



## WHAT IS EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED COUPLES THERAPY (EFT) ?

*Years to*



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**Jfert & Mind**  
 Counseling  
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Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFT) is a short-term treatment approach whose goal is the reconnection between partners. EFT, developed by Susan Johnson and Les Greenberg, is based on John Bowlby's Attachment research over 50 years ago. Bowlby found that humans and higher primate animals appeared to have an innate need to feel attached to and comforted by significant others.

Adult attachment relationships are believed to have the same survival function as the mother-child bond, since ideally these attachments can provide the same love, comfort, support, and protection throughout the lifespan. However, due to our relationship histories, and the negative interaction cycles we get into with our partners, many of us have difficulties with trust and expressing emotion to those who mean the most to us.

When couples argue about such issues as jealousy, sex or money, the origins of these arguments are usually some form of protest from one partner about not feeling connected, not trusting, or not feeling safe or secure with the other partner. When those we are attached to are not available, or are not responding to our needs to feel close or supported, we feel distressed. We may become anxious or fearful, numb or distant.

These behaviors can become habitual or rigid modes of reacting to our partners. Furthermore, these toxic behavior patterns seem to take on a life of their own as they cycle into repetitive couple's interactions that cause much pain, injury and despair. We focus on these patterns and work on changing these negative interaction cycles in a non-judgmental environment.

In a relatively short time, couples begin to recognize and eventually express their needs for love, support, protection and comfort that are often hidden or disguised by the harsh or angry words used in repetitive self-defeating patterns of conflict or arguments with each other. Partners begin to "listen with the heart," one of the cornerstones of EFT - which means listening not for the literal meaning of a partner's words, but for the feelings that he or she, in return, the other partner is better able to respond from their heart in kind. This is the emotional focus of Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy.

We view the building of "a safe haven" in your relationship as our primary task, and we will try to focus on your primary needs -- to feel close, secure and responded to --- which probably underlie most of your couple's conflict. Once this safe haven and feelings of connection are reestablished, you will be better able to manage conflict and the painful or difficult feelings that will inevitably arise from time to time in a close relationship. Furthermore, without so much defensiveness, each of you will be able to send clearer messages and will be better able to hear the other's perspective. You will be better able to collaborate, problem-solve, and compromise -- in short -- you'll be more of a team -- which is the secret of a long-lived, successful marriage!

Research on the success of EFT: - EFT appears to move couples from distress to recovery in 10-12 sessions for 70-75% of cases, and creates improvements in 90% of couples coming in for therapy. EFT has been used with many different types of couples in private practice, university training centers and hospital clinics. These distressed couples include partners suffering from disorders such as depression, post-traumatic stress, and chronic illness.

To view further references, recent articles describing EFT therapy and books on EFT, please refer to the EFT website: [www.eft.ca](http://www.eft.ca); Psychology Today, March/April 2003

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Heart 5 to  
Keep

## Stage 1 – Understand Your Strengths and the Patterns that Keep You Stuck

Step 1: Set goals for counseling; understand some of the ways your relationship history affects your relationship now.

Step 2: Discover and describe the negative patterns of interaction you get stuck in. You and your therapist will track your interactions with your partner and identify where and how your communication breaks down.

Step 3: Emotions are stirred up in your relationship, especially when you get stuck in these negative cycles of interaction. Emotions also drive the cycle. You may first be aware of anger, frustration, anxiety, numbness or even withdrawal. Notice inside what other feelings are beneath these initial feelings, such as hurt, sadness or fear. Begin to share these “underneath” feelings with your partner. It is OK if it feels “bumpy” – it helps diffuse the cycle sometimes but not always.

Step 4: Describe your cycle and recognize what the triggers are. Understand how the things that you do to protect yourself and your relationship affect and may even threaten your partner. Notice how you co-create the cycle: “we’re doing that thing again...the more I go after you, the more you withdraw because you’re feeling hurt...” Slow down your conversations so that you can tap into the feelings that are beneath the surface. Catch your own thoughts (“She doesn’t care;” “I don’t matter”) before acting on them. You might notice that you can hold back your knee jerk reactions to avoid the cycle. You might not know yet how to pull each other close and you might be afraid the “old way” will come back. However, when you discover that this negative cycle is the source of unhappiness in your relationship, you realize that your partner is not the enemy. You can then work together to gain control over this negative cycle and that already feels infinitely better.

## Stage 2 – Create a New, Intimate Relationship Bond; Change Your Communication Patterns

Step 5: Both of you are now able to talk about your feelings that get triggered by the negative cycle, including things you might not have been able to say before. With less friction and more compassion between you, there is safety to explore your experience more deeply. We all have doubts about ourselves at times and may also have fears about depending on others. You may struggle with personal fears or insecurities in this relationship. You may have had life experiences that make it difficult to trust others to be there for you. With the help of your therapist, you can take turns and begin to share these “raw spots” with your partner. As you take these risks, your partner begins to truly see and understand where you are coming from, which creates empathy.

