

# AWARENESS

*Newer Horizons in Human Excellence*





## About the Journal

The journal Awareness is dedicated to promoting and disseminating knowledge derived from innovative research that serves humanity, all forms of life, and their environments. It aims to foster deeper understanding by integrating empirical, experimental, experiential, and spiritual dimensions of knowledge across diverse disciplines. At its core, the journal seeks to expand the horizons of collaborative and empirical research, motivated by a love for humanity, child-like curiosity, and an unwavering commitment to truth. Awareness aims to be a publicly accessible platform for fresh, creative knowledge and shared scholarly exchange, thus embracing the principle that knowledge, like light, must be shared freely and openly to dispel ignorance and inspire the pursuit of human excellence. Only through such open exchange can the journal fulfill its commitment to the ideals of the University for Human Excellence. The journal also provides a forum for exploring critical issues related to the advancement of human excellence, welcoming a wide range of perspectives across multiple fields. It publishes original research articles, reviews, perspectives, editorials, commentaries, and book reviews, all of which reflect the personal views of the authors. These contributions do not represent the official stance of the University or the institutions affiliated with the authors, editors, or reviewers, preserving the journal's commitment to intellectual independence and diversity of thought.

## JOURNAL PARTICULARS

Title	AWARENESS – Newer Horizons in Human Excellence
Frequency	Bi – Annual
ISSN	3107-9881
Publisher	Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence
Chief Editor	Prof. Kanwaljeet J. S. Anand
Starting Year	2024
Subject	Multidisciplinary
Language	English
Publication format	Online
E-mail ID	awareness.journals@sssuhe.ac.in
Website	<a href="https://awarenessjournals.com/">https://awarenessjournals.com/</a>
Author Guidelines	<a href="https://awarenessjournals.com/author-instructions">https://awarenessjournals.com/author-instructions</a>
Privacy Policy	<a href="https://www.awarenessjournals.com/public/img/pdf/privacy-policy.pdf">https://www.awarenessjournals.com/public/img/pdf/privacy-policy.pdf</a>
Copyrights	<a href="https://www.awarenessjournals.com/public/img/pdf/copyrights-permissions-policy.pdf">https://www.awarenessjournals.com/public/img/pdf/copyrights-permissions-policy.pdf</a>



# AWARENESS

*Newer Horizons in Human Excellence*

## Table of Contents

1. The Onslaught of Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare — Kanwaljeet J. S.Anand and Shaun P. Setty	1
2. Indian Jews:A Case Study of Unique Religious Tolerance — Nicole Hirsch Korn	7
3. IXOHOXI Magic Square in Pādukā Sahasram by Sri Vedānta Desika — N Kannan, K Srikanth	15
4. Advancements and Challenges in AlGaN and Phosphor-Based Deep Ultraviolet LEDs: Towards Broader Applications and Higher Efficiencies — K Vineela, P.V.N.M Kaushik, K. Jayanthi	21
5. Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) and Dopamine Detox:A Neurobehavioral Tool for Stress Management — Rajeshwari Ullagaddi	39
6. Confidence in Connectivity: Tracing Government Commitment through India's UDAN Scheme — Jacob Arndt	53



Manuscript

## Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) and Dopamine Detox: A Neurobehavioral Tool for Stress Management

Dr Rajeshwari Ullagaddi

Department of Life Sciences, Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence, Kalaburagi, Karnataka

ORCID: 0009-0004-3533-3910

**Abstract:** Dopamine dysregulation has become a major driver of behavioral addiction, emotional volatility, and cognitive dysfunction in the age of digital hyperstimulation. From social media and entertainment to processed foods and multitasking, the reward system of the brain is under constant supernormal stimulation and it progressively loses its sensitivity to natural reinforcers. Integrating cognitive restructuring with acupressure-based tapping, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) is an integrative neurobehavioral intervention used to control both emotional and physiological reactions to stress. The effectiveness of this strategy mostly depends on one's capacity to control the emotional withdrawal symptoms and psychological distress following the detox procedure. Although well-known for its ability to treat anxiety, trauma, and cravings, the ability of EFT to modify dopaminergic reward pathways also makes it a hopeful addition to dopamine detoxification plans. Often concomitant with reward-seeking behaviors, chronic stress disrupts the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, raises cortisol, causes inflammation, and worsens dopamine balance. While EFT has been shown to lower cortisol, proinflammatory cytokines, and subjective stress markers, it also boosts parasympathetic and antioxidant activities. EFT offers people a practical way to negotiate the neuropsychological difficulties of dopamine detox by breaking compulsive behavioral loops and fostering emotional resilience. The biopsychosocial processes of EFT, its effect on neurochemical control, and its bigger therapeutic potential for handling stress-related disorders, behavioral addictions, and emotional dysregulation in a digitally overstimulated world are discussed in this article. This review further explores the neurobiological mechanisms of EFT, its impact on dopaminergic dysregulation, and its therapeutic role in stress-related and behavioral health challenges.

Citation: Rajeshwari U;  
*Awareness*, 3 (1): 39-52



Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

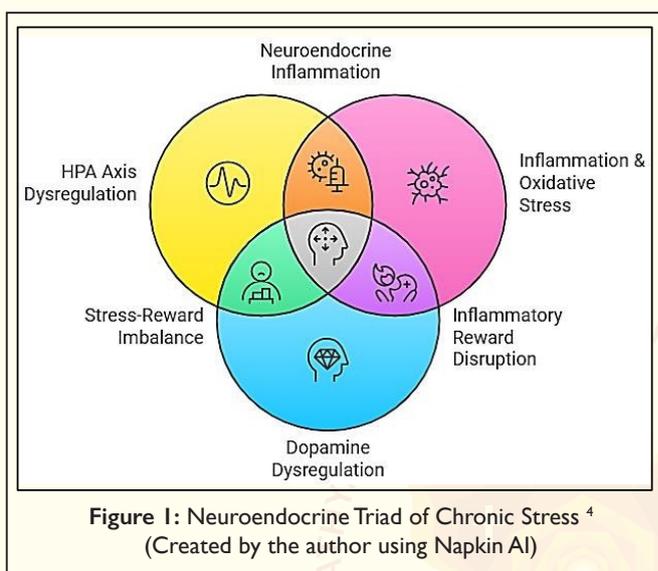
**Keywords:** Emotional Freedom Techniques, dopamine detox, neurobehavioral regulation, stress reduction, neuroplasticity, behavior modification, cortisol.

