

RELAPSE AND HOMEWORK

EFTC module / February 2021 / WOLFGANG

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Relapse Prevention

How do you start a negative cycle?

- Gives couples a sense of their role and responsibility and control in it.
- Focus on self vs. other is emphasized, *what am I doing to harm the relationship* NOT *he is always doing this...*

How might you start up a positive cycle?

- Gives them a sense of agency that if they get into trouble that can get back to a good place.

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HOMEWORK

- An aspect of emotion coaching
 1. Awareness
 2. Practice (eg. Expression)
- Homework is marker-guided and needs to be given (co-assigned) at **teachable moments**.
- In couples, this is especially important as it creates conflict when it doesn't go well, or doesn't happen.

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HOMEWORK

Goals:

- To promote learning through awareness of something that came up in therapy or practicing some change that has **already occurred** in the session rather than being a main process of change.
- To consolidate and advance in-session work

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AWARENESS HOMEWORK

Awareness Homework:

At start of therapy, often used with identifying blocks, and disowned feelings, needs and aspects of self.

- **Eg.** Have the client pay attention to emotions that are interrupted.
- **T:** "Notice when you feel sad during the week and what you do when that happens?"
- **Eg.** After client in-session says that they get angry with partner for no particular reason. "Notice when you feel angry and what triggers it".
- **Eg.** Having couples be aware of their cycles during the week.

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PRACTICE HOMEWORK

Practice Homework:

Eg. Core Vulnerability Homework:

T: "If it fits, can you express to your partner your vulnerability that came up in here and your need when you feel it during the week?"

T: "What you said in here is: 'I feel insecure that I am not lovable and I need reassurance that you love me...'"

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PRACTICE HOMEWORK

- Practicing new positive ways of being that have emerged in therapy
 - Expressing vulnerability
 - Asking for support or needs
 - Being more responsive and close
- Having partners meet needs that come up in therapy

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RESOLVING EMOTIONAL INJURIES AND FACILITATING FORGIVENESS IN COUPLES

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TREATMENT STUDY – YORK UNIVERSITY FORGIVENESS PROJECT

Do you feel betrayed by your partner and are having trouble forgiving?

Have you been emotionally injured by your partner and are having trouble getting over it?

- Greenberg, L. Warwar, S., & Malcolm, W. (2010). Emotion-focused Therapy and the Facilitation of Forgiveness. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 36, 28–42.



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EMOTIONAL INJURY

An act experienced as a betrayal or a violation of trust that shatters one's expectations of the other or the relationship resulting in anger and/or hurt:

- An attachment injury involves a perceived abandonment, betrayal, or breach of trust in a critical moment of need (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008; Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2000).
- An identity injury involves invalidation or diminishment of self-esteem resulting from a criticism or insult at a time of vulnerability (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008).

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EMOTIONAL INJURIES: COUPLES (N = 40; 20 COUPLES)

Primary Injury N(%)	23 (100%)*
Affair	9 (39%)
Abandonment	7 (30%)
Invalidation	3 (13%)
Alliance/Triangle	2 (9%)
Deception	2 (9%)

*More than 1 primary injury was presented at pretreatment within 3 couples

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FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is not...

- Excusing, condoning, or pardoning
- The same thing as forgetting
- Reconciliation

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FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness usually involves...

- Holding the other accountable for a wrong doing;
- Acknowledging one's own role in the unfolding of events that contributed to the injury, or to the feelings you have had about the injury.
- Giving up one's sense of entitlement to hold a grudge or seek revenge.
- An effort to bring to an end feelings of anger, resentment, and desire for revenge.

This process enables the forgiver to release the offender from responsibility for "fixing" the painful effects of the injury.

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UNFORGIVENESS

- Importance of introducing the term UNFORGIVENESS into the injury.

➤ "It's like you have never forgiven him for that night".

Or

➤ "you have never quite forgiven her for not responding and you pulled away.

- It catches a lot of the feeling meaning of the whole situation.
- There is all that unresolved anger; we want to bring in the language of pain, forgiveness, anger and hurt.

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INJURY AND THE CYCLE

- The injury is not to be treated as a consequence of the cycle, although it may be.
- They are two different things.
- The affair is often a consequence of the core cycle, but we are not making that assumption.
- Not resolving the injury is a consequence of a cycle.

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INJURY AND THE CYCLE

- Is the injury a concrete instance in which the cycle is enacted?
- Is the injury a way of coping with the injury?
- Is the injury a result of the cycle?

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APOLOGY LETTER

If your partner feels injured by you, write a letter of apology to your partner for the hurt you have caused. Please include the following three components:

1. **Regret:** Express what you regret and specify your understanding of how you have hurt your partner.
2. **Responsibility:** Take ownership for your role in the injury by specifying what you are taking responsibility for.
3. **Remedy:** Express what you will do now to help your partner heal from the hurt.

