

# Emotion-Focused Psychotherapy

Group 5

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EDPS 602: Counselling Theories and Professional Practice  
University of Calgary, Fall 2014

# Emotion-Focused Therapy

Emotion-Focused Therapy uses the power of an individual's emotions as a psychotherapeutic tool.

Magnavita (2006) lists the following benefits to pursuing emotional connection in therapy:

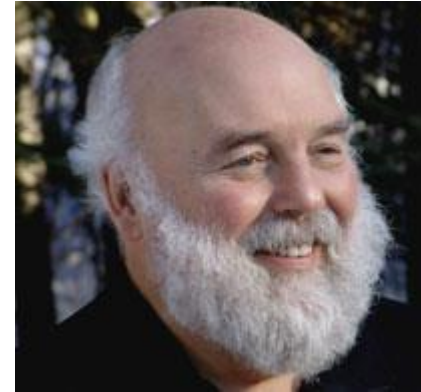
- A balance between emotional connection and regulation is essential to **healthy functioning**
- Emotional connection can help reduce **defensiveness and reactivity**
- Emotional connection can help reduce **somatic symptoms** caused by constricted emotional expression
- Understanding ones own emotions can help an individual understand **emotions of others**
- Emotional skills can be taught that are important for successful and **healthy relationships**
- It creates an opportunity for **meaningful, high impact learning**

# Where It All Began

The origins of EFT

# Origins

- Leslie Greenberg was the lead innovator of Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT)
- First relevant publications circulated in the early 1980's out of York University in Toronto
- EFT has evolved dramatically since the early 1980's



(Greenberg, 2010; Sloan, 2004)

# Provenance

- EFT is truly an integrative theory
- Influenced by psychodynamic, systemic, and cognitive theories, among other approaches
- However, EFT is most closely associated with a client-centered approach to the therapeutic relationship and gestalt intervention techniques
- EFT is empirically based
- Greenberg did not set out to design a new model or theory, EFT emerged from an investigation into change processes (Sloan, 2004)

# Ideas, Themes, and Techniques

- Greenberg worked with Laura Rice on her innovation of the “evocation function of the therapist” (Greenberg, Rice, & Elliott, 1993, as quoted in Raskin, Rogers, & Witty, 2014)
- Gestalt split as an intrapsychic conflict “two voices within a person” (Sloan, 2004)
- Emotion coaching emerged from impetus to provide more directive, by adding interaction to his practice (Sloan, 2004)

# Falling in Love

Key Concepts of Attachment Theory;  
Theoretical Premises of EFT

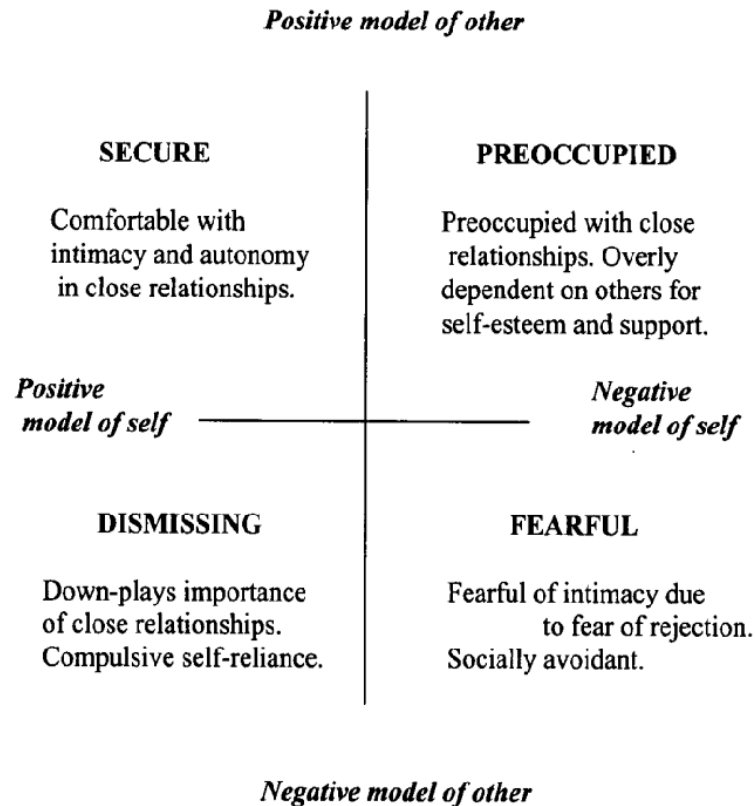
# Crimes of The Heart

- Attachment injury or “attachment crime” (coined by Johnson, 2001)
- a specific traumatic event wherein an injured partner views an offending partner as unavailable or unresponsive and therefore feels betrayed or abandoned
- The injured partner may then question the offending partner’s overall reliability
- Impact of attachment injuries
- Love = behavior + cognition + emotion





# Is He/She The One?



**FIGURE 1**

Two-Dimensional, Four-Category Model of Adult Attachment (Bartholomew, Henderson & Dutton, 2001), reprinted here with permission.

(Crawley & Grant, 2005)

# Questions of the Heart

- Do I deserve to be loved?
- Can I rely on others when I am in trouble?



# Love Hurts

## Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples (EFTC)

- Romantic relationship = attachment bond
- Dysfunctional relationship = insecure bond
- The role of emotions
- Fixed interactional pattern examples include:
  - pursue/withdraw
  - attack/defend
  - Cycle maintains relationship problems
  - Therapeutic goal: maladaptive to functional patterns



# The Love Doctor

**Table 1**  
Stages of Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples

| Stage  | Step/Description   |
|--|--|
| I. Assessment and Delineation of Problematic Cycles/ De-escalation | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Create an alliance and delineate conflict issues in the struggle.</li><li>2. Identify the negative interactional cycle.</li><li>3. Access unacknowledged feelings and attachment needs.</li><li>4. Reframe problem in terms of underlying emotions and needs.</li></ol> |
| II. Reengagement/ Softening  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Promote identification with disowned needs and aspects of self.</li><li>6. Promote acceptance of partner's experience.</li><li>7. Facilitate the expression of unmet needs and wants.</li></ol>   |
| III. Consolidation   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>8. Facilitate the emergence of new solutions.</li><li>9. Consolidate new positions.</li></ol>  |

(Peluso & MacIntosh, 2007)

# How to Heal a Broken Heart

## Integrative Interventions

- Lifestyle (Attachment Style) Interview
- Revised Adult Attachment Scale (RAAS)
- Attachment Injury Measure (AIM)
- The ‘Miracle Question’
- ‘As If’
- Psychology of Use
- The Empty Chair Technique
- Other techniques



# Evolution

The birth and growth of EFT as an integrative theory

# An Integrative Theory

Emotion-Focused Therapy in the 1980's incorporated three therapeutic models:

1. Gestalt Therapy (Fritz Perls)
2. Client Centered Therapy (Carl Rogers)
3. Experiential Therapy (Eugene Gendlin)

Raskin, Rogers, & Witty, 2011

# Contributing Members

- EFT was originally developed by Leslie Greenberg. He later collaborated with Laura Rice, and then Robert Elliot
  - Greenberg trained in a 3 year program at the Gestalt Institute in Toronto in 1970 (York University, 2005)
  - Rice began her career practising Client Centered Therapy with colleagues of Rogers at the University of Chicago (Greenberg, 2005; Raskin, Rogers, & Witty, 2011)
  - Elliot began practising Gendlin's Experiential Focusing method in the late 70's, joining Greenberg and Rice in 1985 (Elliot, Watson, Goldman, & Greenberg, 2004; Raskin, Rogers, & Witty, 2011)



# Contributing Members

Elliot's input added an experiential aspect to Greenberg and Rice's EFT.

*Facilitating Emotional Change* (Greenberg, Rice, & Elliot, 1993) describes this process-experiential approach

Elliot, Watson, Goldman, & Greenberg, 2004

# The Importance of Emotion

Since the early 2000's, there has been an increase in professional acknowledgment of importance of emotion in psychopathology and psychotherapy

- Importance of therapeutic alliance
- Technological advances in neuroscience
- Public interest in Emotional Intelligence

Magnavita, 2006

# Recent Growth

- Les Greenberg continues to be the largest proponent of EFT
  - Introduction of the concept of the “emotion-scheme” (Smith & Greenberg, 2007)
  - Integration of modern emotion theories and dialectical-constructivist meta-theory into his EFT framework (Greenberg, 2010)

# Current Status

EFT today

# Current Status

- Emotionally focused therapy (EFT) is empirically based
  - 1) Interventions in EFT are aimed at addressing relational factors that have been found to be essential to marital satisfaction and distress
  - 2) EFT is based on attachment theory, which has been empirically validated
  - 3) In addition, there is evidence for long term stability of treatment outcomes

Johnson, 2008

# Current Status

- Practiced primarily with couples; however, the approach is growing to include individuals and families
- Effective treatment for issues such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, eating disorders, grief, and chronic illness management (Johnson, 2008; Jones, 2009)
- Practiced with couples who are diverse in age, class, background, and sexual orientation (Johnson, 2008)
- EFT was developed in collaboration with clients in agencies, university clinics, private practice, and hospital clinics (Johnson, 2008)

# Current Status

- Not suggested when couples are separating or when there is not enough safety, e.g. violence and ongoing abuse
- EFT integrates with other approaches
  - Narrative therapy
  - Solution-focused therapy (Johnson, 2004)
- Dr. Sue Johnson founded The International Centre for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy in 1998 in Ottawa, which offers educational courses and training
- Dr. Leslie Greenberg and Jennifer Ellison (MA) established the Emotion-Focused Therapy Clinic in affiliation with the York University Psychology Clinic, which is a training centre
- Couples interventions have increased in the last decade (Johnson & Lebow, 2000)
- Training to be an EFT therapist is increasing, thus the approach is growing to be more widely practiced (Jones, 2009)

# Case Illustration

Practical application of EFT



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**“Yes, I remember the last time we had intimate physical contact.  
We were arm wrestling for the last slice of pizza.”**

(glasbergen.com)

# Case Illustration: *“Broken Bonds”*

## About the Couple

- Bill is a high school teacher; Maggie works as an accountant
- Both are in their late-30s
- They dated for about 8 years before deciding to get married
- They struggled to conceive in their early 30s; the process took a toll on their relationship for about two years
- After their daughter was born, Maggie became incredibly preoccupied with motherhood; consequently leading to a lack of intimacy in the marriage

## History

- Bill comes from a very rigid, religious family; both his parents are still together
- Maggie’s mother was an alcoholic who ultimately abandoned the family; thus her father raised her and her two sisters

## Negative Cycle

- During arguments, Bill would immediately get angry while Maggie would change the subject or withdraw
- Eventually things would subside, both would apologize, life would continue on, and then the cycle would resume

## Attachment Injury

- Post-pregnancy, Bill started spending a lot of time online as a way to cope with Maggie's emotional absence
- Bill formed an online relationship with a woman who filled the void of his loneliness; it developed into an affair that lasted about three months
- During this time, Bill told Maggie that he was "unhappy" in the marriage and he was going to leave Maggie for this other woman
- Bill eventually discovers that this other woman was only using him to get over her ex-husband

# Affairs of the Heart;

## Case Conceptualization

- On the surface, Bill appears **unhappy and angry**, whereas Maggie is **confused** and **sad**
- Underlying emotions for Bill: he does not feel **safe** in the relationship to express his emotions when Maggie constantly withdraws when they fight; he feels **unimportant, alone, and rejected**
- Underlying emotions for Maggie: she does not feel **trust** in the relationship as a result of the affair; she feels **insecure, unlovable, and fearful**
- In the context of EFT, the affair is what caused the **attachment injury** and **the pattern of interaction/behaviours** are anger outbursts by Bill and withdrawal from Maggie

# Case Example - Goals

- Focus and attend to emotional injuries that led to, and resulted from the affair
- Teach 'Bill and Maggie' to listen and validate one another's feelings on an ongoing basis
- Develop attachment security within the relationship
- Restore individual identity
- Re-establish desirable patterns of interaction
- Teach communication strategies for couple to use once therapy has come to an end

# Case Example - Interventions

- **Stage 1: Cycle De-Escalation**
  - Building of the **therapeutic alliance** – using empathy, and considering the clients the experts on their own lives
  - Use of **assessments** – help therapist learn more about the clients, and how they relate to others (i.e., attachment styles)
    - Revised Adult Attachment Scale
      - Maggie is a combination Preoccupied/Fearful Avoidant, Bill is Dismissive
    - Attachment Injury Measure
    - Lifestyle Interview
  - Therapist would help Maggie to **re-experience emotions**
    - fully identify and validate feelings caused by injury
  - Coach couple in how to effectively **focus on** and **communicate** emotions
  - Help the couple re-frame the event in terms of the **relational pattern**

# Case Example - Interventions

- **Stage 2: Restructuring Interactional Positions**
  - Bill encouraged to take **responsibility** for his actions – structures a meaningful apology
  - Therapist facilitates a conversation around how Bill can **rebuild trust**
    - **Empty Chair Technique**
      - Maggie communicating her needs to Bill (trust, feeling loved) in a non-threatening, non-confrontational way
  - Therapist **summarizes** Maggie's needs, helps Bill **create a plan** for reassuring Maggie/meeting her needs.
    - Bill is given homework, possibly a letter to his wife detailing emotional investment in the relationship

# Case Example - Interventions

- **Stage 3: Consolidation/Integration**
  - Therapist helps Bill and Maggie **re-frame the event** in a new light
    - Includes the attachment injury, motivations for injury, and a new awareness of the injury and the emotional consequences
    - Couple is able to come to terms with the event and move forward
    - Promotion of **attachment security** in the relationship
  - Therapist refers back to the therapeutic process the couple **identify emotional/communication strategies** the couple can use at home
    - **“As if” Method**
      - Who would you like to emulate - what would so and so do
    - **Psychology of Use**
      - Ability to identify utility of behaviours (useful vs not useful)
    - **Identifying relationship patterns**



# A few points to take away...

- EFT is an integrative approach borrowing theoretical premises from many models, however it is empirically based.
- The goal of EFT is to produce CHANGE.
- Emotional avoidance plays a prominent role in distress and pathology
- Attachment forms the basis for emotional expression and communication
- In EFTC, affective self-expression, listening, and empathy drive the change processes

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