



**Emotionally Focused
Therapy**

for Individuals

Reena Bernards, LCMFT

September 9, 2011

MAD-AAMFT

UMD, College Park

- Introduction
 - Training in EFT
 - Background with emotional work
- Creative Process of Applying EFT to Individuals

Emotionally Focused Therapy

- Founded in 1990's by Dr. Susan Johnson, psychologist from Ottawa, Canada (other founder Les Greenberg)
- EFT is an evidence-based couples therapy, as effective as CBT
- Theory and practice can be applied to therapy with families & individuals.

Theoretical Roots

- 1. Family Systems Theory (Minuchin, etc.)
 - Causality is circular
 - Task of therapist is to interrupt negative relational cycles so that a new pattern can emerge
- 2. Experiential Therapy (Rogers, Pearlman)
 - Empathically reflecting and validating a person's emotional experience
 - Foster new corrective emotional experiences that emerge from the "here and now."

Theoretical Roots continued

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, Ainsworth)

- People need close primary attachments “from the cradle to the grave.” (Bowlby)
- Secure bonds promote a person’s ability to regulate emotions, solve problems, think clearly and communicate effectively.
- An adult’s ability to create secure relationships is related to the attachment style they learned from their primary relationships as a child.

Attachment Styles

- Bowlby found that from early in childhood, a person acquires a way of attaching to others:
 - Secure attachment
 - Insecure, Anxious attachment (pursue, blame)
 - Insecure, Avoidant attachment (withdraw)
 - Insecure, Fearful-Avoidant, (seeks and avoids closeness, associated with trauma history)
- A person's attachment style has a major impact on their adult relationships.
- Attachment styles can change and become more secure.

Goals of EFT for an Individual

- To expand and re-organize a person's key emotional responses to the primary relationships in their life.
- To create a shift in a person's interactional positions (attachment style) and initiate new cycles of interaction.
- To foster a person's ability to create secure bonds and relationships.

Role of EFT Therapist

- Create a safe alliance with the client
- Collaborate with the person on their goals
- Show genuine curiosity
- Focus on process, not content
- Allow and help emotions to emerge
- Be a “temporary safe attachment figure”
- Provide an “antidote” to traumatic messages
- Psycho-ed about attachment and its role in a person’s life.

On the Role of the Therapist

“Its all about feeling safe with the therapist who can tolerate and accept your experience and help you order it as you go into denied and unfamiliar emotional experiences, and the therapist helps you process it further rather than judge it.”

Sue Johnson
EFT E-list, 2011

EFT Process with Individuals

- Identify and change negative interaction cycles that have emerged in a person's important relationships.
- Identify key un-met attachment needs, primary emotion and perceptions that fuel the negative cycle
- Heal from traumatic attachment events by experiencing other parts of self and new emotions
- From the new place of security, rethink and solve previously unsolvable problems

Primary and Secondary Emotions

- Primary Emotions: Direct response
 - Joy
 - Sadness (hurt)
 - Fear
 - Shame
- Secondary Emotions: Reactive, enables person to deal with primary emotion
 - Anger
 - Embarrassment
 - Jealousy
 - Guilt
 - etc.

Relationship between Attachment Needs, Emotions, Perceptions and Behavior

Behaviors: Pursuing-Blaming, Withdrawing-Avoiding



Perceptions: "I'm not lovable," "I'm going to be left"



Secondary Emotions: Anger, Jealousy, Guilt



Primary Emotions: Joy, Fear, Sadness, Shame



Unmet Attachment Needs: Love, Connection, Security,

Key Elements to Working with Individuals vs. Couples

- Opportunity to heal early childhood attachments
- Finding an “antidote” to an individual’s distress (big Trauma or little trauma)
 - Ex. “you never deserved to be treated that way,” “you are lovable”
 - Use therapist, early safe attachment figures, parts of self, friends, heroes, God, etc.
- Enactments: Talk to chair (or without chair)

3 Stages of EFT (adapted for individuals)

1. De-escalation of negative emotional cycles of interaction
2. Changing Emotional Experience of Relationships (Restructuring Attachment Style)
3. Problem-Solving and Consolidation

Nine Steps of EFT for Individuals

Stage 1: De-escalation of Negative Emotional Cycles of Interaction

Step 1: Create an alliance and delineate conflict issues in a person's core attachment struggles

-  Joining
-  Relationship history
-  Individual attachment history
-  Assess for trauma (present and past - violence, abuse etc.)