**Corresponding Author:** Dr Rajeshwari Ullagaddi; Email: rajeshwari.u@sssue.ac.in

.....

## I. Introduction

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) have become well-known as a scientifically based, somatic approach for stress alleviation, emotional control, and trauma healing. EFT combines cognitive therapy with acupressure tapping on particular meridian points to target psychological suffering.<sup>1</sup> People are now more often exposed to hyper-stimulating surroundings through fast-paced living, processed meals, or digital media. Particularly the mesolimbic route, these stimuli constantly activate the dopaminergic reward system, which causes increased impulsivity, reduced motivation, and emotional dysregulation (Figure 1).<sup>2,3</sup>



Emergent as a behavioral treatment meant to restore equilibrium by lowering overexposure to strong reward stimuli, the dopamine detox concept has emerged. This study explores the interaction among stress, dopamine dysregulation, and behavioral addiction and emphasizes how EFT enables a successful dopamine detox. Emerging public health issues in today's hyperconnected digital world are chronic

psychological stress and dopaminergic overstimulation. Prolonged exposure to stress, social media, digital entertainment, and multitask settings can hyperactivate the brain's reward circuitry, particularly the mesolimbic dopamine pathway, contributing to dysregulated mood, addictive behaviors, attention deficits, emotional burnout, and reduced executive functioning.<sup>5,6</sup> Popularly known as "dopamine detox," this phenomenon reveals a growing need for behavioral resets that cut overstimulation and help to restore neurochemical equilibrium. Simultaneously, chronic psychological stress, usually brought on by unaddressed trauma, work load, or emotional suppression, keeps upregulating the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal (HPA) axis and increasing overall cortisol levels. This causes immune dysregulation, chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, and poor hepatic detoxification.<sup>7,8</sup>

These neuroendocrine problems support one another, resulting in a circular cycle of emotional reactivity, dopamine dysregulation, and physical imbalance. Against this background, there is an increasing demand for integrative mind-body therapies that solve the underlying causes of both psychological stress and neurobehavioral imbalance. Developed in the 1990s by Gary Craig, Emotional Freedom Techniques offers a strong intervention that synergistically combines elements of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), exposure therapy, and acupressure-based tapping on meridian points. EFT seeks to neutralize emotional triggers by reprocessing negative emotions while concurrently stimulating peripheral acupoints, which send calming impulses to the limbic system and downregulate sympathetic nervous activity [1]. EFT has been demonstrated to significantly lower cortisol levels, change amygdala activity, boost parasympathetic tone, and improve psychophysiological resilience.<sup>4,9</sup> By lowering psychological pain, improving emotional regulation, and encouraging parasympathetic dominance, EFT may indirectly help to achieve dopamine homeostasis and help break patterns of overstimulation or addictive engagement with foods, chemicals, or technology.<sup>10,11</sup> Thus, EFT not only relieves emotional suffering but may also support "dopamine detox" by settling reward circuits and conditioning patterns of behavior driven by quick gratification. Recent research has

also investigated EFT's possible effects on dopaminergic signaling and behavioral regulation. Often, common neurobiological pathways, including dopamine and cortisol, define stress and compulsive behaviors.<sup>11</sup>

In this review, we explore EFT's role as a neurobehavioral strategy for stress regulation and dopamine detoxification. We examine the psychophysiological mechanisms of EFT, including its effects on the HPA axis, cortisol modulation, autonomic balance, immune response, and oxidative stress markers. Furthermore, we discuss how this integrative technique can be a cost-effective, non-pharmacological intervention to support emotional regulation, neurochemical balance, and detoxification processes, with implications for mental clarity, behavioral reset, and long-term well-being.

## 2. Methodology:

A detailed literature search was done to find relevant papers published between January 2000 and August 2025. The search was performed using major electronic databases - PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The search approach was developed using a mix of keywords "Emotional Freedom Techniques" (EFT), "dopamine detox," "stress reduction," and "behavioral addictions". operators to catch a wide but concentrated spectrum of publications. Database-specific filters, including publication type, language, and research design, helped to further focus the search. Studies were considered appropriate for inclusion if they were experimental studies, systematic reviews, or peer-reviewed clinical trials looking at the physiological or behavioral consequences of EFT especially in connection to stress reduction, dopamine control, or the attenuation of behavioral addictions. Case reports, conference abstracts, non-peer-reviewed papers, opinion pieces, and studies written in languages other than English all underwent exclusion criteria, as these sources often lack methodological discipline or standardized reporting of results. This strict and clear methodical strategy improves the dependability and credibility of the review in addition to lowering selection bias, hence providing a dependable base for combining present data on EFT's behavioral and physiological effects.

## 3. Stress, Inflammation, and Detoxification:

Research on neurobehavioral and integrative health has increasingly focused on the connection between chronic stress, systemic inflammation, compromised detoxification, and dopamine dysregulation. Marked by high cognitive load, emotional suppression, and continual digital interaction, the contemporary lifestyle results in sustained activation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and overstimulation of the mesolimbic dopamine pathway.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, these parallel yet interconnected neuroendocrine systems affect physical resilience or dysfunction, regulating how the body perceives threats, rewards, and stress.

