

**A Randomised Clinical Trial of a Meridian-Based Intervention for Food Cravings
with 12-Month Follow-up**

Peta Stapleton BA, PGDipPsy, PhD
Senior Lecturer, School of Medicine
Griffith University

Terri Sheldon, BA (Hons)
The Lakeside Rooms, Robina, Qld

Brett Porter, Assoc Dip. WR & W
The Lakeside Rooms, Robina, Qld

Jennifer Whitty PhD
Lecturer, School of Medicine
Griffith University

All correspondence is to go to Dr Peta Stapleton, PO BOX 123 Robina DC, 4226. Email:
peta@slimminds.com

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Abstract

Objective: Food craving was hypothesised to be an important intervening causal variable in the development of obesity. This randomised, single-blind, clinical trial tested whether The Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) reduced food cravings in participants under laboratory-controlled conditions.

Method: Study involved ninety-six overweight or obese adults who were allocated to the EFT treatment or 4-week waitlist condition. The waitlist condition received treatment after completion of the test period. Degree of food craving, perceived power of food, restraint capabilities and psychological symptoms were assessed pre- and post- a four week EFT treatment program (mixed method ANOVA comparative analysis), and at 12-month follow-up (repeated measure ANOVA with group data collapsed). Paired comparisons between time-points were undertaken using post hoc tests. The Bonferroni correction was applied for multiple comparisons.

Results: EFT was associated with a significantly greater improvement in food cravings, the subjective power of food and craving restraint than waitlist from pre- to immediately post-test ($p < 0.05$). Across collapsed groups, an improvement in food cravings and the subjective power of food after treatment was maintained at 6-months and a delayed effect was seen for restraint. Although there was a significant reduction in measures of psychological distress immediately after treatment ($p < 0.05$), there was no between group difference. Across collapsed groups, an improvement in food cravings and the subjective power of food after treatment was maintained at 12-months, and a significant reduction in Body Mass Index (BMI) occurred from pre- to 12-months.

Conclusion: EFT can have an immediate effect on reducing food cravings, result in maintaining reduced cravings over time and impact upon BMI in overweight and obese individuals. This addition to weight loss/dietary programs may result in assisting people to achieve and maintain reduced food cravings and lose weight.