



UNC-CH SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
Clinical Lecture Series

Emotionally Focused Therapy

An evidence-based integrative approach to relationship distress

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Presentation Agenda

- Learning Goals
 - EFT View of Relationship Distress
 - EFT View of Therapeutic Antidotes
 - Tasks, Interventions & In-session Synthesis
 - Demonstrations of Therapy
 - Becoming an EFT Practitioner
- 

About Me



- ▶ Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- ▶ Certified Emotionally Focused Therapist & Supervisor Candidate
- ▶ Former Clinical Faculty at UNC School of Medicine
- ▶ Currently in Private Practice, Durham, NC (mostly couples)
- ▶ Other Post-Graduate Training and Study: Broad and Integrative



Learning Objectives

1. Learn 1 tenet of EFT's basic theory and science
2. Describe 1 way EFT is rooted in attachment theory
3. Identify 3 stages of changes seen in EFT
4. Describe 2 therapeutic EFT interventions

EFT: Relationships, Distress & Recovery



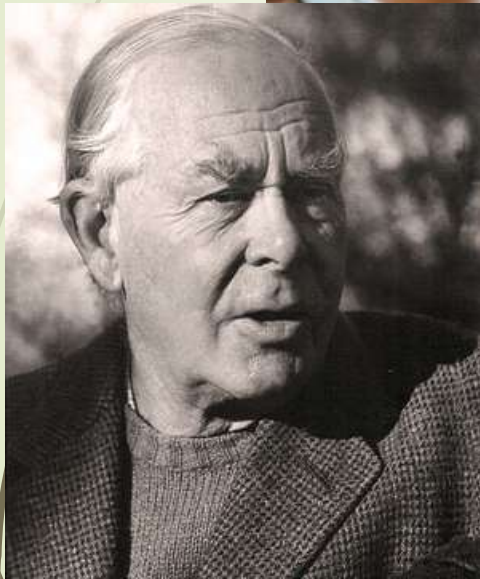
EFT: Relationships, Distress & Recovery



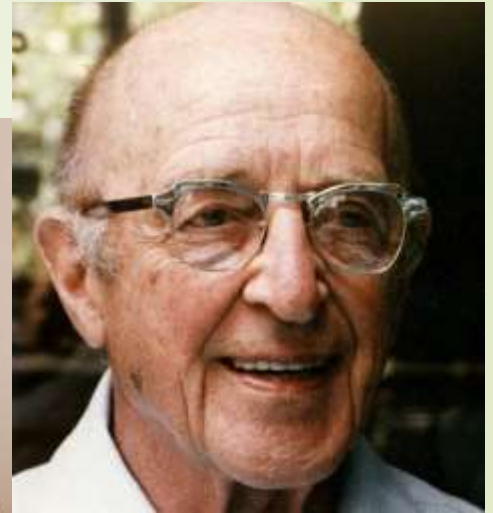
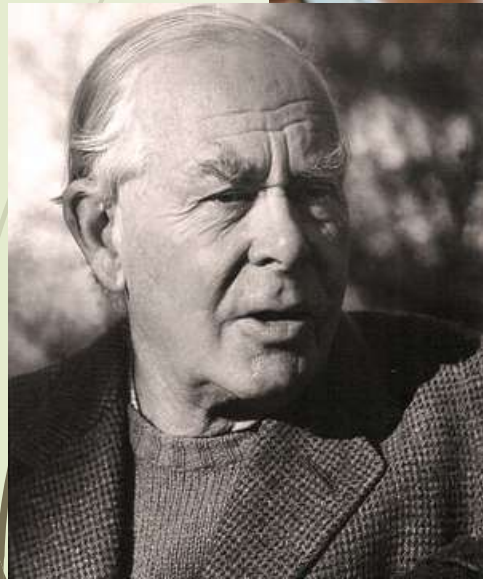
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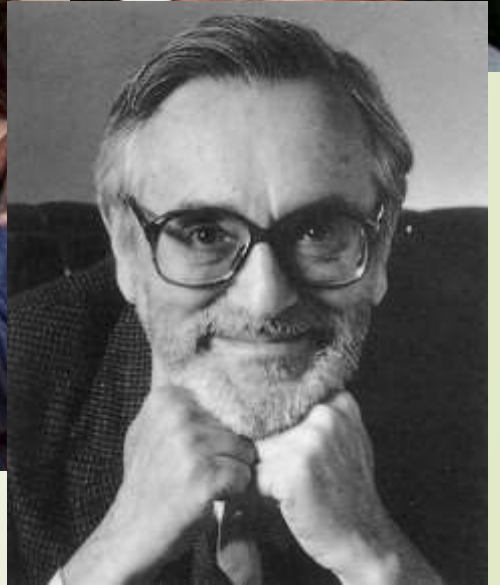
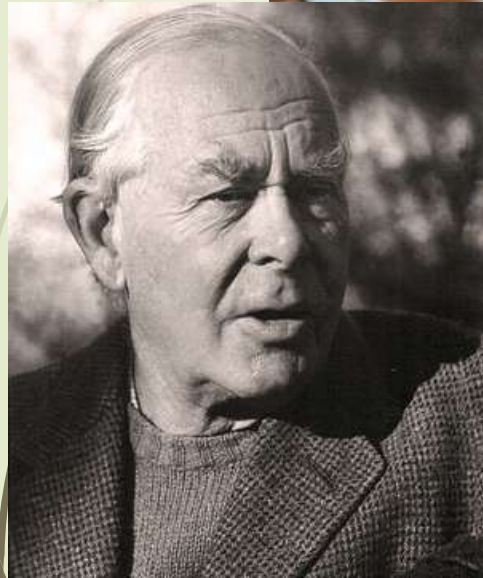
EFT: Relationships, Distress & Recovery