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HURT LETTER

Instructions for Hurt Letter

If you feel hurt by your partner, please write a letter to your partner indicating where you are:

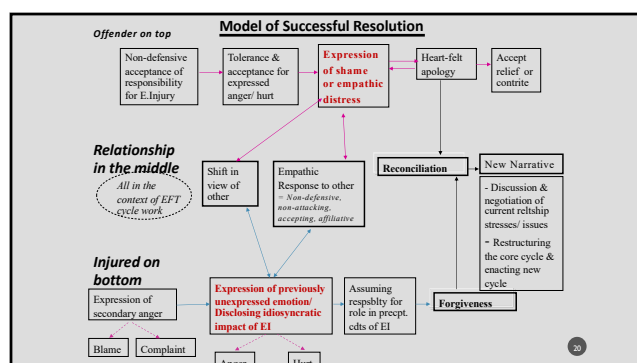
- In the process of resolving, forgiving, and/or letting go of the hurt/anger towards your partner.
 1. Express what you **don't forgive**, or what you are not able to let go of and why it is difficult for you to resolve the injury.
 2. Express what you presently **need** from your partner to help you let go of the hurt/anger and/or to forgive.
 3. If you have **let go of hurt/anger or forgiven** your partner, say what you have done and whether you are able to **reconcile**.

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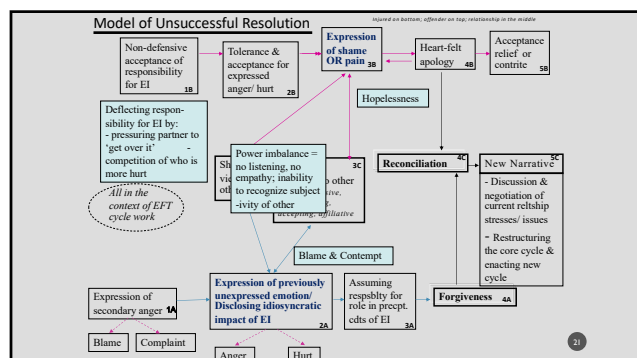
KEY TASKS IN SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION

- 1: REVEAL IMPACT OF INJURY
- 2: APOLOGY
- 3: ACKNOWLEDGE VULNERABILITY
- 4: ACKNOWLEDGE THE WALL
- 5: ACCESS NEEDS & TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

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FORGIVENESS COUPLE (AFTER THE AFFAIR)

- He had an affair 4 years ago, when she was pregnant.
- She feels very betrayed and ensnared. She feels the choice was taken away from her as to whether to stay in the relationship because she was pregnant.
- She had been in two other couples therapies where the therapist told her not to talk about her anger.
- She is angry and critical and he is very defensive.
- He is also somewhat withdrawn and detached.

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REFRAMING CYCLE IN TERMS OF AFFAIR (INITIAL CYCLE)

Woman

Secondary:

Very anxious and needing of support.
When she felt unsupported she became scolding and blaming, critical

Primary: Unsupported and invalidated.
Anxious-insecure.

•Post Extra Marital Affair: Untrusting, more insecure

Man

Secondary: Scolded and defensive: "Good boy response"

Primary: Unloved, not desired.

- When needs not met, looks elsewhere.

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COUPLE : SEQUENCE OF FORGIVENESS AND HEALING

- **She:** Anger. I don't forgive you for betrayal, entrapment.
- **He:** Shame. I'm sorry I was trying so hard to be your rock. I wish I could give you the secure feeling I have.
- **She:** Fear. I'm afraid to put my walls down and trust.
- **He:** I'm feel bad, *I let you down.*
- **She:** There is hope for us.

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FORGIVENESS AND RESOLUTION

- She acknowledges her role.
- Forgives but not forgets.
- Resolving hurt and anger.
- Both feeling more hopeful.
- Ready to get down to core issues between them.

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COUPLE – NEW STRUCTURED CYCLE

Woman

Secondary:
angry

Primary: vulnerable to feeling
unsupported or overburdened

Man

Secondary: rebellious, withdraws, does what he wants

Primary: feeling inadequate, humiliated, small and
unloved, not desired.

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MEANINGFULNESS OF "UNFORGIVENESS"

- Meaningfully captures the feelings of unresolved hurt, pain, resentment, and betrayal regarding the injurious situation.
- Helps the injured person arrive at a meaningful starting point from which to work from.

Examples

- "It's like you have never been able to forgive her for the affair. "

- "It felt like a betrayal and you have never quite forgiven her for embarrassing you, and you pulled away."

