biochemical reactions that release a flood of stress hormones. These hormones compete with the brain's ability to process thoughts and regulate emotions (Eysenck & Derakshan, 2011; LeDoux, 1996; Teicher, Anderson, Polcari, Anderson, & Navalta, 2002), as well as accurately perceive the environment (Derakshan & Eysenck, 2009). In addition, stress hormones inhibit the ability to reason and access information one has learned, as well as interfere with concentration and making good judgments (Blanchette & Richards, 2010; Hopko, Crittendon, Grant, & Wilson, 2005).

Concurrently, the stress response shuts down parts of the brain and body not needed for survival and instead sends its resources to those the components needed to fight or flee; for example, the large muscles and heart that are used to run. In the brain, the limbic system, the part of the brain responsible for survival, takes over. This temporarily bypasses the prefrontal cortex (Sapolsky, 2003). The prefrontal cortex is the center of reasoning and problem-solving abilities, allowing one to accurately comprehend situations and put experiences into words. The prefrontal cortex is also significantly involved with executive functions, such as emotional regulation, planning and sequencing events, long-term memory storage, and inhibition of inappropriate social and emotional behaviors (Bishop, 2007). When anxious, a gifted individual may have difficulty making plans, prioritizing tasks, committing information to long-term memory, controlling their emotional reactions or expressing their thoughts or feelings related to their experiences. What may appear as a lack of motivation, cooperation, or self-discipline could actually be the result of the gifted child's unmanaged anxiety.

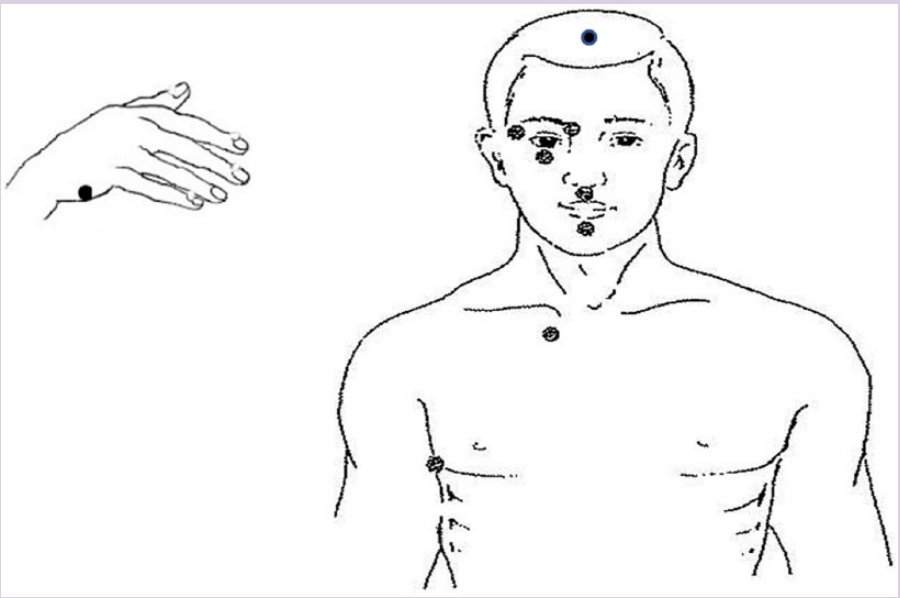
For anxiety management techniques to be effective, this physiological stress response must be calmed so that the areas of the brain involved in cognitive thought and information processing can be readily accessed (Sapolsky, 2004). This is why trying to reason with highly anxious or agitated students is often ineffective. When their amygdala and hippocampus are engaged in threat assessment, as well as production and distribution of stress hormones, students are less able to process information or make decisions. In addition, students cannot access the reasoning abilities of their prefrontal cortex nor can they put words to what they are experiencing. Without taking the step to downregulate this physiological response, trying to talk through the issue can actually increase the students' anxieties, as it is like hitting replay on their stress response cycle (Banks, 2005). The quicker the physiological stress response can be calmed, the sooner students will be able to successfully manage their anxiety. By using this knowledge about the stress response, gifted students and those that serve them can more readily apply evidence-based strategies to build their resiliency and effectively develop anxiety management skills.

