

# Chapter Five

## The Tyranny of Unheeded Attachment Fears: Unpacking Emotion in the De-escalation Change Event (Steps 3 and 4)

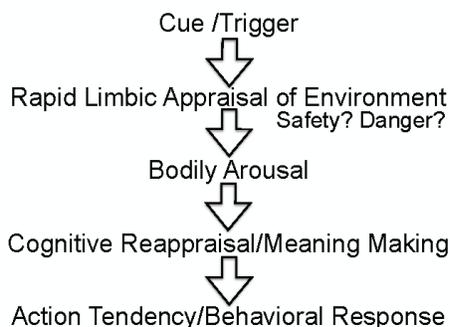
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### Setting the Stage for Understanding Emotion

Chapter five sets the stage for understanding emotion as a dynamic process, and describes the various paths into primary emotion that remains outside of immediate awareness.

“While brushing wisps of snow off her car windows after a long day of work, Emily thinks of how far she has come since she began learning EFT. The car windows cleared, she is happy to notice her own window into emotion is also clearing. “I’ve come a long way since I thought emotion equals feelings and that to do EFT I needed most of all to get people to talk about feelings.” Her confidence in using emotion as the target and agent of change is expanding, as she is integrating what it means that emotion is a multi-faceted process (perceiving safety or danger, sensing bodily arousal, cognitively reassessing, being motivated to act). She is feeling empowered and more confident to patiently unpack this process with her couples, validating and respecting the cues which signal danger to them, until each partner is able to find words for their nuanced version of attachment panic.” – from the conclusion to Chapter 5.

Figure 5.1 Emotion as a Rapidly Unfolding Process

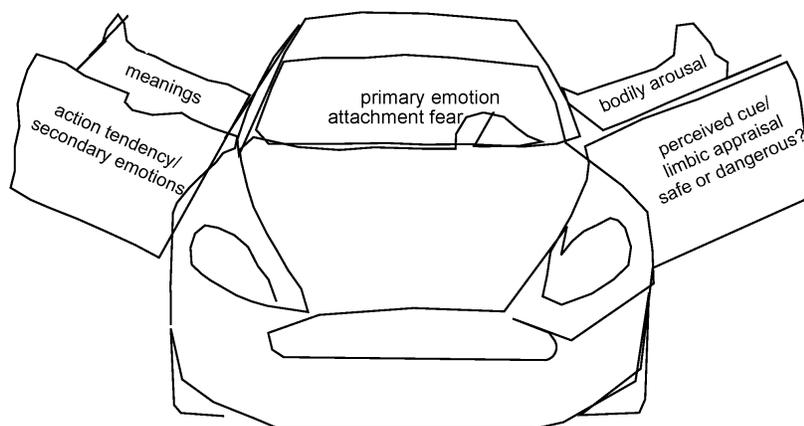


- visual of Arnold's (1960) view of emotion

# What a therapist sees and hears in Steps 3 and 4

Emotional danger cues that trigger threat responses between partners and the rapidly unfolding process of emotion are portrayed in explicit detail for an overview of Step 3. Step 4 is characterized by partners' emerging recognition and ownership of how they get pulled into and pull their partner into the repetitive negative cycle. Naming the typical positions of pursuit or withdrawal that each one takes, expressing vulnerable underlying emotions driving their self-protective positions, and getting a felt sense of this interactive dance as the core problem of their distress are what a therapist sees and hears in Step 4.

Figure 5.2 Doorways into underlying primary emotion



## What therapist and clients do in Steps 3 and 4

**Step 3** includes further exploring the negative cycle identified in Step 2. The therapist replays the danger cues and together partners and therapist unpack the elements of partners' emotion that create the negative cycle. Therapist interventions that are used to validate secondary, reactive response and to open doorways into unacknowledged primary emotion are illustrated in detail. The tasks and experiences of partners' expanding their experience of emotion and disclosing their underlying emotions previously hidden from awareness are described.

