

Step by Step: Learning Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy

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Objectives

Participants will . . .

- be able to identify the importance of training and supervision in assuring fidelity to EST's.
- learn the steps to certification as an EFT therapist.
- be able to identify and successfully formulate four core interventions of the EFT model.
- learn three common challenges in EFT training and supervision.

Science and Relational Therapies

Empirically Supported Treatments

- Sprenkle (2003) argues for substantiating MFT as a more “evidence-based discipline.”
 - Empirically Supported Treatments (APA Div. 12)
 - Evidence based on random clinical trials
 - Evidence – support that approach is better than no treatment and equal to established approaches.
 - Based on a treatment manual.
 - Standards: Efficacious, Possibly Efficacious, Specific and Efficacious.

Summary of EST for Couples Therapy

- APA Division 12
 - Behavioral Marital Therapy (TBCT)
 - Support noted for EFT and IOMT
- Sprenkle / Johnson (2003)
 - Behavioral Marital Therapy (TBCT)
 - Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT)

Challenge: EST → Clinical Myopia

- Privilege of certain approaches
- Forces narrower definitions of presenting problems. (Snyder, 2004)
- Ignores alternative approaches to summarizing evidence (MAST, Shaddish & Baldwin, 2003)
- Efficacy vs. Effectiveness
- Transportability

EFT: Empirical Support

- Meta-analysis - 4 most rigorous EFT studies
 - 70 – 73% recovery rate from relationship distress
 - Effect size based on these studies is greater than ES reported for other couple therapy models.
- EFT range of applications
 - Chronic illness (Gordon-Walker, et al, 1997)
 - Couples with partners suffering from PTSD from various traumatic experiences (Johnson & William-Keeler, 1998).
 - Eating disorders, bi-polar and major depressions (Johnson, et al 1998; Johnson et al, 1999)

EST and Everyday Practice

Challenge of Training and Supervision

- Effective training models – little evidence
- Graduate programs teach the classics / theory
- Most training is brief and untested
- Supervision – often guided by expert opinion in response to case consultation (Berg, 2000)

Two Training Implications

- Fidelity / Adherence
 - Did the therapist follow the treatment manual?
 - Were the proper skills used?
- Competence
 - Was the skill used effectively?
 - Evaluation requires skilled and experienced clinicians (Waltz, et al. 1993; Miller & Binder, 2002)

EFT Certification

The Process

- Goal - to register EFT therapists who demonstrate expert intervention using EFT/EFFT
- Prerequisites: Graduate degree in mental health, Membership in professional association. Active clinical practice, State license, Mal-practice insurance, Two graduate courses in MFT

The Program

- Training Experiences
- Clinical Externship – OCFI approved 40 hours
- Advanced Externship – OCFI approved 15 hours
- Consultation with Certified EFT Therapists 32 hours (Group – review/discussion of clinical transcripts & tapes; Individual – 8 hour requirement; Long distance consultation – audio/video required)
- Final Case review
- 110 - Total hours of training and supervision/consultation for certification. Estimated Cost: \$3500.

EFT – Overview

Overview of Core Assumptions

- Couple's rigid interaction patterns both reflect and create relational distress
- Distress perpetuates absorbing emotional states
- Partners are not seen as problematic – rather seen as stuck in a pattern or dance
- Emotion is the target for change of these patterns
- Change requires a new experience
- Resolution = new security in the relationship promoted by increased accessibility and responsiveness.

Therapy Process

- Key Tasks
 - Building and maintaining the alliance
 - Accessing and processing emotions
 - Restructuring couple interaction
- Nine step process – Three treatment goals
 - Cycle de-escalation
 - Restructuring Interactions
 - Consolidation