**3.1 Stress and Dysregulation of the HPA Axis:** Psychological stress sets the HPA axis off, therefore triggering a cascade in which the hypothalamus releases corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH), which activates the anterior pituitary to secrete adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH), therefore causing the adrenal cortex to secrete cortisol, the body's main stress hormone. Although cortisol helps short-term stress by raising glucose availability and inhibiting non-essential bodily activities, chronic hypercortisolemia turns pathological. Prolonged cortisol exposure results in a pro-inflammatory state characterized by elevated cytokines such as tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF- $\alpha$ ) and interleukin-6 (IL-6) as well as immune suppression and compromised neuroplasticity.<sup>7,8</sup> Overactivation of the HPA axis also upsets neurotransmitter equilibrium, including dopamine signaling,

which is essential to motivation, learning, and behavioral reward. Compulsive behaviors, burnout, anxiety, and substance use disorders<sup>5</sup> are increasingly linked with this neurochemical imbalance. Under this heading, the notion of dopamine detox that is, a behavioral and neurochemical reset from chronic overstimulation has found support. Downregulation of stress channels that support reward-seeking and impulsivity under pressure is a vital part of this reset.

**3.2 Inflammation, Oxidative Stress, and Impaired Detox:** Sustained pro-inflammatory conditions result from cortisol increases brought on by chronic stress. High cytokine levels aggravate oxidative stress even further characterized by an overproduction of reactive oxygen species (ROS) and a depletion of antioxidant defenses such as glutathione (GSH), superoxide dismutase (SOD), and catalase. Contributing to early cellular aging and vulnerability to chronic diseases, this redox imbalance causes lipid peroxidation, mitochondrial dysfunction, and DNA damage.<sup>12,10</sup> Additionally, oxidative stress and inflammation impede the body's detoxification ability, especially the liver's Phase I and Phase II elimination systems. Enzymatic oxidation (e.g., cytochrome P450 system) in Phase I detoxification transforms lipophilic poisons into intermediate substances, sometimes more reactive and damaging if not rapidly processed. Phase II involves conjugation reactions (e.g., methylation, sulfation, glucuronidation) that make these compounds water-soluble for excretion. Both phases need a strong antioxidant system, especially glutathione, to run. Detoxification becomes inadequate when antioxidant reserves are depleted under chronic stress, which permits the accumulation of toxic metabolites and exacerbates systemic inflammation and neurotoxicity.<sup>1,9</sup>

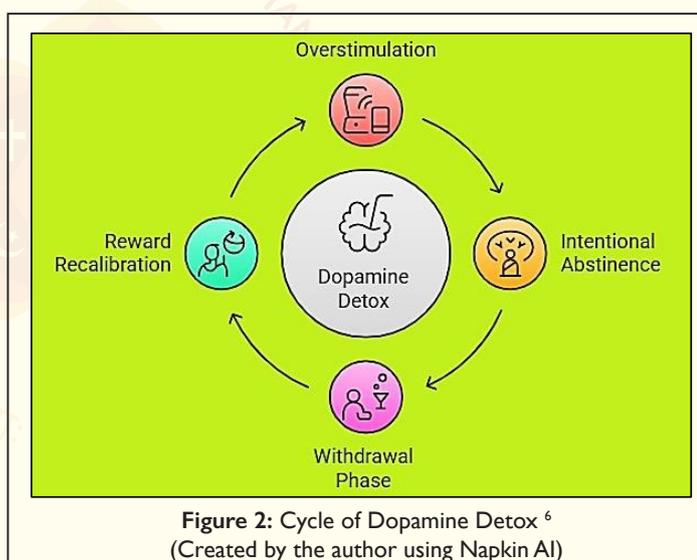
**3.3 Dopamine dysregulation and behavioral exhaustion:** Parallel to the physiological effects of chronic stress is dopamine dysregulation, especially in the mesolimbic reward pathway, involving the ventral tegmental area (VTA) and the nucleus accumbens. Dopamine plays a central role in reinforcing behaviors, attention, pleasure, and motivation. In the context of overstimulation, via excessive digital content, stimulants, or emotional distress, dopamine receptors may become desensitized, leading to a blunted reward response, decreased motivation, and increased compulsive behaviors.<sup>6,11</sup> While necessary for survival-driven behaviors, modern activities like social media use, instant messaging, and video streaming hijack this pathway by offering artificial surges of dopamine.<sup>13</sup> This neurochemical exhaustion promotes psychological symptoms, including anxiety, impulsivity, emotional numbing, and attention dysregulation. Additionally, stress-driven elevations in cortisol and inflammatory cytokines can negatively impact dopaminergic transmission in key brain regions like the prefrontal cortex, undermining emotional regulation and executive function.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, individuals often develop addictive behaviors accompanied by stress, fatigue, and reduced self-efficacy.<sup>14</sup>

Chronic exposure to highly stimulating environments, such as digital overload, addictive substances, or constant stress, can significantly disrupt the brain's reward system. Over time, this leads to reduced sensitivity of dopamine receptors, making it harder to experience pleasure from everyday activities. As a result, individuals often develop hedonic adaptation, requiring increasingly intense stimuli to achieve the same level of satisfaction. This imbalance not only weakens impulse control but also contributes to emotional exhaustion and burnout, impairing overall well-being and mental resilience. Together, this triad of stress-induced HPA dysregulation, inflammatory-oxidative imbalance, and dopamine exhaustion creates a self-perpetuating cycle underlying several chronic conditions, ranging from metabolic syndromes and mood disorders to addictive behaviors. Interventions that can regulate both neurocognitive processes and biochemical pathways will help to address these imbalances. Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) here provide a hopeful neurobehavioral therapy that can break this cycle by lowering stress reactions, regulating dopamine-driven behaviors, and restoring detoxification ability. The following chapters discuss how EFT targets these systems to achieve emotional, physical, and biochemical balance.

This review uses the term “dopamine detox” in an intellectual and behavioral context rather than a strict neurochemical one. It is a process of behavioral recalibration marked by the intentional decrease or momentary abstinence from high-frequency external stimuli like social media, gaming, or other instant-reward actions that are known to engage and perhaps dysregulate the reward system of the brain. Restricting such stimuli helps people to promote an indirect neurochemical recalibration that lets the dopaminergic signaling pathways of the brain regain a more balanced baseline throughout time. Notably, the word emphasizes a behavioral strategy meant to restore dopamine rather than suggesting the physical depletion, removal, or direct detoxification of it. Dopaminergic system’s inherent sensitivity and activity.