AN EFT ROADMAP FOR COUPLES

by Pat LaDouceur PhD, LMF

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Hours

Step 6: This step involves staying engaged and listening to your partner's disclosures. Your partner may share feelings that take you by surprise. You may feel disoriented or even hurt that you have not heard your partner share so personally like this before. It is OK to experience a mixture of emotions. Start by trying to understand at an emotional level what your partner is saying, without needing to change his/her experience or take responsibility for it yourself. Stay open to the possibility of experiencing and understanding your partner in a new way. Allow yourself to be moved by your partner's new disclosures.

Step 7: Explore what helps you feel deeply connected, what is most important for you in this relationship. In this stage of therapy your therapist helps you find ways to ask for your needs in the relationship in a way that is both caring and direct. You can lean into and reach for your partner and he/she is able to reach back in a loving way. You have found a new way to relate when one of you feels stressed, hurt or insecure. The bond between you shifts, becoming closer and more intimate. You can check out your perceptions and talk about feelings. You can listen with an open heart, be curious about one another and offer reassurance when needed. Both of you have a felt sense of "being there" for each other.

### Stage 3 – Use New Communication Patterns to Solve Problems and Maintain Intimacy

Step 8: Revisit old problems or decisions that have been put on hold (e.g., parenting, finances, sex, family issues, health concerns, etc.) while staying emotionally connected. They don't seem as loaded now that you feel heard, valued, close and secure. Focus on staying accessible, responsive, and engaged while talking about practical issues. Together, you can face any of life's challenges more easily.

Step 9: Congratulations! You have reshaped your relationship. Or perhaps this is the first time in your relationship that you have felt a profound bond with one another. You have worked hard to get here, so it's important to celebrate it and put safeguards in place to protect it. Create rituals together that privilege your relationship. Find ways of keeping this new way of relating strong.

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for me

**"No Secrets" Policy for Family Therapy and Couple Therapy**

This written policy is intended to inform you, the participants in family therapy or couple therapy, that when I agree to work with a couple or a family, I consider that couple or family (the treatment unit) to be the patient. For instance, if there is a request for the treatment records of the couple or the family, I will seek the authorization of all members of the treatment unit before I release confidential information to third parties. Also, if my records are subpoenaed, I will assert the psychotherapist-patient privilege on behalf of the patient (the treatment unit).

During the course of my work with a couple or a family, I may see a smaller part of the treatment unit (e.g., an individual or two siblings) for one or more sessions. These sessions should be seen by you as a part of the work that I am doing with the family or the couple, unless otherwise indicated. If you are involved in one or more of such sessions with me, please understand that generally these sessions are confidential in the sense that I will not release any confidential information to a third party unless I am required by law to do so or unless I have your written authorization. In fact, since these sessions can and should be considered a part of the family or couple therapy, I would also seek the authorization of the other individuals in the treatment unit before releasing confidential information to a third party.

However, I may need to share information learned in an individual session (or a session with only a portion of the treatment unit being present) with the entire treatment unit — that is, the family or the couple, if I am to effectively serve the unit being treated. I will use my best judgment as to whether, when, and to what extent I will make disclosures to the treatment unit, and will also, if appropriate, first give the individual or the smaller part of the treatment unit being seen the opportunity to make the disclosure. Thus, if you feel it necessary to talk about matters that you absolutely want to be shared with no one, you might want to consult with an individual therapist who can treat you individually.

This "no secrets" policy is intended to allow me to continue to treat the patient (the couple or family unit) by preventing, to the extent possible, a conflict of interest to arise where an individual's interests may not be consistent with the interests of the unit being treated. For instance, information learned in the course of an individual session may be relevant or even essential to the proper treatment of the couple or the family. If I am not free to exercise my clinical judgment regarding the need to bring this information to the family or the couple during their therapy, I might be placed in a situation where I will have to terminate treatment of the couple or the family. This policy is intended to prevent the need for such a termination.

We, the members of the \_\_\_\_\_ (couple/family or other unit) being seen, acknowledge by our individual signatures below, that each of us has read this policy, that we understand it, that we have had an opportunity to discuss its contents with Dr. Lisa Palmer and that we enter couple/family therapy in agreement with this policy.

**Each family member must initial:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Initials

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What are your biggest strengths as a couple?

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What have you already done to deal with the difficulties?