Neuroscience: Lessons and Tools for the Classroom

As part of building anxiety resiliency for our gifted youth in the school setting, it may be important to incorporate lessons from educational neuroscience into classroom activities to readily engage students' brains in the learning process and provide stimulating activities to reduce stress (Geake, 2009). Desautels and McKnight (2016) have suggested a framework for engaging all stakeholders in creating environments that meaningfully support innovative learning in schools through mind–body focused principles. Within this framework, these scholars suggest revolutionizing education by recognizing schools as living systems with a focus on interpersonal relationship building as a way to create safe and meaningfully engaged environments in which children can thrive. In addition, they recommend assisting students in the development of emotional self-regulation through classroom activities and discussions designed to identify and integrate a healthy, full spectrum of emotions. Based on current developments in educational neuroscience, they advocate using curricula that teaches students to recognize and understand their bodies' responses to stress and anxiety so students can most effectively restore and maintain equilibrium, moving from high alert to calm, focused, and ready to learn. Furthermore, these researchers advise incorporating downregulation techniques as standard practice throughout the school day to minimize negative triggering of stress and anxiety for students and staff alike. To assist teachers and counselors with incorporating educational neuroscience strategies into their classrooms, Desautels also has provided age-appropriate, body–mind curricula, and brain-based exercises that can be easily incorporated into daily learning processes. One such exercise is energizing breath in which the teacher leads the students through a breathing exercise that begins with three short inhales and exhales with the tongue extended and belly moving in and out rapidly, similar to a dog panting. The participants then retract the tongue and continue this rate of breathing with the mouth closed for another 30 s. The teacher and students end this energizing breathing cycle with 1 min of regular, deep-belly inhales and exhales (see https://www.edutopia.org/users/dr-lori-desautels for more examples).

EFT

Equally important, educators need to assist gifted children and adolescents in learning evidence-based, lifelong anxiety management skills. EFT, an emerging, innovative strategy, has significantly decreased anxiety for gifted students in fewer sessions than traditional interventions (e.g., deep breathing and muscle relaxation; Gaesser & Karan, 2017). Additional research found that EFT significantly reduced a fear of failure (Stapleton



1) **Side of Hand** (Extending you hand out with thumb pointed directly up as if to shake someone's hand, this point is located on the fleshy part of the hand on the side directly opposite of the thumb.)
2) **Eyebrow** (at the inner edge of either eyebrow)
3) **Side of eye** (on the bony area beside either eye)
4) **Under eye** (on the orbital bone under the center of either eye)
5) **Under nose** (halfway between nose and upper lip)
6) **Chin** (halfway between lower lip and point of chin)
7) **Collarbone** (From the collarbone, find the U-shaped notch (about where a man ties his tie). From the notch move right or left approximately 2" to a small depression, immediately below the collarbone.)
8) **Under arm** (under the arm on either side of the body, halfway between the front and back of the body, usually right on the seam of one's shirt or about 4" below either armpit)
9) **Top of Head** (at crown of head)

Figure 1. EFT tapping point diagram.
Note. **All questions related to materials used for this article, as well as questions and assistance related to assistance with the EFT, can be directed to Dr. Amy Gaesser at agaesser@brockport.edu.**

et al., 2017) and test anxiety (Sezgin & Özcan, 2009) in adolescents. Similarly, a study examining the effect of EFT on the body's biochemistry found that using EFT significantly reduces cortisol levels in one session (Church, Yount, & Brooks, 2012). Cortisol is a biochemical marker in the body that indicates the individual's level of stress; as the person's level of stress decreases, so does the level of cortisol. Gifted students can learn EFT in small groups, classrooms, or individually (see the "EFT examples from the field" section). It is an easily implemented technique that combines cognitive-behavioral strategies, like helping individuals develop an awareness of their body's stress cues (e.g., rapid breathing, sweaty palms, tightness in chest, clenched jaw, rapidly increasing thoughts), with learning to self-stimulate identified acupuncture points (i.e., acupoints). The acupoints used in EFT are based on points shown in acupuncture research to reduce stress and anxiety. Self-stimulation is done by the individual tapping on the acupoints.

The process of learning EFT involves several simple steps. To begin, students are taught the locations of the nine acupoints used in the EFT protocol (see Figure 1). They learn how to tap on these acupoints while simultaneously focusing on the trigger for their anxiety and/or how they physically experience the anxiety along with statements that positively reframe the situation or highlight aspects of themselves (see *How To Do EFT* below for examples). For ease of learning, it is recommended that students initially practice using EFT on something that commonly occurs day-to-day or is easily managed by them. For example, EFT is often successfully used to help students transition from lunch break to refocusing on class or to relax into sleeping at bedtime. The concise steps on how to do EFT are presented in Box 1. Younger children can also be assisted

Box 1. How to do Emotional Freedom Techniques.

