Emotion-Focused Psychotherapy

Group 5
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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 one’s 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)
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
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?

**Positive model of other**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECURE</th>
<th>PREOCCUPIED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable with</td>
<td>Preoccupied with close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intimacy and autonomy</td>
<td>relationships. Overly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in close relationships.</td>
<td>dependent on others for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-esteem and support.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Negative model of self**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISMISSING</th>
<th>FEARFUL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Down-plays importance</td>
<td>Fearful of intimacy due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of close relationships.</td>
<td>to fear of rejection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsive self-reliance.</td>
<td>Socially avoidant.</td>
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**Negative model of other**

**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Step/Description</th>
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</table>
| I. Assessment and Delineation of Problematic Cycles/De-escalation | 1. Create an alliance and delineate conflict issues in the struggle.  
2. Identify the negative interactional cycle.  
3. Access unacknowledged feelings and attachment needs.  
4. Reframe problem in terms of underlying emotions and needs. |
| II. Reengagement/Softening | 5. Promote identification with disowned needs and aspects of self.  
6. Promote acceptance of partner’s experience.  
7. Facilitate the expression of unmet needs and wants. |
| III. Consolidation | 8. Facilitate the emergence of new solutions.  

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

Crawley, J. & Grant, J. (2005). Emotionally focused therapy for couples and attachment theory. ANZJFT, 26(2), 82-89.


References (continued)