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What do you hope to accomplish through counseling?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No concern<br><input type="checkbox"/> Little concern<br><input type="checkbox"/> Moderate concern<br><input type="checkbox"/> Serious concern<br><input type="checkbox"/> Very serious concern | <input type="checkbox"/> No occurrence<br><input type="checkbox"/> Occurs rarely<br><input type="checkbox"/> Occurs sometimes<br><input type="checkbox"/> Occurs frequently<br><input type="checkbox"/> Occurs nearly always |
|--|--|

As you think about the primary reason that brings you here, how would you rate its frequency and your overall level of concern at this point in time?

Length of time in current relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married<br><input type="checkbox"/> Separated<br><input type="checkbox"/> Divorced<br><input type="checkbox"/> Dating | <input type="checkbox"/> Cohabiting<br><input type="checkbox"/> Living together<br><input type="checkbox"/> Living apart |
|--|--|

Relationship Status: (check all that apply)

Name of Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Couples Counseling Initial Intake Form



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for me  
please write  
legibly

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do either you or your partner drink alcohol to intoxication or take drugs to intoxication? Yes  No   
If yes for either, who, how often and what drugs or alcohol?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have either you or your partner been in individual counseling before?  Yes  No   
If so, give a brief summary of concerns that you addressed.

Very successful  Somewhat successful  Stayed the same  Somewhat worse  Much worse

What was the outcome (check one)?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Problems treated: \_\_\_\_\_

By whom: \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of treatment: \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, when: \_\_\_\_\_  
Where: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you received prior couples counseling related to any of the above problems?  Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please make at least one suggestion as to something you could personally do to improve the relationship regardless of what your partner does.

(extremely unhappy) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely happy)

Please rate your current level of relationship happiness by circling the number that corresponds with your current feelings about the relationship.

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Have either you or your partner struck, physically restrained, used violence against or injured the other person? Yes  No  If yes for either, who, how often and what happened.

Has either of you threatened to separate or divorce (if married) as a result of the current relationship problems?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If married, have either you or your partner consulted with a lawyer about divorce? Yes  No  If yes, who?  Me  Partner  Both of us

Do you perceive that either you or your partner has withdrawn from the relationship? Yes  No  If yes, which of you has withdrawn?  Me  Partner  Both of us

How frequently have you had sexual relations during the last month? \_\_\_\_\_ times

How enjoyable is your sexual relationship? (Circle one)  
 1 (extremely unpleasant) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely pleasant)

How satisfied are you with the frequency of your sexual relations? (Circle one)  
 1 (extremely unsatisfied) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely satisfied)

What is your current level of stress (overall)? (Circle one)  
 1 (no stress) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high stress)

What is your current level of stress (in the relationship)? (Circle one)  
 1 (no stress) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (high stress)



5

Thank you for completing this. Please bring this with you during your first appointment. Please note that you will be asked to talk about your answers in sessions but your partner will not be shown this form.

Current

### Relationship over time

When you met/began dating

No satisfaction

Complete satisfaction

Lastly, please draw a graph indicating your level of relationship satisfaction beginning with when you met your partner. Note *pivotal/significant events* in your relationship (e.g., one of you moved out, one of you cheated).

3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Rank order the top three concerns that you have in your relationship with your partner (1 being the most problematic):

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# Domestic Violence Screening Quiz



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Use this brief screening measure to help you determine if you might need to see a mental health or other social services professional to help you successfully deal with a domestic violence or abusive relationship situation.

1. Do you feel anxious or nervous when you are around your partner?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

2. Do you watch what you are doing in order to avoid making your partner angry or upset?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

3. Do you feel obligated or coerced into having sex with your partner?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

4. Are you afraid of voicing a different opinion than your partner?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

5. Does your partner criticize you or embarrass you in front of others?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

6. Does your partner check up on what you have been doing, and not believe your answers?

No

Sometimes

Often

7. Is your partner jealous, such as accusing you of having affairs?

No

Sometimes

Often

8. Does your partner tell you that he or she will stop beating you when you start behaving yourself?

No

Yes

9. Have you stopped seeing your friends or family because of your partner's behavior?

No

Yes

10. Does your partner's behavior make you feel as if you are wrong?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

11. Does your partner threaten to harm you?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

12. Do you try to please your partner rather than yourself in order to avoid being hurt?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

13. Does your partner keep you from going out or doing things that you want to do?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

14. Do you feel that nothing you do is ever good enough for your partner?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

15. Does your partner say that if you try to leave him or her, you will never see your children again?

No

Yes

Not applicable

16. Does your partner say that if you try to leave, he or she will kill himself or herself or you?

No

Sometimes

Regularly

17. Is there always an excuse for your partner's behavior? ("The alcohol or drugs made me do it! My job is too stressful! If dinner was on time I wouldn't have hit you! I was just joking!")

