FRONTLINE ASSISTANCE FOR STRESS & TRAUMA

First Anniversary for Organisation Offering Free EFT Trauma Therapy to COVID healthcare-workers

As the number of COVID cases in the UK falls, a national trauma support organization is predicting a huge rise in post-traumatic stress cases among health workers. Frontline Assistance for Stress and Trauma, or FAST, is marking its first anniversary in April with a warning that a mental health crisis is imminent for those affected by COVID. “Although it may feel that the pandemic is starting to recede, healthcare and emergency workers are left badly traumatised,” said FAST founder Wendy Power Stoten. “We are finding that frontline staff are facing layer upon layer of stress. The trauma is off the scale. I genuinely think we are looking at an epidemic of PTSD, with mental health problems linked to their COVID experiences lasting many years. As an organization, now twelve months old, we feel that our real work is only just beginning. With our experience of trauma management, FAST is excellently placed to help.”

Wendy, based in Cornwall, is an experienced practitioner of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), or Tapping, a complementary health treatment involving fingertip tapping on acupuncture points on the body. Scientific research has shown this can significantly reduce the stress hormone cortisol. “It was in early April 2020 that I first helped a nurse struggling with COVID stress,” she recalled. “I felt that EFT could be enormously helpful for anyone on the COVID frontline because it is simple to learn and highly effective. I got flooded with requests for help, so I quickly started a pilot project, FAST, creating a network of practitioners experienced in working with trauma, offering 4 free online sessions to any health or emergency worker who needed them.” The structure of FAST has been refined and developed and now has over 30 trained practitioners, all around the UK, who have delivered hundreds of sessions to a wide range of healthcare workers including nurses, consultants, anaesthetists, care home staff, emergency workers and paramedics.

FAST is run on an entirely voluntary basis, funded only by donations, and anyone asking for help is put in touch with a practitioner within 24 hours. “NHS mental health services are so over-stretched at the moment, with long waits for an appointment,” said Wendy. “There was already a serious mental health crisis in the NHS before the pandemic, and Covid has added a uniquely devastating layer to it. Our FAST service can help people very quickly. EFT sessions can easily take place online, and we are constantly told that our work has made a massive difference. We have had 100% positive feedback from everyone we placed with a practitioner.”
One of the first people to be helped by FAST was Nikki Brown, a theatre nurse in Cornwall, who like many nurses in the regions, felt overwhelmed with fear as the pandemic developed. “As a nurse already living with anxiety issues, working throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has proved challenging,” said Nikki. “I got help from a FAST practitioner, and her support and training during the first lockdown was vital in enabling me to be proactive in taking control of my feelings when needed. EFT tapping really worked for me. Eleven months down the line now and I am still finding it an invaluable tool. I can’t recommend it or the FAST team enough.”

Practitioners around the country have given their services for free, among them Ginny Cunningham, based in Conwy, Wales. “The level of trauma that we are seeing is shocking. These healthcare workers are at the end of their tether, they are desperate and running on empty. And they are just so incredibly grateful for the help that EFT can offer. Some of them come to us so traumatised they can hardly speak. By gently tapping with them we can start releasing those traumas straight away. We help them to take back some control, so they feel they can cope again, enough to go back to work. It is surprising how quickly they can start to feel better.” Like Wendy, Ginny is also worried that a surge is likely in cases of PTSD in the coming months. “I think cases will sky-rocket. The healthcare workers affected will need ongoing support.”

It is for this reason that Wendy hopes FAST can offer extended sessions for those with PTSD. “If left untreated PTSD does not go away, it usually gets worse, impacting that person and those around them emotionally, physically and often financially. It is vital that FAST now becomes a sustainable, long-term community interest initiative, and we are looking for benefactors and sponsors to help us go forward.”

EFT International, the professional body for the practice of EFT, is in full support of FAST. Chairperson Jacqui Footman, based in Devon, is pleased to see EFT being so useful in a time of national health crisis. “The emerging evidence base for the use of EFT in the treatment of PTSD shows huge promise. Our organisation is working in the UK as a stakeholder for the NG116 PTSD Guideline with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), which has found EFT to be clinically effective and cost-effective for PTSD and has requested more scientific research. EFT has already been shown to be helpful for war veterans suffering from PTSD. In addition to the randomised controlled trials and meta-analyses considered by NICE, there is also plenty of anecdotal and practitioner-based evidence to support EFT’s use as a first line of treatment for trauma. In these difficult times, as so many frontline workers face growing trauma, we are keen to help spread the message that tapping can help anyone who may be struggling with stress.”

Editors’ notes
1. 2 pictures attached: Unnamed male health worker and close-up of EFT tapping fingers.
2. More information from www.fasttraumasupport.org.uk or contact Wendy Power Stoten on 07419 335424 or email: wendypower1@hotmail.com.
3. EFT was originally developed in the US by Gary Craig, in the 1990s.
4. EFT International is a UK-registered charity number 1176538. More information about EFTi from www.eftinternational.org, or contact Jacqui Footman on 07933 998118 or Jacqui.footman@aamet.org.
5. Research carried out by Bond University in Queensland, Australia, and published in March 2020, has shown that EFT can reduce levels of the stress hormone Cortisol. The research is published in the American Psychological Association Journal, Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy. The findings confirmed the results of previous EFT clinical trials carried out in 2012 by Dawson Church PhD, Garret Yount and Audrey J Brooks. Ends