

A Patterdale Terrier's Guide To Stress Relief

Andy

*Always meditate on whatever causes resentment
- Tibetan Buddhist training guideline*

We have a small dog called Sally, a Patterdale Terrier, she is agreeable, affectionate, determined and at times incredibly annoying. Dealing with her has been the inspiration for this simple technique that allows you to use EFT to soothe your reactions to disagreeable situations, people and dogs!

Sally is a good dog in the house, fond of lying in whatever sun comes through the window and cuddling up to you on the sofa, but when it is time for her to go for a walk a Jeekyll and Hyde transformation takes place. She gets very excited and impatient, almost hysterical. When I leave the house with her there is almost always a chorus of barking, squealing and squawking as she does an excellent, loud, impression of a squealing pig!

Passers by look at me as if I am torturing her rather than taking her for a walk. I shrug apologetically and follow the apparently deranged dog the 100 yards to the point at which she can read and respond to her "pee-mails" then she calms down.

I'm usually pretty calm with people and animals but after a while even my patience was wearing a little thin. One morning while preparing to leave, and Sally was revving up for her performance, I thought that I need to do a little bit of tapping for myself to calm down. I stood in the porch, a very tall man looking down at very short dog, and did some tapping. All the while she looked at me with a "What is the crazy human doing now" look on her face.

After a few minutes of tapping I opened the door and we stepped out. It hadn't made any difference she was still yapping away like a demon.

On the quiet part of the walk I had an idea. What if I make a list of all the things that aggravated me about her behaviour and tapped on those issues?

When we got home and Sally had been fed I sat down with a piece of paper, wrote on the top of the page "Sally is ..." then made a list of all the ways I could finish that sentence. It was quite an extensive list. When I had finished I went through the list reading each statement aloud giving it a score between 0-10 for how intense my reaction to the statement was. The higher the score the greater the level of aggravation.

This is what I wrote:

Sally is ...

- hysterical (9)
- annoying (8)
- anxious (7)



- scared (8)
- noisy (8)
- greedy (6)
- underfoot (8)
- clingy (8)
- jealous (8)
- insecure (7)

Having written the list I tapped out each statement using the following kind of set-up and reminder phrases:

Set-up phrase: *“Even though Sally is hysterical I accept myself and how I feel”* – Reminder phrase *“Sally is hysterical”*

I tapped until there was no score on each phrase in turn. I found myself feeling much less ill will to Sally as a result.

The next day I made ready for the walk wondering whether the tapping had made any difference in Sally’s behaviour. It made some difference in her behaviour but it made a huge difference to my response to what she was doing. I just accepted the situation and got on with it. She was going to do what she was going to do and I wasn’t nearly so bothered about it. Sally must have picked up on my new mood because she was a little less noisy than usual. Since dogs are good barometers of their owner’s moods I think she had picked up on my relaxation and was relaxing accordingly herself.

I’ve since tried this process out as a way of working with our reactions to difficult people or situations. It’s quite a simple way to unpack a complex set of reactions into tappable issues. All you need is a piece of paper and a pen.

1. Write down the situation at the top of the page in the following format “... is ...”. E.g.. My boss is ..., my husband is ..., the meeting is ..., my job is ..., Alice is ..., George is ..., whatever word best sums up the difficulty
2. Complete the sentence as many times as you can, working down the page as you go. E.g..
 1. *My boss is angry*
 2. *My boss blames me*
 3. *My boss gives me a hard time*
 4. *My boss is power crazy*
 5. ...
3. When you have completed your list read each statement out loud and give it a score between 0-10 of intensity.
4. Start with the most intense statement and begin to tap using *“Even though X I accept myself and how I feel”* and *“X”* as the reminder phrase. Where X is the item on the list. E.g.. *“Sally is greedy”, “My boss blames me”*
5. Keep tapping until the statement is neutralised.
6. Work your way through the rest of the list.
7. When you have finished think about the person or situation and estimate its effect now
8. If anything else arises take care of that also.

Important: When I say ‘Sally is annoying’ it looks like I am making a statement about her behaviour, but in reality I am describing my reaction to what she does. The statement should read “Sally does something and I am annoyed” and is that annoyance that we are tapping on. In each case we are tapping on our reaction to the situation, the other person, or whatever is provoking that reaction. When I tapped out “Even though Sally is annoying, I accept myself and how I feel” it is the feeling response that Sally’s behaviour elicits in me that is being reduced.

Just in case you think this is a light weight technique for dealing with difficult dogs. It can be extremely effective for a whole range of human experiences.

I was using this a few days ago at a Cancer Support Group Meeting when we were working with challenging situations for cancer patients (there are a lot to choose from).

One lady was worried about her next chemotherapy session. I asked her to complete the sentence "Chemotherapy is ...", she came up with

Chemotherapy is ...

- saving my life
- unpleasant some of the time
- taking control of my life

Then we went through each item on the list. When she said "Chemotherapy is taking control of my life" she started to get visibly upset. It was obviously a very charged statement for her. We spent some time tapping using "*chemotherapy is taking control of my life*" as the tapping phrase, until the feeling subsided.

At the end of several rounds of tapping she was settled and saying the words had no effect, they were just a bunch of words. Of course her situation is the same, she still has to face the next chemotherapy session but she can do it without having the thoughts and feelings of "chemotherapy is taking over my life" rattling around inside her causing extra unnecessary distress.

The next time you find yourself being upset by a situation, person or small dog you might like to get a piece of paper, make a list, do some tapping and enjoy some emotional freedom.