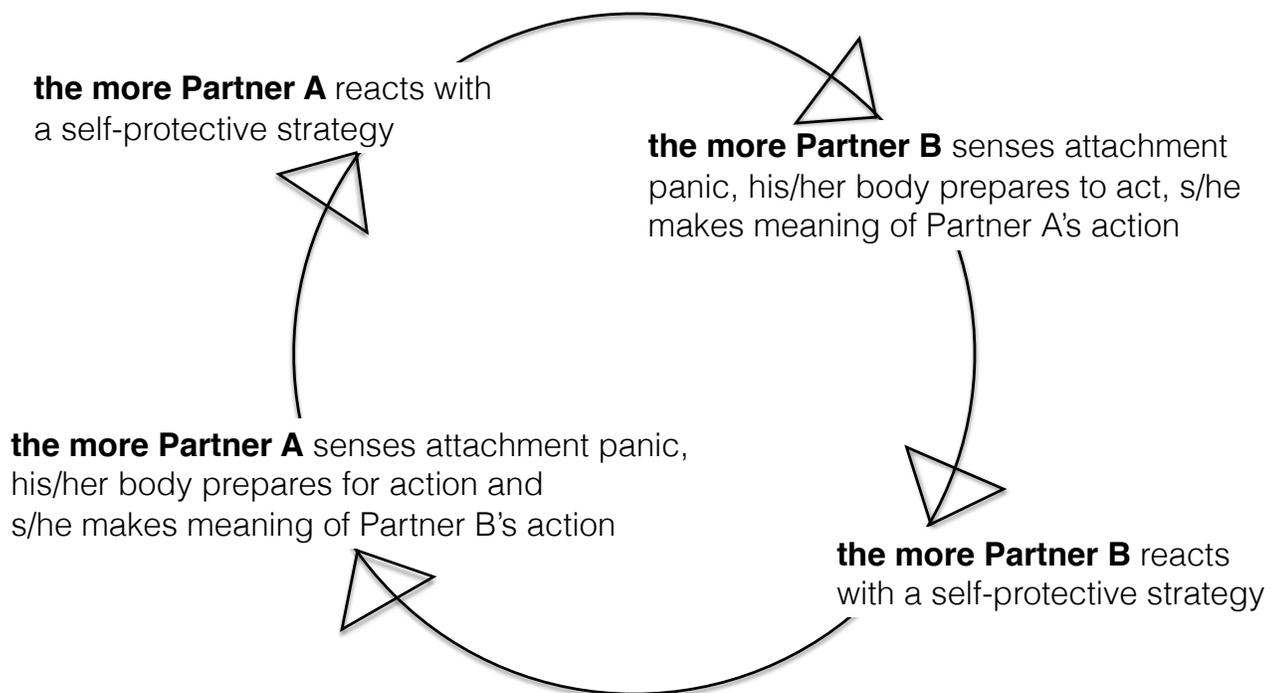
**The Step 4** process of "reframing the problem as a simple dance to powerful emotional music that until now had not been clearly put into words" is detailed.

# How a therapist does Steps 3 and 4

In this section the therapist's therapeutic stance and conscious attention to his or her own emotional balance are explored. Additionally, suggestions are given to help therapists to tune into common patterns of how emotional experience is organized for partners in positions of pursuit or withdrawal and to immerse themselves in the unique experience of each partner's unfolding experience.

The generic visual below, while not in the book, illustrates the basic pattern described in the couple cases throughout the book.

## Circular Causality of a Couple in Distress: Emotions drive behavior, shape meaning, make us feel.



“In EFT, clinicians understand the couple as a system: What one person does or says has an impact on what the other feels, does, or says, and so on in a circular fashion. This is the notion of circular causality (Bertalanffy, 1968), which is at the heart of the EFT conceptualization that couples' difficulties are primarily the result of self-reinforcing interaction patterns” (Greenman & Johnson, 2013, pp 48-49).