

Chapter Six – Working with Emotion to Shape the Withdrawer Re-engagement Change Event (Steps 5 - 7)

I begin Chapter 6 with the seismic shift of the two Stage 2 change events, starting with Withdrawer Re-engagement (WRE). In this chapter I illustrate the “overly determined sense of independence and self reliance” of more withdrawing partners and the survival strategy that more avoidant partners use “to avoid any emotional state that would interfere with their main goal of keeping the attachment system deactivated.” I also present a portrait of withdrawers seeking to avoid experiencing “emotions that are associated with a sense of threat and vulnerability (such as fear, anxiety, anger, sadness, shame, and guilt.”

I present the Step 7 WRE, where a therapist invites the partner to take the ultimate risk of “stepping into the relationship, towards an intimate partner, with vulnerability and assertiveness, taking a stand to give voice to his or her wants and needs.”

What a therapist sees and hears in Steps 5, 6 & 7 WRE

I describe the signs of de-escalation and a growing tone of safety as indications for a therapist to know when a couple is ready to begin Stage 2. “Emotional handles” of a withdrawer’s primary emotional experience are delineated as markers of “the withdrawer’s hidden misery or despair” and as places to begin the expansion and deepening of his or her core attachment fears and needs.

A new dynamic emerges through the Stage 2 process towards WRE, and I describe the elements of newness that a therapist sees and hears.

What therapist and clients do in Steps 5, 6 & 7 WRE

I describe what partners and therapist do to engage withdrawers, first with their own inner experience and then in the relationship. I portray this from the perspectives of the therapist and of the client’s increased sense of risk.

I present the reader with the rationale and the process for a withdrawer to take the lead into Stage 2, “diving more deeply into his or her emotional processes”, distilling and disclosing newly accessed experience to the other partner.

I discuss how an EFT therapist responds to the observing partner's experience of the new disclosures in Step 5 expressions and the assertive re-engagement in Step 7. The therapist's empathic responding to the observing partner, is key in Step 5. I detail the EFT therapist's directive prompting to a withdrawn partner to make take the Step 7 assertive, yet vulnerable reach towards the other partner.

Step 5: Three Ds of Deepen, Distill and Disclose are illustrated to capture what is done in Step 5 with the withdrawer.

Step 6 exploration of the observing partner's response is described.

Step 7: Three Rs of Reach, Respond, Receive are illustrated to capture what is done in Step 7 between the withdrawer and the other partner.

How a therapist does Steps 5, 6 and 7 WRE

From Emily's perspective I describe *how* a therapist uses the EFT interventions to engage a more withdrawn partner with self and with the other partner. I present this manner of working to encompass both change events of Stage 2. The essence of an EFT therapist's manner in Stage 2 is to retain one's emotional balance while attuning to and choreographing the vulnerable, deeper, interactive processes of Stage 2. I propose doing this by situating oneself on the map of Stage 2 with the "3 Ds" (deepen, distill, disclose) and the "3 Rs" (reach, respond, receive), following the five moves of the *EFT tango*, and immersing in the RISSSC manner (repetition, images, simple, slow, soft, use of client's words) to help partners to take risks with each other.

You may enjoy the following exercise on expanding and deepening attachment-related affect in the withdrawer re-engagement change event with Karl and Tara.