

# Tapped In

*Innovative process helping golfers improve their game*

By Ron Matejko

If you are on the golf course and see a fellow golfer seemingly beating themselves about the head, don't worry. They aren't punishing themselves for missing a short putt. In fact, they may be performing a cutting edge process that helps make sure they sink more of the short putts that drive us crazy when they lip out or stop just shy of the cup.

The process is called Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), or tapping. The process involves using your fingertips to tap firmly on eight strategic acupuncture points, which cause a physiological response that releases mental, emotional, physical and mechanical blocks from the cells of your body.

Gary Craig, a Stanford graduate in electrical engineering, developed EFT in 1995 but Scottsdale resident Stacey Vornbrock has taken it one step further. The former psychotherapist pioneered the use of tapping to help athletes clear these blocks to improve their performance. Vornbrock works with amateur, pro and elite athletes in all sports but has worked most with golfers, who are renowned for habitually torturing themselves during the elusive pursuit of the perfect round.

"The largest issue with golfers is anxiety," Vornbrock said. "Golfers have a tendency to not stay in the present moment and just play one

hole at a time. They are usually calculating what will happen if they birdie the next hole."

The scientific explanation of the process is that when we experience an emotion, it is caused by a chemical response our body has to an event. The hypothalamus in the brain releases chemicals that dock on to cell receptor sites. If those chemicals are not processed out naturally through exercise, talking about the event or dreaming, then the chemicals fill the cell receptor and we process the emotion. If the cell receptors are filled with the chemicals, they are kept from taking in the proteins and minerals they need to keep the body balanced. Tapping is intended to be used as an alternative method for clearing out those chemicals if it isn't done naturally.

"The best part of this procedure is you don't have to believe in it and it will still work because it is a chemical process," said Vornbrock. "Since it is a physiological effect, you could think tapping is the dumbest thing ever and it is still going to work."

Vornbrock says tapping can trigger immediate mechanical improvements by clearing the blockages caused by stress following a bad tournament, a bad day or a bad shot. Tapping can also be used to address the dreaded yips (an involuntary movement during putting or chipping). According to a study

released by the Mayo Clinic in 2005, up to 45 percent of all golfers have experienced the yips. The study revealed that one of the key reasons for the yips is anxiety, which, while not directly supporting the effects of tapping, ties in to the theory of how tapping can improve a golfer's performance.

"In many golfers, the yips may be a task-specific disorder in which the act of putting or swinging the golf club results in a twitch, posturing or shake that disrupts the movement," says Charles Adler, M.D., Ph.D., a neurologist at Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale. "As with other forms of focal dystonia (medical term for yips), anxiety and stress may make this symptom worse."



Stacey Vornbrock of Scottsdale has pioneered the use of "tapping" to improve sports performance. Photo by Norm Hall shot at The Raven Golf Club at South Mountain.

Vornbrock also uses tapping to address current or previous injuries. With current injuries, tapping is intended to complement the effects of medical treatment or therapy by keeping the cells clear of the trauma, adrenaline or anger associated with the injury. Tapping addresses previous injuries by eliminating the memory of protection in the area after it is healed.

"The problem is once the healing is over there is no signal that triggers the cells that it is healed and then you are open to another injury," Vornbrock said. "Tapping frees the physical blockage so they feel stronger, which helps them emotionally by eliminating the fear of being hurt again and mentally by helping the athlete not hold back."

The acupuncture points used in tapping are located in the face, chest, wrist and underarm. While tapping, Vornbrock says specific phrases she picked based on what she learned about the patient's core issue. The client continues tapping while repeating the phrase. They repeat this process three times. The words act as a natural means of addressing the chemical release while the tapping of the acupuncture points sends an electrical message to the cell receptors that it is time to release the blockages.

Vornbrock says clients can feel an immediate cellular shift after one round of tapping. The effects they feel depend on the person but they include tingling in the fingers or toes, laughing, itching or fatigue. Once a

golfer learns how to tap, they can use it any time for any stressful situation by tapping their most effective acupuncture location called "Your Point."

"Tapping is a do-it-yourself technique," Vornbrock explained. "I teach my clients to use this so they can keep clearing things up as they come along. You have the opportunity to tap while you're in the cart, when walking to your next shot. I always teach ways to tap your point so it is inconspicuous. I want it to be a habit for them, like brushing their teeth in the morning."

For more information on Stacey Vornbrock and tapping, visit [www.breakthroughperformance.net](http://www.breakthroughperformance.net).