#### 4. The Concept of Dopamine Detox

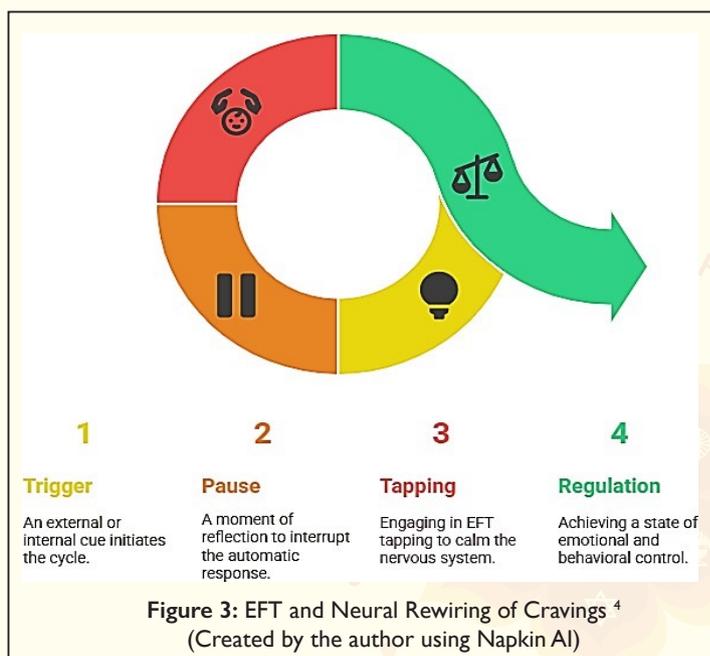
As a means to fight overstimulation and reward system exhaustion, the idea of dopamine detox has become increasingly accepted in behavioral neuroscience and popular psychology. Though the name might suggest otherwise, dopamine detox aims to momentarily lower dopamine-triggering stimuli so that the brain’s reward system can reset and calibrate (Figure 2),<sup>15,6</sup> not to eradicate dopamine, a crucial neurotransmitter involved in motivation, reward anticipation, attention, and motor control. People are bombarded with high-frequency, low-effort sources of dopamine spikes in modern situations by regular interaction with digital devices, social media alerts, ultra-processed foods, caffeine, and on-demand entertainment. This constant exposure to gratifying stimuli causes dopaminergic desensitization, whereby more frequent and more intense stimulation is needed to get the same level of pleasure, a phenomenon akin to tolerance seen in substance use disorders.<sup>5,11</sup>



Dopamine detoxification entails a time of voluntary abstinence from these obsessive sources of pleasure, therefore producing a low-stimulation environment that advances neuroplastic repair, self-reflection, and the development of more balanced behavioral patterns.<sup>16</sup> Usually, people abstain from activities like scrolling through social media, binge-watching content, multitasking with electronic gadgets, taking stimulants like caffeine, or indulging in fast food during a detox phase since each of these stimulates the mesolimbic reward pathway and floods the brain with dopamine. The aim is to restore sensitivity to natural, effort-based rewards such as interpersonal connection, physical activity, focused work, or mindfulness practices.<sup>17</sup> By allowing the brain’s baseline dopamine signaling to normalize, this reset process is thought to boost motivation, impulse control, and general mental clarity. The initial phase of dopamine detox also presents difficulties, though. Many people have withdrawal-like symptoms, including boredom, restlessness, irritability, anxiety, mental fatigue, and strong hunger for immediate gratification.<sup>18</sup> These reactions are linked to both psychological dependence and neurochemical adaptation as the brain briefly fights to adjust to reduced levels of stimulation. Many people revert to obsessive behaviors without sufficient coping mechanisms,

therefore negating the advantages of the detoxification procedure. Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) could be of great help at this phase by combining focused cognitive processing with somatic tapping to control emotional suffering and autonomic excitement. By interacting the amygdala–hippocampus–prefrontal cortex network, EFT has been proven to lower cortisol levels, reduce anxiety, and moderate craving responses, all of which are engaged in both stress regulation and addictive behaviors.<sup>1,4</sup>

Moreover, by helping to promote emotional acceptance and diminish the inclination to escape pain, EFT can alleviate the psychological withdrawal symptoms linked with dopamine detox, therefore



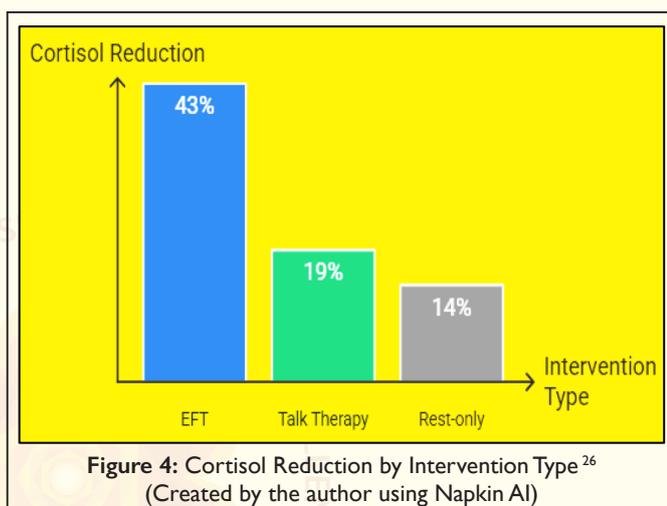
enabling people to stay committed to better behavioral change and long-term neurochemical stability.<sup>11,9</sup> Hence, dopamine detox is less about suppressing behaviors and more about strategic self-regulation. By means of planned behavioral abstinence and careful reintegration of natural rewards, the dopaminergic pathways in the brain can recover their sensitivity and effectiveness. Integrating evidence-based therapies like EFT during this period may also encourage permanent rewiring of bad reward-seeking channels, therefore sustaining a more balanced and emotionally healthy lifestyle.