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SYMPTOMS OF INJURED PERSON IN AFFAIRS

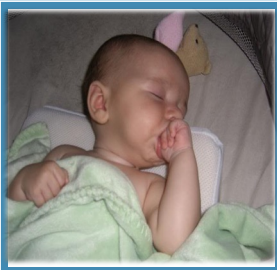
Common symptoms of injured include:

- Obsessive thoughts, flashbacks or intrusive thoughts, numbness and detachment, hyperarousal and hypervigilance.
- Similar to PTSD symptoms

Therapeutic Task

- Validating the "crazy" behavior of the injured in the context of a trauma response
- Connecting it to other trauma

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SELF SOOTHING OR
SELF COMPASSION WORK

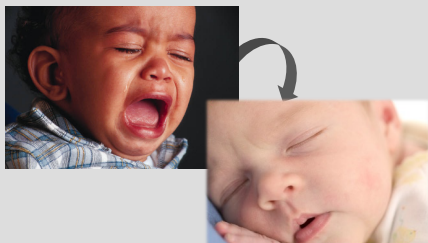
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TWO PHASES OF EFT-C

- Phase I: Couple Processes
 - Stage 1: Validation and Alliance Formation
 - Stage 2: Negative Cycle De-escalation
 - Stage 3: Accessing Underlying Feelings
 - Stage 4: Restructure the Interaction and the Bond
 - Stage 5: Consolidation and Integration
- Phase II: Individual Processes
 - Self-Soothing
 - Self-Criticism
 - Self-interruption
 - Unfinished Business

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Soothing of Anguish



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DIFFERENTIAL EMOTION REGULATION WITHIN COUPLES (ATTACHMENT)

- At times therapists facilitate affect regulation within the couple, such as.....coaching them to face one another, disclose primary vulnerable emotions/needs, process blocks to accessing emotions, and helping partners emotionally respond and meet the other's need.



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DIFFERENTIAL EMOTION REGULATION WITH INDIVIDUALS (IDENTITY)

- Sometimes we facilitate affect regulation within the individual.....such as helping individuals self-soothe, access and work with inner resources to find validation they need. This can also be helpful in face of partner's unavailability.



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ENDURING CHANGE THROUGH SELF-SOOTHING

- First, *other soothing* through responsiveness and corrective emotional experience
- Once some present security and validation has been established
- *Self soothing* through emotion awareness, regulation and transformation

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SELF-SOOTHING AND SELF- COMPASSION

- In any difficult interaction, at least one partner entered into a core maladaptive state of anxious attachment or shameful inadequacy.
- Ability to tolerate a partner's non-attuned responsiveness is greatly helped by having client develop capacity to remember that partner was available or attuned in the past and will be again in the future.
- At certain times, when partners are unable to respond to each other's needs or soothe, each person has to exercise capacity for self-soothing.

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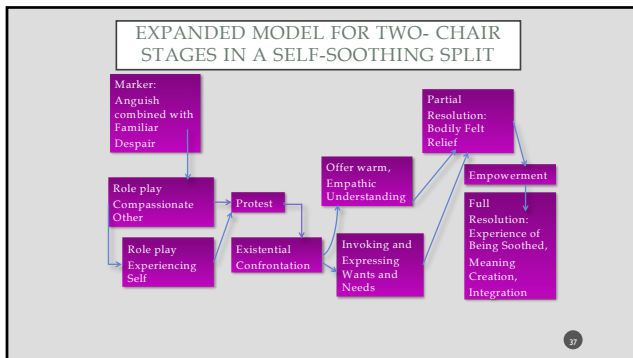
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SELF-SOOTHING TASK

- The self-soothing task for EFT has been described as a dialogue with an imagined other, in which the client is encouraged to soothe and care for the other.

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Reframe the Negative Cycle/Pattern

- The cycle is reframed as the enemy and the source of the partners' emotional deprivation and distress.
- The reactive behaviors are reframed as ways of fighting for the connection or for needing validation.
- For example:
 - A critical partner is seen as desperate to connect vs. hostile. The attack is about fighting for closeness and a distancer is seen as protecting against engulfment/impingement
 - A dominant is seen as needing validation anxiously protecting self from shame or fear and a submitter as protecting self from partners anger and invalidation.

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Restructuring and Shaping Interactions

Enact present position to experience and expand it

Tell her this *I resent when you... or I'd like you to hold me.* This is where we emotionally explore.

Turn New Emotional Experience into a response

C: (Husband who is saying he feels inadequate to meet wife's needs): *I don't have wood to stoke the fire; I've got a twig.*

T: *So, you are actually saying to her, your need is so great, it's more than I can meet.*

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