

Conscious EFT™ : the Cucumber Technique

(see also the accompanying video called Cucumber Technique)

by Nancy Forrester

Last week I wanted to support a friend going through a challenging time and I texted them to ask how they were doing. My friend wrote back saying that they'd had a meltdown the previous night over cutting cucumbers for pickles.

My response? "Bless those cucumbers for showing up. They are such loving vegetables."

What 'cucumber moment' have you experienced? Moments where the intensity of your body's response to what's happening makes no logical sense. My friend has chopped cucumbers many many times. It wasn't about the cucumbers.

I remember a cuke moment of my own. Not actually a cucumber moment, it was a sandpaper moment. Twenty-five years ago, I was going through separation and divorce after a 24-year marriage. But of course, I considered myself a highly evolved person (I'm in recovery from that) and so was functionally doing everything that needed to be done around ending that significant relationship. Everything that is other than allowing space to feel my feelings. I was printing out yet another draft of the separation agreement when the printer said it needed more ink. In my efforts to be able to afford the legal fees I was using refillable ink cartridges, black. Yes, I spilled it all over my fingers and hands. Very calmly I went about removing the ink with soap and water. Of course, it didn't come off. Then I tried a nail file. Nope. Finally sandpaper, really gritty harsh sandpaper. As I was sitting on the lid of the toilet literally scrapping off my fingerprints, I finally had the meltdown. I cursed, I screamed, I sobbed. And even though there was still significant black on my hands, I felt better!

That's what my friend said too, "I had to throw a few things around and go for a walk but then all was good and I felt better."

Such moments are a part of being a human being. We all tend to freeze the intensity of our emotional responses during challenging times. It's a survival strategy. Our brilliant nervous system knows how much intensity we can handle and cleverly stores the excess until we're ready. And it's natural that the emotional intensity comes when we're distracted with tasks that aren't related to the challenging situations we're in, or when the challenging situation has come to some resolution, and now we're ready to more safely process the emotional content of the situation.

It's also true that the body often takes more time to process information than the mind does. Often we understand our situation at an intellectual level, but truly getting it at an embodied level requires deeper cellular processing.

So, what is the 'Cucumber Technique'? Well its always about love and acceptance of who we are and what is happening in the moment. For my friend it was following their body's impulse to throw things around and walking. For me it was giving myself permission to scream and sob. (Of course, all of these impulses are followed in a safe way. That's why I was in the bathroom with the water running – hoping my 6-year-old wouldn't hear! He did, and we've had some great conversations about it over the years.) When the impulse is present and we're giving it a safe expression there is little need for tapping. The energy is flowing and the body is doing what it knows to do to be safe.

Where Conscious EFT™ is helpful is before and after the cucumber moment. Before the safe expression occurs, we may be aware that we are in a stressful time and even that we are storing some emotional stress. Well that's what we love and accept. 'Even though I suspect that I'm not fully experiencing the full extent of my feelings around this, I love and accept myself as I am in this moment.' Perhaps we can bring self-compassion to the tapping. 'Even though perhaps I'm not fully experiencing all the emotional intensity of this situation, I understand why that might be and I accept the wisdom of my journey through this experience.'

After the expression of the intensity, very often we have aspects of shame that arise due to cultural conditioning about 'staying in control'. Perhaps we judge ourselves based on old learning that we are 'too sensitive'. Perhaps some guilt about how the intensity of our expression may have impacted others – like mine around my son learning that his mother knew some language that she had not previously shared with him! 'Even though I'm having the thought that I'm too sensitive, I love and accept who I am as a human being.' Personally, this is where I bring in the self-compassion of forgiveness. 'Even though I'm ashamed that my son overheard me swear, I hold myself in forgiveness and accept my humanness.'

Cucumbers and sandpaper really are to be blessed. Almost like they are gifts sent from a loving universe to help us release stored stress that isn't helpful anymore. And one more blessing is the impact of sharing these moments with trusted people. What a gift from my friend to share their cucumber status report with me. We had delightful texting back and forth including how we have added 'cucumber moment' to our shared vocabulary. Now it's part of our unique language; and having a unique language means we share a neural association that we can light up just by talking about cucumbers. And that strengthens the social engagement part of our vagus nerve, deepening the connection between us. A blessing.

Bless the cucumbers. Bless the sandpaper. Bless us all.