## 5. Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT): Overview

Combining concepts from cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and somatic acupressure stimulation, emotional freedom techniques (EFT) provide a dual-modality approach aimed at both the psychological and physical components of emotional dysregulation. Starting with the individual recognizing a painful emotion, craving, or traumatic memory and measuring its subjective intensity on a numeric scale (usually 0 to 10). Following this is the crafting of a “setup statement,” which acknowledges the problem yet affirms self-acceptance, frequently phrased as, “Even if I feel anxious, I thoroughly accept myself.” While the person concentrates on the painful emotion, they concurrently tap on nine acupressure points reflecting major meridians employed in traditional Chinese medicine, points on the face, hands, and upper torso.<sup>1,4</sup> Often, within a few rounds, this tapping sequence is repeated until the reported distress level drops dramatically. Neurophysiological studies imply that this structured engagement with both emotional cognition and tactile input helps the amygdala, hippocampus, and medial prefrontal cortex, brain regions central to threat detection, emotional memory, and executive control, regulate. Hyperactivation of the amygdala is often noted in anxiety, PTSD, and addiction-related disorders; it is mostly involved in triggering the fight-or-flight response.<sup>19</sup> Through EFT, reactivation of the emotional memory trace in a secure environment, combined with calming tactile stimuli, seems to promote emotional reconsolidation and desensitization, therefore allowing for the formation of fresh neuronal connections. Functional MRI and EEG investigations have validated this mechanism by demonstrating discernible changes in brain wave activity and lower limbic activation following EFT sessions (Figure 3).<sup>4,20</sup> Targeting both cognitive reappraisal and autonomic modulation, EFT positions itself as a potential instrument for fast emotional relief, particularly helpful during times of stress, withdrawal, or dopamine detox, when emotional response and appetites are increased.<sup>20</sup>

## 6. EFT in Stress Reduction and Cortisol Modulation

Among the most thoroughly confirmed physiological effects of Emotional Freedom Techniques is their ability to greatly lower cortisol, the body's main glucocorticoid hormone engaged in the stress response. Central in mobilizing energy, controlling inflammation, and modulating focus and arousal, cortisol, released by the adrenal cortex in response to hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis activation, helps to accomplish this. But when cortisol is chronically raised, especially by weakening the regulating activities of the prefrontal cortex and enhancing limbic system reactivity,<sup>7,8</sup> it causes immune suppression, cognitive impairment, and neurochemical imbalance. These effects are strongly related to dysregulation in dopaminergic pathways, where high cortisol lowers dopamine receptor sensitivity and executive control, hence increasing reward-seeking behavior and emotional impulsivity.<sup>5,6</sup> In a single session, EFT may reduce salivary cortisol levels by up to 43%, surpassing both talk therapy and rest-only control groups, which displayed a maximum reduction of 14%, according to a landmark randomized controlled study by Church *et al.*<sup>21</sup> (Figure 4). Along with this quick drop in cortisol came notable improvements in subjective ratings of anxiety, mood, and emotional control. With a shift from sympathetic dominance (fight-or-flight) to parasympathetic recovery (rest-and-digest), such cortisol reductions reflect a rebalancing of the autonomic nervous system, a critical change for reversing the biochemical damage caused by chronic stress. These findings have since been duplicated in several clinical groups, including patients with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), fibromyalgia, and work-related stress.<sup>9,22</sup>



Crucially, by calming the physiological stress reaction of the body, EFT helps more adaptive reward processing, boosts impulse control, and raises the capacity to interact with natural, effort-based rewards, which are crucial for restoring dopaminergic sensitivity. EFT also supports more adaptive reward processing, enhances impulse control, and helps to reduce amygdala hyperactivation, which are necessary for normalizing cortisol levels, and so directly matches the aims of dopamine detoxification. Hence, EFT helps to control both stress physiology and reward circuitry, making it an especially appropriate instrument for people going through dopamine detox, therefore acting not just as a psychological treatment but also as a biochemical modulator.

## 7. EFT for Cravings, Emotional Triggers, and Habits

Research shows that Emotional Freedom Techniques can effectively reduce food cravings, cigarette addiction, and compulsive behaviors. EFT helps address cravings, emotional reactions, and obsessive actions linked to poor reward processing and emotional self-control. Growing clinical studies show that EFT can greatly lower the intensity and frequency of food cravings, nicotine dependence, and emotion-driven behavioral patterns.<sup>29,23</sup> In the early phases of dopamine detoxification, a time defined by increased vulnerability to withdrawal symptoms like restlessness, irritability, impulsivity, and emotional suffering, these advantages are especially pertinent. Cravings are sometimes learned responses to emotional or environmental cues, not only chemical impulses. Boredom, stress, or fatigue, for instance, can activate limbic system structures such as the amygdala and insula, which link negative affect with regular behaviors aimed at quick reward.<sup>6</sup> By simultaneously stimulating acupressure points and engaging the prefrontal cortex via conscious cognitive processing, EFT breaks

this neurobehavioral cycle. This mix helps people become more conscious of the hunger cue, lower the emotional intensity connected with it, and decouple the automatic cue-response connection that normally motivates obsessive behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Clinical studies have shown that even short EFT treatments can lead to notable decreases in emotional eating, craving strength, and substance use impulses. For example, Stapleton et al.<sup>24</sup> found that patients who received EFT for food cravings showed major decreases in both the strength and frequency of cravings as well as improved dietary restraint and lowered emotional eating, effects that were sustained at six-month follow-up. Effective reductions in cigarette use and desire intensity using EFT-based interventions were observed, underlining its potential as a non-pharmacological support tool in habit cessation and addiction recovery. Significantly, EFT also improves emotional tolerance, the capacity to stay present with unpleasant internal states like boredom, worry, or resentment without turning to regular escape actions. EFT calms the autonomic nervous system and supports emotional control, therefore forming a buffer between impulse and action and allowing the person room and time to select more helpful responses. This is especially critical during the early stages of dopamine detoxification when the brain's reward pathways are resetting and people are most vulnerable to falling back into quick pleasure activities. Especially when incorporated into more general wellness regimens or behavioral therapies, repeated EFT use over time can promote habit change, increased behavioral flexibility, and long-term dopaminergic equilibrium.<sup>23</sup>

