

**The Effect of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) on Stress
Biochemistry: A Randomised Controlled Trial.**

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Abstract

Cortisol is a physiological marker for stress. Elevated cortisol levels are associated with accelerated aging, many organic diseases, and psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety. This study examined the changes in cortisol levels and psychological symptoms of 83 non-clinical subjects receiving a single hour-long intervention.

Subjects were randomly assigned to either an EFT group, a psychotherapy group receiving a supportive interview (SI), or a no treatment (NT) group. Salivary cortisol assays were performed immediately before, and thirty minutes after the intervention. Psychological conditions were assessed using the SA-45. The EFT group showed clinically and statistically significant improvements in anxiety (-58.34%, $p < .05$), depression (-49.33%, $p < .002$), the overall severity of symptoms, (-50.5%, $p < .001$), and symptom breadth across conditions (-41.93%, $p < .001$).

There were no significant changes in cortisol levels between SI (-14.25%, SE 2.61) and NT (-14.44%, SE 2.67); however cortisol in the EFT group dropped significantly (-24.39%, SE 2.62) compared to SI and NT ($p < .01$). The reduced cortisol levels in the EFT group correlated with decreased severity in psychological symptoms as measured by the SA-45.

These results suggest that salivary cortisol tests may be useful not only for assessing stress physiology, but also as an objective indicator of the impact of mental health treatments in reducing psychological symptoms. In the current study, EFT was shown to significantly improve both cortisol-related stress levels and self-reported psychological symptoms after a single treatment session.

Keywords: cortisol, stress, depression, anxiety, physiology, EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques).