

Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFT)

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Emotionally focused couples therapy (EFT) is a short-term, systematic and empirically tested intervention designed to reduce distress and create stronger, more secure attachment bonds in adult love relationships. Formulated in the 1980's by Dr. Sue Johnson, this highly effective approach to couples therapy focuses on emotion (rather than the content of the specific problem a couple is facing) as the essential transforming element in couples therapy. It is a great option available to couples in which both partners are willing to work on repairing their relationship.

In the EFT model, there is no identified patient in a couple. Rather, both partners engage in a cycle (or "dance") that is destructive to their relationship. The EFT clinician helps the couple to identify their destructive cycle. Through this process, we validate both partners' experiences, acknowledging that their reactions to each other are completely understandable. For example, one partner may be an angry pursuer while the other is a withdrawer. The more angrily one partner pursues, the more the other partner withdraws, resulting in a state of distress for both partners.

Once the couple understands their destructive cycle, the goal is to unite them against the cycle, rather than each other. With the cycle as the common enemy, the EFT therapist helps both partners to change the way they react to each other, creating new emotional experiences. Both partners express their underlying fears and needs to each other, and acknowledge each others' emotional experiences. As this "new (healthier) dance" becomes the norm for the couple, both partners experience newly found emotional safety and love in their relationship.