### 8. Reconditioning the Brain's Reward System with EFT

Every time EFT is practiced during a craving or stress response, it introduces a new sensory-cognitive feedback loop over time, which can change neurobehavioral patterns. Instead of automatically responding to the craving or emotional urge, whether it's reaching for a phone, a snack, or a cigarette, the person is urged to stop, recognize the emotional state, and engage in the tapping series while keeping conscious awareness of the inside experience. This purposeful disturbance of the conditioned response lets the amygdala-centered stress circuits be bypassed, hence giving the prefrontal cortex time to engage and exert regulatory control.<sup>1,4</sup> Through repeatedly substituting deliberate self-regulation for impulsive actions, EFT breaks automatic cue-response loops usually strengthened in dopamine-driven addictions. This repetition produces a fresh associative connection in the brain between emotional triggers and self-soothing rather than instant pleasure over time. Based on the idea of neuroplasticity, where repeated emotional events and behavioral choices may change synaptic connections and rewire established responses,<sup>25,26</sup> this mechanism is grounded. Even when confronted with previously dysregulating stimuli, tapping's calming somatosensory input strengthens a parasympathetic condition and improves feelings of agency, serenity, and emotional clarity. As this new neural route becomes more established, people start to link emotional activation with safety and self-regulation rather than with impulsivity or escape. This change is very important for maintaining the benefits of dopamine detox,

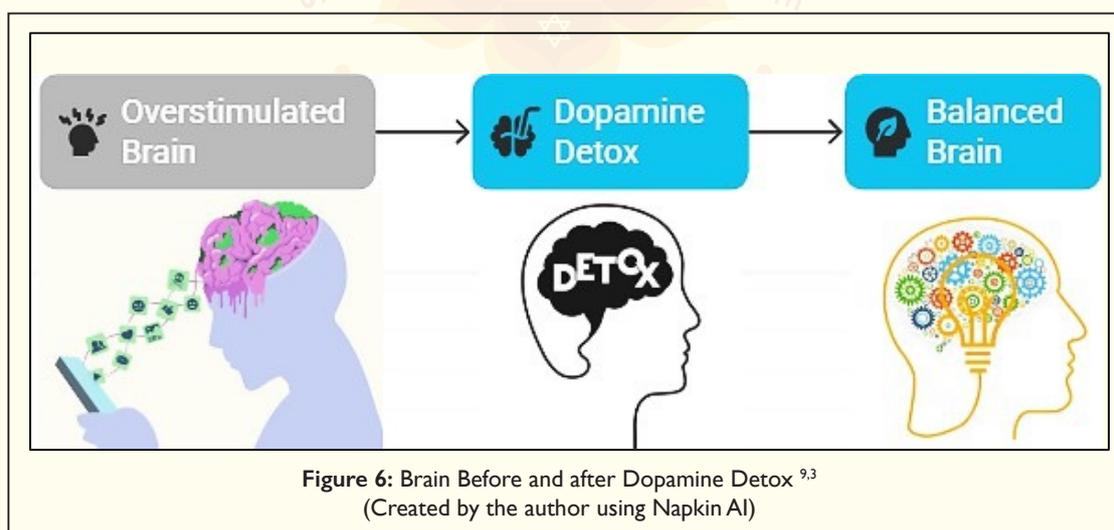
Characteristic	EFT Tapping
 <b>Brain Target</b>	Amygdala (↓)
 <b>Emotional Effect</b>	Hippocampus (↔)
 <b>Cognitive Effect</b>	Prefrontal Cortex (↑)
 <b>Overall Effect</b>	Calms fight/flight
 <b>Outcome</b>	Emotional regulation
 <b>Benefit</b>	Reduced stress

Figure 5: Neurophysiological Effects of EFT on Stress Regulation <sup>25</sup>  
(Created by the author using Napkin AI)

whereby sustained success depends not only on temporary abstinence from strong dopamine stimuli but also on developing continuous emotional resilience and behavioral flexibility. EFT helps this internal transformation, therefore becoming more than just a tool for stress reduction; it becomes a neurobehavioral training tool matching the mind and body towards deliberate, health-promoting responses. Thus, EFT supports **long-term neuroplastic changes** needed for sustained dopamine detox success (Figure 5).<sup>25</sup>

### 9. Integrative Benefits of EFT in Dopamine Detox

Though theoretically straightforward, dopamine detox offers several physical and mental obstacles that frequently prevent consistent behavioral change. When people refrain from high-dopamine stimuli such as digital gadgets, processed foods, or instant entertainment, they typically experience a range of withdrawal-like symptoms, including anxiety, cravings, restlessness, emotional flatness, and disturbed sleep. By activating both the cognitive-emotional centers and somatosensory regulatory pathways, Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) provides multidimensional support throughout the detoxification process. Anxiety and restlessness, which result from limbic hyperactivation as well as the abrupt cessation of regular sources of stimulation, are among the most immediate obstacles during dopamine detox. Along with its proven capacity to drastically reduce cortisol levels, EFT's calming impact on the amygdala and autonomic nervous system helps to swiftly lower physiological arousal and emotional turmoil.<sup>21,10</sup> EFT also interferes with the cue-response cycle during episodes of craving or compulsive urges by bringing structured meridian tapping, which gives other sensory information as the brain reprocesses the emotional driver behind the urge. Building tolerance to delayed pleasure, a major objective in dopamine detox,<sup>9,19</sup> and rewiring the dopaminergic reward system are helped by this process.