1. Begin by identifying the feeling (e. g. anxious, frustrated, angry, disappointed, sad, afraid, stressed, etc.) or problem and rate how intense it is using a scale of 0 – 10, with 0 being no intensity and 10 being the worst it could be.
2. A set-up phrase is often used for adults, but not always needed for children. A set-up phrase pairs the feeling or problem with a positive statement that the individual easily identifies with about the situation or themselves. Examples of set-up phrases for children include, "Even though I am worried they won't like my idea, I am excited to put it into action!" or "Even though I don't like to write, I am an awesome kid!". There is no right or wrong wording to use. The most important aspects are that the words are the child's and specific to the child's experience; the more specific, the better EFT works. These words may change as the person taps and uncovers or releases different layers of the feeling or situation. Trust the child and the words that they choose to use.
3. Tap on the Side of Hand point while repeating your set-up phrase 3 times. When tapping throughout the EFT process, use 2 – 3 fingers of your dominant hand and a light to firm pressure.
4. Next, tap on the remaining EFT points using a brief reminder phrase. From the examples above, a reminder phrase could be "worrisome class project" or "writing yuck!". Tap each point about 7 – 10 times repeating the reminder phrase. Again, there is no right or wrong wording to use. The most important aspects are that the words are the child's and specific to the child's experience. These words may change as the person taps and uncovers or releases different layers of the feeling or situation. Trust the child and the words that they choose to use throughout. The remaining EFT points include (see Figure 1 for a visual aid) :
    a. **Eyebrow** (at the inner edge of either eyebrow)
    b. **Side of eye** (on the bony area beside either eye)
    c. **Under eye** (on the orbital bone under the center of either eye)
    d. **Under nose** (halfway between nose and upper lip)
    e. **Chin** (halfway between lower lip and point of chin)
    f. **Collarbone** (From the collarbone, find the U-shaped notch [about where a man ties his tie]. From this notch, move right or left approximately 2" to a small depression immediately below the collarbone.)
    g. **Under arm** (under the arm on either side of the body, halfway between the front and back of the body, usually right on the seam of one's shirt and about 4" below either armpit.)
    h. **Top of Head** (at crown of head)
5. When you have finished the first sequence of tapping, again rate the intensity of the feeling or situation. Continue the tapping sequence in step 4 until the intensity has gone to zero. Remember –the wording may change as the person taps and uncovers or releases different layers of the feeling or situation. Trust the child and the words that they choose to use throughout the process.

with learning the EFT acupoints and process through several storybooks that are currently available in which the characters demonstrate tapping on the EFT acupoints (e.g., *Gorilla Thumps and Bear Hugs* by Alex Ortner, *Be the Boss of Your Feelings: Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) for Children* and *Be the Boss of Your Thoughts: A Guide to Reduce Anxiety and Lower Stress* by Jan Yordy).

EFT examples from the field

In the study by Gaesser and Karan (2017) and studies currently underway, gifted students have reported effectively using EFT to address anxiety related to being in crowds, fear of failure and performing, generalized worry, and relieving their physical symptoms of anxiety (e.g., headaches, stomachaches, rapid breathing). In addition, they have shared that using EFT has helped them with feeling more confident approaching tasks and in social situations, falling asleep, concentrating, and completing homework. The following examples of gifted students and their teachers successfully using EFT and the benefits they experienced are found in these authors' studies. Pseudonyms have been used in place of real names.

Mastering midterms and competition with greater ease. One group of students from a highly competitive high school began working with EFT-trained graduate students during the midpoint of their school year. Each high school student attended three 1-hr meetings to learn and refine their use of EFT. Many were in high states of stress due to impeding midterm exams. In addition, for those who were juniors and seniors, they were in the throes of college applications and/or anxiously awaiting acceptance decisions from premier colleges of their choice. Many of the students reported difficulty concentrating on tasks and sleeping, increased moodiness, and psychosomatic symptoms, such as stomachaches and

headaches. As these students learned and began to use EFT, they reported increased and maintained ability to focus, as well as greater ease with approaching and completing schoolwork and projects. In addition, they found that they were able to fall asleep more quickly and remain asleep throughout the night, as well as more enjoyable time spent with friends because they were less worried. The students were so excited about the results they experienced that tapping quickly became a norm in their school for managing stress. Several students also felt that it enhanced their ability to perform at sporting events and music competitions, and decided to teach it to their teammates, who also reported better focus and improved outcomes.