EFT – Overview

Therapy Process

- Cycle De-escalation (Steps 1 – 4)
 - Therapist identifies problematic cycle and attachment related issues.
 - Accesses underlying emotions
 - Frames problem in the context of the couples cycle and underlying attachment needs / fears
- Restructuring Interaction (Steps 5 – 7)
 - Two important shifts occur
 - Withdrawn partner engages
 - Pursing partner softens blaming
 - Accessing and processing attachment related fears, wants and needs
 - Elicit models of self and other
 - Restructuring the couple’s pattern
- Consolidation (Steps 8 – 9)
 - Supporting new positions and patterns
 - Long standing issues are reviewed
 - Helping couples recognize old patterns and ways they can exit to engage a more secure relationship

EFT – Interventions

EFT-CS Clinical Rating System (Bradley, 2003)

- Coding system for identifying EFT interventions
- Used in research studies – reliability and validity of the measure has been confirmed (Bradley & Furrow, 2004)
- Composed of 13 interventions based on the treatment manual “Creating Connections.”

EXAMPLE: EFT-CS Rating Form:

Talk Turn	Segment 2 Narrative	EFT Codes
1	Therapist: Oh, I think what I am hearing you say is you see that Florence is afraid and you understand that she is afraid to risk, right, and you understand that.	RUE Refr2
1	M: Sure.	

EFT – Interventions

Tracking and Reflecting Interactions

- Therapist tracks and reflects the process of interactions. The sequence of interaction is reflected back to the couple and noted as a recurring pattern.
 - Therapist tracks the “blow by blow” escalation of a couple’s conflict.
 - Therapist will isolate the pattern as a series of actions and responses. Often noting the positions partners take: Pursuer, Blamer, Placater, Withdrawer.
 - Therapist frames the sequence as a pattern or dance.

Evocative Responding: Reflections and Questions

- Therapist behaviors focus on the tentative, unclear, or emerging elements of a client’s experience. Therapist tries to elicit/capture the implicit elements of the client’s experience in a tentative manner to help the client encounter, construct and differentiate.
 - Focus on “felt sense” of an emotional experience.
 - Drawing out somatic cues.
 - Questions about emotional experience-focusing on present experience.
 - Therapist often uses an evocative voice and leans toward the client.

Reflecting Emotions

- The therapist attends to, focuses on, and reflects present intense emotion. The therapist slowly tracks with the couple helping them become aware of how the couple constructs her and his experience moment by moment.
 - Reflecting Secondary Emotions
 - Therapist identifies and reflects secondary or reactive responses.
 - Reflection given in the context of the couples developing cycle.
 - Reflecting Underlying Emotions
- Primary Emotions
 - Therapist brings to the forefront emotions that often have not been apparent.
 - These emotions may have been acted upon but not part of the partner's awareness.

Empathic Conjecture

- Therapist is on the leading edge of experience with the client and tries to move the client forward in their experience so that new meaning can naturally emerge.
 - Focus on attachment fears – (Views of self / other)
 - Therapist conjecture- based on experience of couple and theory
 - Tentative formulation of new information

EFT Supervision

Evidence Based

- Evaluating Treatment Adherence
 - What interventions is the therapist using?
 - Do the interventions fit with the conceptualization of the couple and process?
- Evaluating Treatment Competence
 - Was the intervention properly formulated?
 - Did the intervention have the desired effect?

Process Oriented

- Involves consultation focusing on a therapist's conceptualization of the case within the model.
- Involves consultation focusing on the therapy process itself.

Supervision Issues

- Experiential Shift
- Knowing where I am
- Trusting the process
- Timing

Selected Resources

Books:

- Johnson, S. (2004). *The practice of Emotionally Focused Marital Therapy: Creating Connection*. (2nd Ed.). New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Johnson, S. et al. (2005). *Becoming an Emotionally Focused Couple Therapist: The workbook*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Web Sites:

- <http://www.eft.ca> - Center for Emotionally Focused Therapy – Sue Johnson
- <http://www.theEFTzone.com> – EFT Training Resources – Brent Bradley and James Furrow

Externship Training:

- 5/13 – 19/2006 Brent Bradley and James Furrow. Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion IN, USA
- 1/9 – 12/2006 Sue Johnson and Scott Wooley. Alliant University, San Diego, CA, USA
- 6/19- 23/2006 Sue Johnson. OCFI. Ottawa, ON Canada