No

Sometimes

Regularly

18. Do you lie to your family, friends and doctor about your bruises, cuts and scratches?

No

Yes

Not applicable

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# Couple Screening Form



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**Directions:** Check the items that apply

## MOODS: (ex. irritability, depression etc.)

My moods are a problem to the relationship. how?: \_\_\_\_\_

My partner's moods are a problem to the relationship. how?: \_\_\_\_\_

## ALCOHOL and SUBSTANCE USE

My use of alcohol is excessive \_\_\_\_\_

My use of prescription or illegal drugs is a problem \_\_\_\_\_

My partner's uses alcohol excessively \_\_\_\_\_

My partner's use of prescription or illegal drugs is a problem \_\_\_\_\_

## AGGRESSION

My temper adversely affects our relationship \_\_\_\_\_

I have been verbally abusive to my partner \_\_\_\_\_

I have been physically abusive to my partner \_\_\_\_\_

My partner's temper adversely affects our relationship \_\_\_\_\_

My partner has been verbally abusive to me \_\_\_\_\_

My partner has been physically abusive to me \_\_\_\_\_

Our fights and arguments are very destructive to our relationship. \_\_\_\_\_

## AFFAIRS

I have had an affair during our relationship (or an inappropriate outside relationship). \_\_\_\_\_  
I am currently having an affair (or an inappropriate outside relationship). \_\_\_\_\_

My partner has had an affair during our relationship (or an inappropriate outside relationship). \_\_\_\_\_  
My partner is currently having an affair (or an inappropriate outside relationship). \_\_\_\_\_

## SATISFACTION AND COMMITMENT

\_\_\_\_\_ % I am committed to staying in our relationship.

\_\_\_\_\_ % Overall how satisfied are you now with your relationship?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:**

In percentage terms, how strongly do you agree with the statements below

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Use this scale to answer the questions below.

0 25% 50% 75% 100%  
Not at all Slightly Moderately Very Extremely

% I feel disorganized by all this negative emotion.

% I can't think straight when my partner gets so negative.

% Talking things over with my partner only seems to make them worse.

% I have little confidence that we can discuss a significant problem without fighting.

% I am basically unhappy with my relationship.

% I have often felt like leaving my partner.

% I often don't feel close to my partner.

% I'm not satisfied with our sex life.

% I feel lonely in our relationship.

% I feel we are disconnected.

% My partner and I live pretty separate lives.

% I confide in a special person outside of our relationship. Who?

% There are specific events in our relationship which I am having trouble getting over.  
What?

% In spite of all our problems, I believe that my partner really cares about me.

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1. To whom did you go for comfort when you were young?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Could you always count on this person/these people for comfort?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. When were you most likely to be comforted by this person/these people?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How did you let this person/these people know that you needed connection and comfort?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Did this person/these people ever betray you or were they unavailable at critical times?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What did you learn about comfort and connection from this person/these people?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. If no one was safe, how did you comfort yourself? How did you learn that people were unsafe?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Did you ever turn to alcohol, drugs, sex or material things for comfort?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Have there been times when you have been able to be vulnerable and find comfort with your partner?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Have there been any particularly traumatic incidences in your previous romantic relationships?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. How have you tried to find comfort in romantic relationships?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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Client Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Client Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Therapist Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In order to enhance training and supervision of therapists and provide the best possible therapy treatment, it is common to videotape or audiotape therapy sessions for review. In order for supervisor or therapist-in-training to observe a session, clients must give written consent for the purposes of upholding confidentiality agreements.

By signing below, I give my consent to allow my therapy sessions with Felicia Friesen to be videotaped. I understand that any supervisor who observes my therapy session is under the same confidentiality requirements as my therapist. I also understand that the purpose of allowing observation of my therapy sessions is to enhance the effectiveness of the therapy treatment I am receiving with Felicia Friesen. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time and that I will be notified if any live taping is going to occur before my arrival.

**LIVE OBSERVATION AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION:**


Informed Consent:



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## Experiences in Close Relationships Scale

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					


  
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36	I resent it when my partner spends time away from me.					
35	I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.					
34	When romantic partners disapprove of me, I feel really bad about myself.					
33	It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.					
32	I get frustrated if romantic partners are not available when I need them.					
31	I don't mind asking romantic partners for comfort, advice, or help.					
30	I get frustrated when my partner is not around as much as I would like.					
29	I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.					
28	When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure.					
27	I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.					
26	I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.					
25	I tell my partner just about everything.					
24	If I can't get my partner to show interest in me, I get upset or angry.					
23	I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.					
22	I do not often worry about being abandoned.					
		Strongly disagree	disagree	Disagree	disagree nor agree	Strongly Agree