Stage 1 – De-escalation

Step 2: Identify and track a person's negative interactional cycle

- Five elements: behavior tendencies, perceptions, secondary emotion, primary emotion, unmet attachment needs.

Step 3: Assess the unacknowledged emotions underlying positions

Stage 1 continued

Step 4: Reframe problems in terms of negative cycles, underlying emotions and attachment needs.

At the end of Stage 1 – A person can identify and (sometimes) un-attach from their negative cycle.

Stage 2 – Changing Emotional Experience of Relationships (Restructuring Attachment Style)

Step 5:

- Encourage expression of disowned attachment emotions and needs
- Go deeper (fear, sadness, shame)

Stage 2 continued

Step 6: Promote acceptance of a person's experience

- Provide an "antidote" to a person's negative attachment experience
- Encourage the person be in touch with the part in them that is an "antidote" to the negative perceptions
- Allow a new emotional response to emerge

On Working Deeply

“I would go into the part where she is sure that she is unworthy and unlovable, and stay with that experience, unfold it, and see if she can find a piece of herself that doesn't accept this. Have an encounter between the 'I am bad, unlovable, critical self,' and the sad self that sometimes for a moment believes that she is loved...”

Sue Johnson

EFT E-list - 2011

Stage 2 continued

Step 7: Promote the expression of attachment needs

- Once you have accessed primary emotion, and integrated a new understanding of experience, the expression of needs follows
- Facilitate expression of needs and wants

Stage 3: Problem-solving and Consolidation

Step 8: Facilitate the emergence of new solutions to old relationship problems.

- Revisit on-going problems and help develop new solutions

Step 9: Consolidate new positions and new cycles of attachment behaviors

- Create new story of self in relationship

Case Study with Individual

- Map her negative cycle
- Describe some things you might do in each of the EFT stages

EFT Interventions with Individuals

1. Empathic reflection -- use tone of voice, repeat client's key phrases
2. Validation of emotions -- "I can see you are really scared."
3. Track and reflect process -- "when that happens, you tend to retreat, and then..."
4. Evocative responding (questions about feelings) – "what's it like for you inside?"
5. Heighten and expand – "so you're on edge, maybe scared..."
6. Empathic conjecture ("I wonder if...")

EFT Interventions continued

7. Reframe negative interactions patterns in attachment language – “you withdraws because it hurts and you so much want to be close.”
8. Enactments: Restructuring and shaping emotional interactions -- talk to chair, etc.
9. Provide an antidote to a person's distress – “It was never your fault that the abuse happened.”
10. Use of metaphor and images – “its as if there's a brick wall and you are feeling it come down.”

Upcoming EFT Externship

- Jan. 18 - 21 in Falls Church, VA
- Facilitated by Kathryn Rheem, Ed.D, LCMFT
- For more information go to the on the Washington Baltimore Center for EFT web site: www.WBCEFT.com

Resources

- Greenberg, L.S. and Paivio, S.C., (1997) Working with Emotions in Psychotherapy. N.Y.: The Guilford Press.
- Johnson, S.M. (2008) Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love. N.Y: Little Brown.
- Johnson, S.M. et al, (2005) Becoming an Emotionally Focused Couples Therapist : A Work Book. N.Y.: Brunner Routledge.
- Von Hockauf, Y. (2011) "Using EFT with Individual, Part 2: Not Alone on the Dance Floor," in The EFT Community News, 9th Issue, Spring.
- Official EFT website: www.iceeft.com



Reena Bernards, LCMFT
Jonah Green and Associates
3930 Knowles Avenue, Suite 200
Kensington MD 20895
301 367-6480
rbernards2@gmail.com