



Welcome to Alternative Mental Health News, brought to you by the nonprofit Safe Harbor

It is my great pleasure to announce that our editor Craig Wagner, author of [Choices in Recovery](#), is now the executive director of Safe Harbor. His extensive understanding of alternative mental health treatments makes him a great fit. He is already making great contributions to our organization.

Welcome, Craig!

Dan Stradford

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## Biomedical Research

**Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS) for schizophrenia.** A small cell-phone sized device that costs a few hundred dollars gives a low-intensity electrical current to stimulate the brain via two electrodes placed on the head. Although tDCS is not currently FDA-approved, [Johns Hopkins](#) Medicine indicates that this therapy, tDCS, is non-invasive, painless, safe, easy to administer, and may have several advantages over other brain stimulation techniques. For schizophrenia, small studies have shown that tDCS offers patients a reduction in both [hallucinations](#) and [negative symptoms](#). [Most studies](#) report an overall improvement in the patient's general state, functioning, social interaction, and insight when using tDCS. [Practitioner training](#) on tDCS is available from Harvard Medical School.

## Psychosocial Research

**Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) for anxiety, stress and PTSD.** EFT is a noninvasive technique that uses elements of cognitive therapy and exposure therapy combined with acupressure. One [study](#) examined people without a mental health diagnosis divided into three treatment groups: 1) EFT, 2) talk therapy and 3) rest. Anxiety and depression declined significantly more in the EFT group, while cortisol (a stress hormone) levels also dropped significantly. Small studies of veterans with PTSD have found that 90%-100% [no longer met PTSD criteria](#) after 6-10 sessions of EFT, with many showing gene expression reflecting [lower inflammation](#). Another study of 188 children orphaned by the Rwanda genocide found that 94% no longer met PTSD diagnostic criteria given a single Thought Field Therapy (similar to EFT) session - and remained that way for one year. EFT appears to be [as effective as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](#) for reducing adolescent anxiety.

## Wellness Research

**Vitamin D and mental health.** Vitamin D insufficiencies have long been associated with mental health issues. A [recent study](#) found that low vitamin D levels were found to be significantly associated with increased negative and depressive symptoms in those with schizophrenia. [Another](#) found that children of mothers who took vitamin D during pregnancy had fewer symptoms of ADHD at the age of 2½ years. [Yet another](#) found that vitamin D deficiency was almost 5 times more common among people with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or schizoaffective disorder than the general population.

Surprisingly, as many as 85% of psychiatric patients have [suboptimal Vitamin D levels](#). Historically, 25-hydroxy-vitamin D levels of 20 ng/mL were considered normal. During the past decade many researchers have argued that a blood level of at least 30 ng/mL is optimal; [some advise](#) even higher goals - 40-50 ng/mL. [Dr. James Greenblatt](#) prefers to see higher levels - 50-75 ng/mL - and recommends supplementation of 2,000-10,000 IU for deficiencies. Vitamin D supplementation should be monitored by blood testing every few months.

**Yogic breathing (pranayama) lowers inflammation.** Inflammation is common in depressed people. In one [study](#), researchers measured cytokine (proteins for cell signaling) levels to determine the effect of yogic breathing on inflammation. Three stress-related biomarkers significantly decreased in those who did the yoga breathing exercise but not in people who were just reading. The following is a simple yogic breathing technique:

- Come to a comfortable seat and sit upright with your spine tall.
- Close your eyes and bring your attention to your natural breath.
- Inhale through your nostrils for four counts and imagine your lungs filling up from the bottom, middle, and all the way to the top.
- Exhale through your nostril for four counts. Imagine your lungs emptying from top, middle, and the bottom.
- Repeat this breath pattern for 10 cycles.
- Next, inhale your nostrils for four counts, hold for four counts, and then exhale through your nostrils for four counts.
- Repeat this breath pattern for 10 cycles.

**Bodily electrical grounding impact on stress, sleep and mental health.** Earthing is electrically grounding the body to the Earth and its continuously available supply of electrons. Grounding - whether being outside barefoot or indoors connected to grounded conductive systems - appears to affect a variety of bodily processes that influence mental health. Evidence for Earthing is small but growing. Pilot studies show that it can [increase free thyroxine and thyroid-stimulating hormone](#), [improve mood](#), and [influence inflammation](#) and the immune response. It also appears to reduce and [resynchronize cortisol](#) (a stress hormone) levels to more align with the natural 24-hour circadian rhythm, improve sleep and [reduce stress](#). A variety of earthing products are available including grounded sheets, pillowcases, and wrist straps, as well as grounded mats for use under electronic equipment.

## Conferences & Events

- **Nov 5, 2016** - Nutrient Resolution: Breaking the Cycle of Stress and Chronic Inflammation - a CAM Conference with BANT (British Associ. for Applied Nutrition and Nutritional Therapy), [More](#).
- **Feb 5-12, 2017**. 2nd International Integrative Mental Health exchange. Havana, Cuba. Limited attendance. [More](#).

## Staff



### **Dan Stradford, Safe Harbor President/Founder.**

Dan is the lead author of a book for physicians, [Complementary and Alternative Medicine Treatments in Psychiatry](#), and the author of the book, [The Men's Code of Honor: 66 Principles That Make a Man](#).

He has published over 250 articles and technical papers. His writings and commentary have appeared in *Time Magazine*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Daily Record* (Scotland), the college textbook *Social Problems* and many other publications.

### **Craig Wagner, Safe Harbor Executive Director and Editor.**

Craig is an author, speaker, educator and freelance editor in the field of Integrative Mental Health. He is a trainer for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and editor of *Codex Alternus*, the most comprehensive



practitioner reference on alternative mental health research.

His book, [\*Choices in Recovery\*](#), is the first to extract the full range of non-drug mental health therapies from the bowels of scientific research and transform it into a pragmatic recovery tool for those with mental health issues and their supporters. He writes and curates this newsletter. See [www.OnwardMentalHealth.com](http://www.OnwardMentalHealth.com).

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