From isolation to belonging. Ben was a highly gifted, competitive middle school student with a love for all things technology and a quick, satirical sense of humor. In his free time, he was working with his dad to develop an artificial intelligence that would assist Internet searchers with their vacation planning. Ben struggled significantly with anxiety, resulting in frequent meltdowns throughout the day that included Ben making loud, disparaging remarks about himself and hitting himself and/or knocking his head on a wall or desk. At school, Ben was placed in an 8:1:1 classroom (i.e., a classroom limited to eight children with one teacher and one teacher's aide) and assigned a 1:1 aide (i.e., the teacher's aide was assigned solely to work with Ben) to assist with his emotional and behavioral needs, leaving him feeling more isolated socially and significantly understimulated academically. To help Ben feel less isolated and pursue his technology passion, his parents had encouraged him to join a robotics club outside of school. Ben greatly enjoyed the activities, but still struggled with anxiety outbursts to the point that he was in danger of being asked to leave the club. Ben began working individually with a trained graduate student for three sessions to learn EFT. Concurrent to the beginning of these EFT sessions, Ben's robotics team was involved in a regional weekend competition to determine which teams would advance to the state-level. During the first round of the competition, the team's robot did not work correctly and they scored limited points. Ben's mother observed from the bleachers that Ben began to pace, which often signaled the beginning of a meltdown. However, she noticed that he was tapping the side of his hand and instead regained composure. The team's robot continued to not respond well to commands in the second round, resulting in the team falling further behind. Ben's mother reported that under usual circumstances, this would have been created too much anxiety for Ben and he would have been asked to leave the match by his coach due to an outburst. However, Ben utilized the sequence of EFT tapping points and became calm enough to remain with his team. After the competition, Ben reported to the graduate student teaching him EFT that when he was using the tapping sequence in the competition, he realized that the robot's programming difficulties were due to interference from the fluorescent lights in the gymnasium. Ben was in charge of the team's third round and reprogrammed the robot based on his new understanding of the problem. The robot successfully negotiated all but one of the tasks, earning the team enough points to move to the final round. During the final round, Ben was chosen to answer a question about what being on the robotics team meant for him. His mom reported that Ben gave a heart-felt response about belonging that brought tears to her own and several judges' eyes. After Ben had finished, one of the judges remarked about the physical emphasis Ben brought to his points throughout his speech by tapping the side of his palm into his opposite hand, which Ben happily reported was the way he stimulated the EFT side of the hand point to manage his anxiety about public speaking. Ben's speech scored enough points to move the team onto the state competition. More importantly to his mom, she saw Ben's teammates embrace him with a new appreciation what the team meant to him and they meant to each other.

Renewed hope: One elementary teacher's experience of EFT. Like many teachers, Ms. Martin was stressed trying to meet the increasing demands of standardized testing and curricula when she joined a training designed to assist teachers in learning EFT for their own use, and then teach it to their students. This training included a 3-hr initial session to learn EFT and several follow-up meetings to refine its use for herself, as well as assist her with implementing it in her classroom. A seasoned teacher with a deep passion for her work and commitment to her students, she was significantly discouraged and nearing burnout as she struggled to meet the needs of her larger-than-usual kindergarten class. Many of her students had difficulty with basic self-regulation related to behaviors and emotions due to significant experiences of difficulties outside of school. Ms. Martin spent much of her day drying some students' tears, managing outburst of others and in general trying to motivate students to engage in activities. As instructed during her training on EFT, Ms. Martin became comfortable using EFT first on herself by using it daily at one or two consistent points. She did this for at least 1 month prior to introducing it to her students. During this time, she reported a decrease in the tension she was feeling, greater ease and increased focus while moving through the tasks in her day, and greater ease at falling asleep at night. In addition, Ms. Martin reported that she felt taking the time to master using EFT for herself was critical to her than being able to effectively teach it to her students.

She began her students' EFT learning process by using a stuffed bear to demonstrate tapping on the EFT points and utilized the EFT storybook, *Gorilla Thumps and Bear Hugs*, to help students recognize and discuss when they might want to use EFT for their own fears, frustrations, and disappointments. Simultaneously, she began using EFT at consistent times in the day to help students transition and settle. These times included when first arriving to class in the morning, when returning from lunch, any time the class had to line up for an activity, and while walking through the halls. Ms. Martin later reported

that this consistency was critical to helping her students master EFT and being able to later use it effectively during more stressful times. In addition, she found that it brought a reassuring sense of calm for the children throughout the day. As her students became accustomed to EFT, it was easier to then use it at other times during their school day when they were feeling increased frustration or anxiety, such as focusing on completing some schoolwork, testing, or moments when learning to share was hard. "We should tap on that" was a phrase frequently uttered by children as they recognized when they or their peers needed something to help them deal with frustration or settle into a task. As a result of using EFT regularly in her class, Ms. Martin reported a significant decrease in her students' outbursts and greater engagement, as well as an increase in their ability to transition with ease, maintain focused attention, and overall task completion. In addition, Ms. Martin found a renewed sense of positive enjoyment in her work and more time in creative activities in the classroom.

Summary

Gifted youth have many interests they are exploring, with rich insights and unique perspectives to share. Teaching them evidence-based techniques, such as EFT, can effectively assist them in managing anxiety-provoking stressors they encounter, allowing them to more readily focus their attention and energy on the things they passionately love and manifesting their talents. Infusing brain-based exercises and stress-reducing learning concepts into the classroom can reinvigorate the learning experience, while supporting gifted students in readily understanding their body's response to stress and anxiety. Utilizing this knowledge, educators can better assist gifted students in successfully applying management techniques like EFT, as well as the process of transforming these skills into lifelong tools.

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