

Chapter Twelve - Extending Attachment-based EFT to Individual Therapy

In Chapter 12, I respond to one of the inevitable next steps for a therapist embracing EFT: A search for how to extend this model across all of one's therapy clients and in particular, how to extend attachment-based EFT to individual therapy.

I describe Emily's quest to apply EFT smoothly to individual therapy. She thinks of the elements of EFT that she has come to rely on and value so deeply: Shaping secure bonds by (a) focusing on attachment, (b) following emotion, and (c) priming new responses, and she reflects on how she can extend the elements she values in EFT with couples to individuals.

In this context, I discuss how these elements are applicable to individual therapy: (a) Dyadic co-regulation and secure attachment is not a dynamic restricted to romantic relationships, but is more efficient and more effective than conscious self-soothing to regulate emotions; (b) Tracking repetitive and automatic patterns of emotional behaviors during times of stress, is as relevant an initial step for individual therapy as it is for couple therapy; (c) The transformative aspect of EFT couple therapy can be applied to shaping new responses in individual therapy as well.

I discuss Emily's quest to extend EFT to individuals by noting that the attachment perspective focuses upon dyadic relationships and that there are three basic relational contexts in therapy with individuals: the client's relationship with the therapist; the relationships the client has with others in his/her life, and the client's mental representations of relationships with attachment figures from the past that often blend with conflictual inner relationships with parts of self.

After defining the goal of emotionally focused individual therapy (EFIT) as *effective dependency* I present the secondary strategies typically used in the absence of a secure base of support and caring. Examples of individual clients with different versions of these secondary attachment strategies and patterns are made vivid with each individual's spontaneous, poignant images of their lived experience of these strategies and patterns.

I delineate the three stages in the EFT model of individual therapeutic change, and illustrate them in the case example of Lyndon, a successful chartered accountant. I demonstrate how tracking and reprocessing emotion can shift a client's sense of self and other, reshaping attachment patterns towards the flexibility, resilience, and health that come with "effective dependency".

"An EFT therapist working with individuals does not fast-forward to the Stage 2 change events. Communicated empathic understanding and acceptance and genuine emotional engagement from the therapist provide the foundation. Stage 1 begins with alliance building and tracking and reflecting to identify the in-effective feedback loops in which clients are stuck. The next move is to validate the reactive secondary emotions, action tendencies, and meanings in the client's familiar, repetitive patterns. From the platform of a safe therapeutic alliance and the newfound awareness of the automatic repetitive coping patterns, an EFT therapist steps slowly with an individual into an experience of the underlying, often previously hidden, primary emotion which is the fuel for the negative patterns as well as the potential power for healing. Primary emotion, once discovered and savoured, in the secure base context of Rogerian empathy, acceptance, and therapist genuineness, becomes the fuel for Stage 2 transformation." p. 268

I delineate the EFT interventions and the five moves of the *EFT Tango* in EFIT (See attached EFIT Tango). I provide transcript excerpts of corrective emotional experiences with a client introduced early in the chapter, to illustrate choregraphing enactments for reshaping a bond with a past attachment figure. In Chapter 12 I seek to give the reader practical guidelines and a map to follow as well as an experience of how individual therapy can be an experience of love and transformational change.