People in the digital age are more and more likely to have an overstimulated brain as they are constantly exposed to high-reward incentives, including social media, online gaming, and ongoing digital contacts. This overstimulation interferes with the brain's normal reward systems, resulting in emotional dysregulation, impulsivity, attention deficits, and behavioral addictions.<sup>6,27</sup> The practice of dopamine detox has become popular as a behavioral therapy intended to lower overstimulating inputs and let the brain's reward system recalibrate<sup>15</sup> in response to this neurochemical overload.

By brief abstinence from high-dopamine activities, people may reset their neural thresholds and start to enjoy joy from simpler, more natural stimuli. One of the most often seen symptoms of dopamine detoxification, though, is emotional indifference or numbness brought on by decreased sensitivity to natural rewards. Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) are especially helpful at this point; they help people to sit with unpleasant inner feelings without using distraction or aversion, therefore building emotional resilience and presence.<sup>1</sup>

Over time, this practice enhances emotional granularity, allowing for a richer, more nuanced emotional experience and encouraging engagement with subtler, more sustainable sources of joy. In the context of digital withdrawal often marked by irritability, anxiety, and reduced concentration, EFT promotes parasympathetic nervous system dominance, which helps shift the brain from hyperarousal towards a calm, regulated state.<sup>20</sup> The disruption of sleep cycles brought on by disparities in cortisol, melatonin, and autonomous regulation is another difficulty during dopamine detox. Through these mechanisms, EFT supports the transition from an overstimulated brain to a balanced brain (Figure 6), not only by addressing psychological symptoms but also by aiding neurobiological homeostasis. Therefore, it offers an integrative, mind-body approach to navigating the complex process of dopamine detox and long-term cognitive-emotional recovery.<sup>9</sup>

While EFT is generally considered safe and non-invasive, certain constraints exist. These include variability in practitioner expertise, inconsistent adherence in self-guided use, and the possibility of transient emotional discomfort during exposure to distressing memories. EFT should be used with caution in individuals with severe psychiatric disorders and ideally under professional supervision. Despite promising evidence, a key limitation is the lack of longitudinal neuroimaging and neurochemical biomarker studies to directly assess dopaminergic and cortisol regulation during and after EFT-assisted dopamine detox. Future research should integrate functional MRI, PET, and biochemical assays to provide objective evidence of these mechanisms. Variability in EFT delivery and heavy reliance on self-reported outcomes also highlight the need for standardized protocols and controlled multi-center trials.

## 10. Limitations and Future Directions

Although the current evidence supporting Emotional Freedom Techniques as a method for stress reduction, desire control, and emotional control is strong, several restrictions and research gaps need further study. Most studies so far have concentrated on short-term results or separate treatments, usually using healthy adult populations with little diversity in age, ethnicity, medical history, or environmental exposure.<sup>4</sup> This limits the overall generalizability of results to actual environments where chronic stress, trauma, and behavioral addiction co-exist among larger demographic groups. Future research should aim to include more varied populations, including teenagers, older adults, people with comorbid psychiatric or neurodevelopmental conditions, and those exposed to high-risk digital surroundings.<sup>22,3</sup>

Few empirical investigations have directly assessed neurochemical or structural brain alterations following constant EFT application, even though narrative and clinical evidence indicate that EFT helps dopamine detoxification. Functional MRI (fMRI) and electroencephalography (EEG) could provide insightful knowledge on how EFT affects reward circuits, emotional regulation networks, and prefrontal-limbic connectivity over time. Furthermore, to determine the most successful and long-lasting behavioral approaches, EFT-supported phasic detoxification treatments

where people progressively decrease dopamine-reinforcing activities should be compared with cold-turkey abstinence models. Finally, the best timing and order of EFT inside dopamine detox regimens is still underappreciated. Researching whether EFT is most effectively used during the anticipatory phase, during peak withdrawal, or as a maintenance tool post-detox could greatly improve implementation fidelity and result reliability. Refining and thoroughly testing EFT as a scalable, evidence-based treatment is a crucial first step toward integrated behavioral health and customized neurotherapeutic care as digital overstimulation and obsessive behavior keep increasing worldwide.<sup>5,11</sup>

## 11. Conclusion

The notion of dopamine detox has become increasingly popular in today's overstimulated and digitally saturated world as a behavioral reset strategy to restore neurochemical equilibrium, increase mental clarity, and regain control over compulsive behaviors. Though the idea of refraining from immediate-reward activities such as scrolling, binge eating, or multitasking seems simple, the detoxification process sometimes involves emotional discomfort, including anxiety, irritability, cravings, weariness, and sleep problems. These reactions go beyond just mental ones; they point to underlying neuroendocrine imbalances, including the HPA axis, limbic system, and dopaminergic signaling pathways. Hence, dopamine detox success relies not only on avoidance but also on the individual's ability to self-regulate, handle emotional strain, and promote constructive coping mechanisms during the reset phase.

Emotional Freedom Techniques offer a strong and easily available response to this issue. EFT is a non-invasive, evidence-based technique combining cognitive reappraisal with acupressure stimulation that has been found to dramatically reduce cortisol, reduce limbic hyperactivation, and rewire bad cue-response links. These consequences are especially pertinent during dopamine detox, when emotional dysregulation and impulsive actions are most visible. EFT helps people to stay present with their pain rather than retreating into temporary enjoyments by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, increasing emotional resilience, and enhancing neuroplasticity. This helps over time to develop new neural paths linking emotional triggers with calm, agency, and deliberate action, instead of compulsivity. Furthermore, EFT's usefulness reaches beyond quick symptom alleviation. With its ability to adjust across several populations and environments and its impact on inflammation and stress markers, it is a useful complement in integrative health programs geared at emotional well-being, detoxifying, and behavioral change. Incorporating EFT can improve both the effectiveness and sustainability of such treatments as dopamine detox grows more pertinent in clinical, educational, and occupational well-being areas. With little obstacles to adoption and expanding empirical evidence, EFT has the potential to bridge the gap between emotional control and neurobehavioral recovery, therefore providing a whole approach to thrive in a high-stimulus setting.

