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As EFT practitioners we help clients from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds. For this reason, I have created an approach that I call Geo-Specific EFT. As each person carries a unique cultural blueprint that is enmeshed in developing issues, Geo-specific EFT approach makes us sensitive to cross-cultural variables: Language, culture and religion. I have outlined the basic tenets of Geo-Specific EFT with the help of brief examples from actual EFT sessions.

## Language

EFT and its key component, the affirmations, were created in English by the EFT Founder, Gary Craig, an American English speaking gentleman. Hence, when we use EFT with people whose native language is different than English, we need to understand that each word has a specific meaning in a certain context. I have found while working with clients from different nationalities, that in many languages, there is no exact translation for words "love" and "accept", especially in the context of oneself; self love and acceptance may not be looked upon favorably in some cultures.

The language in which a person speaks to himself "internally" will often be his native language. Geo-specific EFT encourages use of native verbal expressions during tapping.

I recently was working with a lady from Saudi Arabia and her native language was Urdu. She knew English but the term "accept" did not resonate with her. So we found a word "Kubool" in her language that was more appropriate for her.

Each word carries an emotional intensity that differs in each culture. The same word spoken by an enemy will have different intensity than when spoken by a friend. Certain words like forgiveness, acceptance, love, abundance, co-dependence etc carry a different intensity in each language.

## Culture

Culture includes a wide range of factors like lifestyle, communication styles, parenting styles, family roles, values, and a lot more.

In a study conducted by Cousins & Ross & Nisbett, they found that in Japanese culture that emphasizes collective self, they define themselves in terms "meeting the

expectations of others rather than of fulfilling their own private needs.” If they are asked to answer “Who Am I”, they would say “I’m an employee in this X company.” In contrast, Americans are more likely to emphasize the content of the individual (private) self, defining themselves with such statements as “I am strong-willed.” Japanese define themselves in a social context whereas Americans are less dependent on social context. (Bordens, 2008)

### **An Example of Geo-Specific EFT**

“Cathy” called me from Indonesia. She was going through a difficult phase in her marriage and was advised by a friend to consider divorce. She was not comfortable with the suggestion and revealed that divorce in her community carried a social stigma. She was very stressed and indecisive. She was anxious that her daughter’s life would be negatively affected by a decision of divorce as her daughter would be teased mercilessly in her school. She and her parents would also face repercussions in her community.

The focus of EFT sessions was to help Cathy find ways to resolve conflicts within the marriage and release her anger with her husband. She felt much better after finding a way to work on her problems. Her eventual decision of not taking divorce based on her cultural beliefs became a significant factor in her healing process. She was not comfortable with the idea of divorce and attached a lot of importance to her family and her community. Her self worth was reflected in her “self-other relationships” and her being part of the community. If I had focused on changing her cultural beliefs and downplaying the importance of community, it could have aggravated her situation. Instead, helping her within her cultural framework was more beneficial.

### **Religion**

Some problems are deeply imbedded in a religious context and understanding them in that context is very important.

Rose from South America came to me for issues related with self image few years back. During the course of the sessions, she told me about her belief in spirits; she could feel them at times. A part of her anxiety and fear was embedded in this specific belief. However, she also believed that these spirits would not harm her but she was not able to reduce her anxiety. My first instinct was to challenge her beliefs, but I realized that it would be more helpful to use an EFT *reframe* for her anxiety in the context of this belief:

*Even though I see apparitions and I get terrified of them, I choose to feel safe when I see them because I know they won't harm me.*

This helped in significantly reducing her anxiety.

Ranjitha, a pious lady, believed that she had psoriasis because she didn't appreciate her hands and legs and God was punishing her for this. The following EFT statements gave her a lot of solace. It brought about a significant shift in her problems:

Even though I have psoriasis because I didn't appreciate my beautiful hands and feet that God has given me...

Even though I feel that God gave me psoriasis to make me realize that I did not appreciate my hands and legs, I deeply and completely love and forgive myself for not appreciating what God gave me and ask God for his forgiveness.

### Conclusion

Our work as practitioners is to help the clients change the beliefs that hinder their growth rather than change their core cultural or religious beliefs. It's important to distinguish between the two: beliefs that hinder growth and cultural beliefs that are supportive. Beliefs that may seem like a block to us may be healthy cultural beliefs in the client that do not need to be changed. Therefore, in my opinion, understanding our own cultural and religious beliefs is very important before we use EFT on clients from different cultures. This will help us in refraining from imposing our socio-cultural beliefs on them.

**Note:** Please do not form any generalizations about any culture or religion based on the examples given in this article. Geo-Specific EFT does not intend to encourage stereotypes, biases or prejudices.

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Reference : Bordens, K. S., &Horowitz, I. A. (2008) *Social Psychology*. U.S.A: Freeload Press.

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