

THE TRAUMATIC BIRTH EXPERIENCE: A FATHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Many people are unaware that fathers may be affected by a traumatic birth experience, just as mothers are. We have little to no data on the numbers of men that may be affected, as the research is very slow in coming. This issue is only recently coming into greater awareness.

Most often, the fathers I have met who were struggling with trauma from a child's birth came to me in my childbirth classes, anxious and unnerved but still gamely trying to prepare for the next birth experience. These men showed symptoms very similar to those of women I'd worked with who experienced birth trauma. But the men typically tried much, much harder to conceal those symptoms.

Sometimes, in special classes for fathers only, men would open up and share their stories. As a facilitator of these classes, I was privileged to hear these men discuss how they had been affected by a partner's traumatic birth. The EFT Set-Up Phrases below are a reflection of some of the things these fathers were feeling.

EFT for Fathers – Traumatic Birth Experience

If you're not familiar with EFT, you can download an EFT Basics handout from my website, http://www.shekinahbirthing.com/files/EFT_BASICCS.pdf. You will find a printable Tapping Points sheet at www.shekinahbirthing.com/files/EFT_Tapping_Points.pdf.

While tapping on the Karate Chop point on either hand, repeat a Set-Up Phrase three times. Then tap one or more rounds through the tapping points while repeating a Reminder Phrase.

Start with a Set-Up Phrase that really resonates with you. Don't be afraid to 'tweak' the wording to make it fit your situation better. It may be worthwhile to tap through each of the statements, even if you don't think they apply. If you find that one or more of the phrases makes you uncomfortable, that's a good clue that something about the phrase is triggering an issue you can clear. Definitely tap on those statements that make you uncomfortable, or that have an emotional charge on them!

Some people like to always finish with a round of EFT using a positive Reminder Phrase. This helps you to "tap in the positive."

SAMPLE PHRASES:

Set-Up: *Even though I feel somehow responsible for the things that happened, I love and accept myself anyway.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I feel responsible for what happened

Round 2: How could I have let that happen?

Set-Up: *Even though I couldn't protect my partner (or baby), I love and accept myself anyway.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I couldn't protect her

Round 2: I couldn't protect the baby

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Set-Up: *Even though I felt helpless and powerless to stop what happened, I love and accept myself anyway.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I felt helpless

Round 2: I couldn't stop what happened

Round 3: I let it happen

Set-Up: *Even though I am angry with myself for all the things I did wrong, I love and accept myself anyway.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I'm angry with myself

Round 2: I should've done something

Round 3: I shouldn't have trusted <someone> (*Replace <someone> with an appropriate name or title*)

Round 4: I should've protected my partner

Round 5: I didn't listen to my intuition

Set-Up: *Even though I feel like less of a man because I didn't protect my partner, I love and accept myself anyway.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I feel like less of a man

Round 2: I'm not a good protector

Round 3: I failed my partner

Round 4: I let my partner down

Set-Up: *Even though I was afraid and exhausted and I didn't know how to help, I love and accept myself anyway.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I was afraid

Round 2: I was exhausted

Round 3: I didn't know how to help

Round 4: That's no excuse and I still should've done something

Set-Up: *Even though I felt completely out of my depth, I still should've done something, and I love and accept myself anyway.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I was out of my depth

Round 2: I didn't know what to do

Round 3: I didn't know who to trust

Round 4: It was a bad situation

Round 5: I did the best I could at the time

Round 6: I know a lot more now than I did then

Set-Up: *Even though I did the best I could at the time and it wasn't enough, I choose to have compassion for my humanness.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I did the best I could at the time

Round 2: It wasn't enough

Round 3: I choose to have compassion for myself

Set-Up: *Even though I feel guilty that I couldn't stop it, I am learning to forgive myself now.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I feel so guilty

Round 2: I couldn't stop it

Round 3: I'm learning to forgive myself now

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Set-Up: *Even though I made some bad decisions, I didn't know then what I know now, and I am beginning to forgive myself.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I made some bad decisions

Round 2: I didn't know what I needed to know

Round 3: I learned from that experience

Round 4: I'm beginning to forgive myself

Set-Up: *Even though I have these images stuck in my head and I can't get rid of them, I love and accept myself anyway.*

Reminders:

Round 1: These images

Round 2: These images stuck in my head

Round 3: I can't get rid of these images

Round 4: I'm releasing these images now

Round 5: I can be free of these images

Round 6: I choose to be free of these images now

Set-Up: *Even though it makes me angry and sad to remember my baby's birth, I forgive myself.*

Reminders:

Round 1: This anger about my baby's birth

Round 2: This sadness about my baby's birth

Round 3: I can't let go of this anger and sadness

Round 4: I forgive myself

Round 5: I choose to remember the good parts more now

Set-Up: *Even though I can't imagine ever going through that again, so I need to keep this anger and sadness ever-present to remind me, I love and accept myself anyway.*

Reminders:

Round 1: Never again

Round 2: I need to keep this anger and sadness

Round 3: I need this anger and sadness

Round 4: I learned a lot of hard lessons

Round 5: I'm older and wiser now

Round 6: I can release the bad parts and keep the wisdom

Set-Up: *Even though I thought I would never get over this, I choose to forgive myself and begin to heal now.*

Reminders:

Round 1: I thought I'd never get over this

Round 2: I choose to forgive myself

Round 3: I did the best I could at the time

Round 4: I choose to heal now

There is some progression to the phrases, as you can see. Even if the phrases really disturb you, try them. You deserve to feel better, just as your partner deserves to heal. You can better support her if you allow yourself to process your emotions too.

You can learn more about EFT from the World Center for EFT website, www.emofree.com, and from Shekinah Birthing Co.'s website, www.shekinahbirthing.com.