**Author Contribution:** The entire article was conceptualized and written by the author.

**Supplementary Materials:** None

**Funding:** None

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable

**Acknowledgements:** I thank the reviewers for their constructive comments and critical reading, which helped improve the manuscript.

**Conflicts of Interest:** None.

## References

1. Feinstein, D. Acupoint stimulation in treating psychological disorders: Evidence of efficacy. *Rev. Gen. Psychol.* 2012, 16, 364–380.
2. Volkow, N.D.; Wang, G.J.; Fowler, J.S.; Tomasi, D. Addiction circuitry in the human brain. *Annu. Rev. Pharmacol. Toxicol.* 2012, 52, 321–336.
3. Rajeshwari, U. Emotional Freedom Techniques: A pathway to stress relief and body detox. *J. Neonatal Surg.* 2025, 14, 2953–2959.
4. Church, D.; Stapleton, P.; Vasudevan, A.; Gallo, F. Is tapping on acupoints an active ingredient in Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)? A review and meta-analysis of comparative studies. *J. Nerv. Ment. Dis.* 2018, 206, 783–793.
5. Lembke, A. *Dopamine Nation: Finding Balance in the Age of Indulgence*; Dutton: New York, NY, USA, 2021.
6. Volkow, N.D.; Koob, G.F.; McLellan, A.T. Neurobiologic advances from the brain disease model of addiction. *N. Engl. J. Med.* 2022, 386, 363–371.
7. Kelly, J.R.; Minuto, C.; Cryan, J.F.; Clarke, G.; Dinan, T.G. Cross talk: The microbiota and neurodevelopmental disorders. *Front. Neurosci.* 2017, 11, 490.
8. McEwen, B.S.; Akil, H. Revisiting the stress concept: Implications for affective disorders. *J. Neurosci.* 2020, 40, 12–21.
9. Stapleton, P.; Sheldon, T.; Porter, B.; Whitty, J. A randomized trial of EFT for food cravings: The impact on subjective and physiological responses. *J. Clin. Psychol.* 2016, 72, 894–906.
10. Maharaj, M.E.; Stapleton, P.; Church, D. Psychophysiological and biochemical responses to Emotional Freedom Techniques: A scoping review. *Complement. Ther. Clin. Pract.* 2022, 47,

101548.

11. Wang, Y.; Wang, Y.; Wang, W. Dopamine and the digital age: Reward system overload and its consequences. *Front. Hum. Neurosci.* 2023, 17, 109211.
12. Pham-Huy, L.A.; He, H.; Pham-Huy, C. Free radicals, antioxidants in disease and health. *Int. J. Biomed. Sci.* 2008, 4, 89–96.
13. Kuss, D.J.; Griffiths, M.D. Social networking sites and addiction: Ten lessons learned. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2017, 12, 1286–1306.
14. Robinson, T.E.; Berridge, K.C. The incentive sensitization theory of addiction: Some current issues. *Philos. Trans. R. Soc. B Biol. Sci.* 2008, 363, 3137–3146.
15. Sahakian, B.J.; Bruhl, A.B.; Cook, J.; Killcross, S.; Savulich, G.; Jilka, S.R. Impulsivity and compulsivity in disorders of addiction. *Curr. Opin. Behav. Sci.* 2018, 22, 24–31.
16. Winkielman, P.; Niedenthal, P.; Wielgosz, J.; Eelen, J.; Kavanagh, L.C. Embodiment of cognition and emotion. In *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Psychology*; Reisberg, D., Ed.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2018; pp. 539–559.
17. Berridge, K.C.; Robinson, T.E. Liking, wanting, and the incentive-sensitization theory of addiction. *Am. Psychol.* 2016, 71, 670–679.
18. Hofmann, S.G.; Fang, A.; Brager, D.N. Effect of self-administered emotional freedom techniques (EFT) on stress, anxiety, and burnout in nurses: A randomized controlled trial. *J. Nerv. Ment. Dis.* 2020, 208, 438–444.
19. Stapleton, P.; Buchan, C.; Mitchell, I. Evaluating Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) treatment for reducing PTSD symptoms in veterans: A randomized controlled trial. *J. Evid. Based Integr. Med.* 2019, 24, 1–11.
20. Swingle, P.G. *Biofeedback for the Brain: How Neurotherapy Effectively Treats Depression, ADHD, Autism, and More*; Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, NJ, USA, 2020.
21. Church, D.; Yount, G.; Brooks, A. The effect of Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) on stress biochemistry: A randomized controlled trial. *J. Nerv. Ment. Dis.* 2012, 200, 891–896.
22. Bach, D.; et al. Clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) improves multiple physiological markers of health. *J. Evid. Based Integr. Med.* 2019, 24, 1–12.
23. Baker, S.; Siegel, L. Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) reduces intense food cravings: A randomized controlled trial. *Energy Psychol.* 2010, 2, 27–40.
24. Stapleton, P.; Sheldon, T.; Porter, B.; Whitty, J. A randomized clinical trial of a meridian-based intervention for food cravings with six-month follow-up. *Behav. Change* 2011, 28, 1–16.
25. Dispenza, J. *Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself: How to Lose Your Mind and Create a New One*; Hay House: Carlsbad, CA, USA, 2014; pp. 1–56.

26. Davidson, R.J.; McEwen, B.S. Social influences on neuroplasticity: Stress and interventions to promote well-being. *Nat. Neurosci.* 2012, 15, 689–695.
27. Dunckley, V.L. *Reset Your Child's Brain: A Four-Week Plan to End Meltdowns, Raise Grades, and Boost Social Skills by Reversing the Effects of Electronic Screen-Time*; New World Library: Novato, CA, USA, 2015; pp. 9–12.

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of SSSUHE and/or the editor(s). SSSUHE and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.