EFT: Relationships, Distress & Recovery



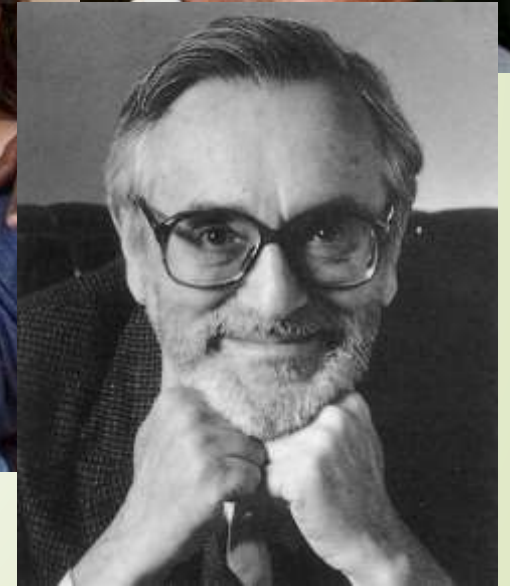
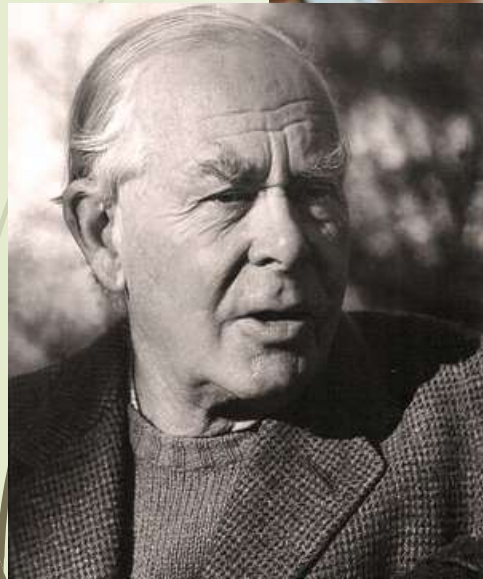
EFT: Relationships, Distress & Recovery



EFT: Relationships, Distress & Recovery



EFT: Relationships, Distress & Recovery





How EFT Thinks

Concepts and Framework about Distress and Therapy



Our Couple: Jamie & Blaire

- ▶ Together for 7 years, Cohabiting for 6 years, Committed
- ▶ Started out passionate, fun, loving
- ▶ After moving in together, friction/conflict erupted
- ▶ Escalations of arguments happened in fits with periods of repair, and loneliness crept in. Then...
- ▶ Jamie had a 1-year long secret affair that started as a friendship, moved into secret intimacy, and then physical intimacy
- ▶ Blaire discovered the affair, Jamie ended the affair, and the relationship has limped along for the past year
- ▶ Explosive arguments and subsequent moments of mutual withdrawal have consumed the relationship
- ▶ Every topic can erupt in interactions this way

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

Our Couple: Jamie & Blaire

- Now they show up in your office: “We don’t know what to do... can you help?”



Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

History of EFT

- ▶ Developed originally in 1980s by Les Greenberg & Sue Johnson
- ▶ Attachment-based model further developed & championed by Sue Johnson in subsequent years



Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

History of EFT



- Johnson's version established and expanded through extensive change process and clinical trial research
- 3 Bodies of Knowledge Integrated:
 1. Humanistic Experiential Psychotherapies (**Rogers**, Perls, Gendlin)
 2. Systemic Psychotherapies (**Minuchin**)
 3. Attachment Theory (**Bowlby**, Hazan & Shaver)
- Attachment theory guides the entire therapy. Can't do EFT without this framing of emotion. Provides coherence.
- Has clear models of training and supervision
- "Living, breathing model... always growing with latest science"

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

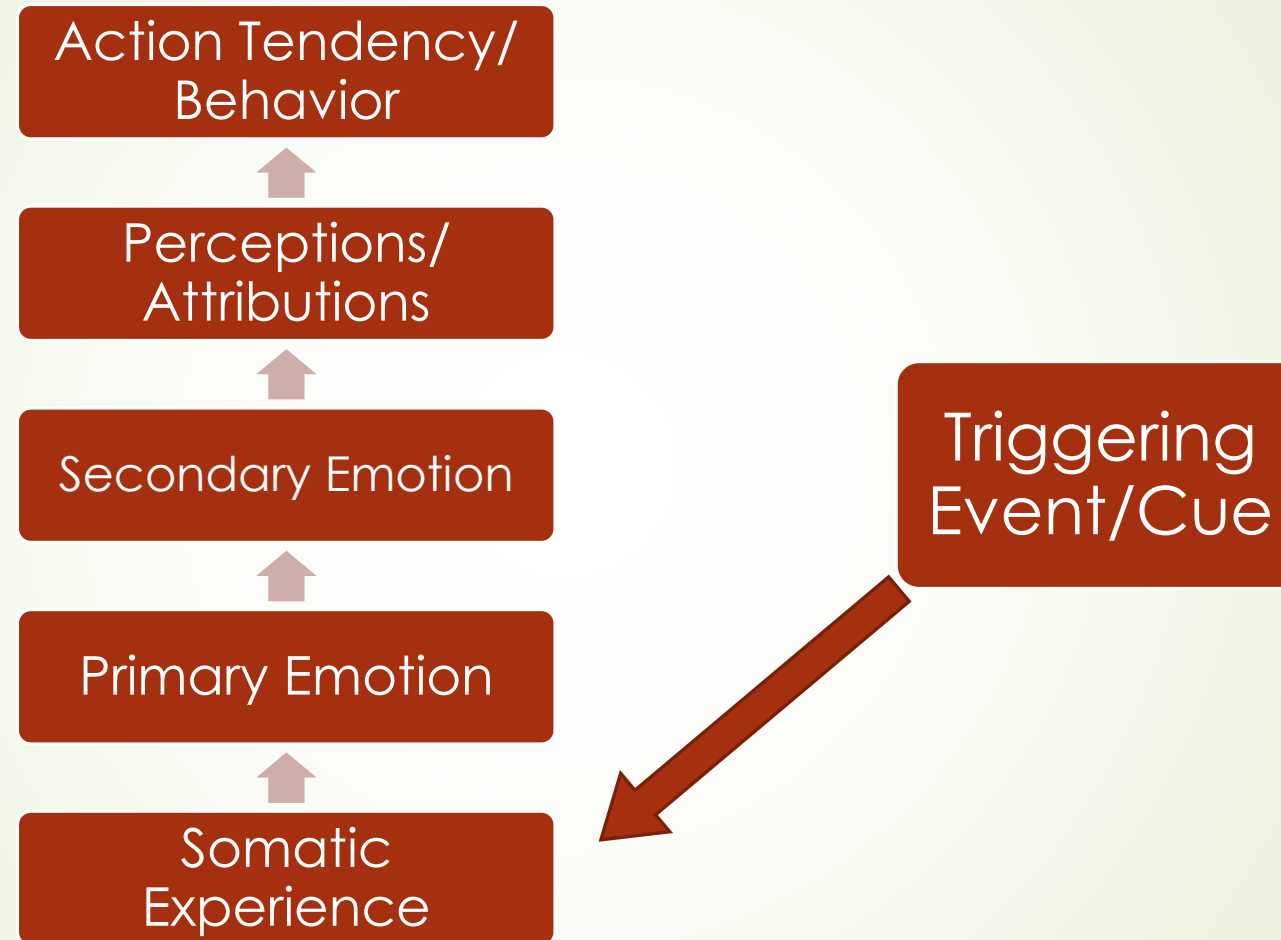


EFT & Emotion Theory

- Emotion includes:
 - Trigger/Cue
 - Bodily Experience
 - Primary, Secondary, & Instrumental Emotion/Feelings
 - Perceptions/Attributions (View of self, View of other, View of Situation)
 - Action Tendency/Behavior

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

Emotional Process



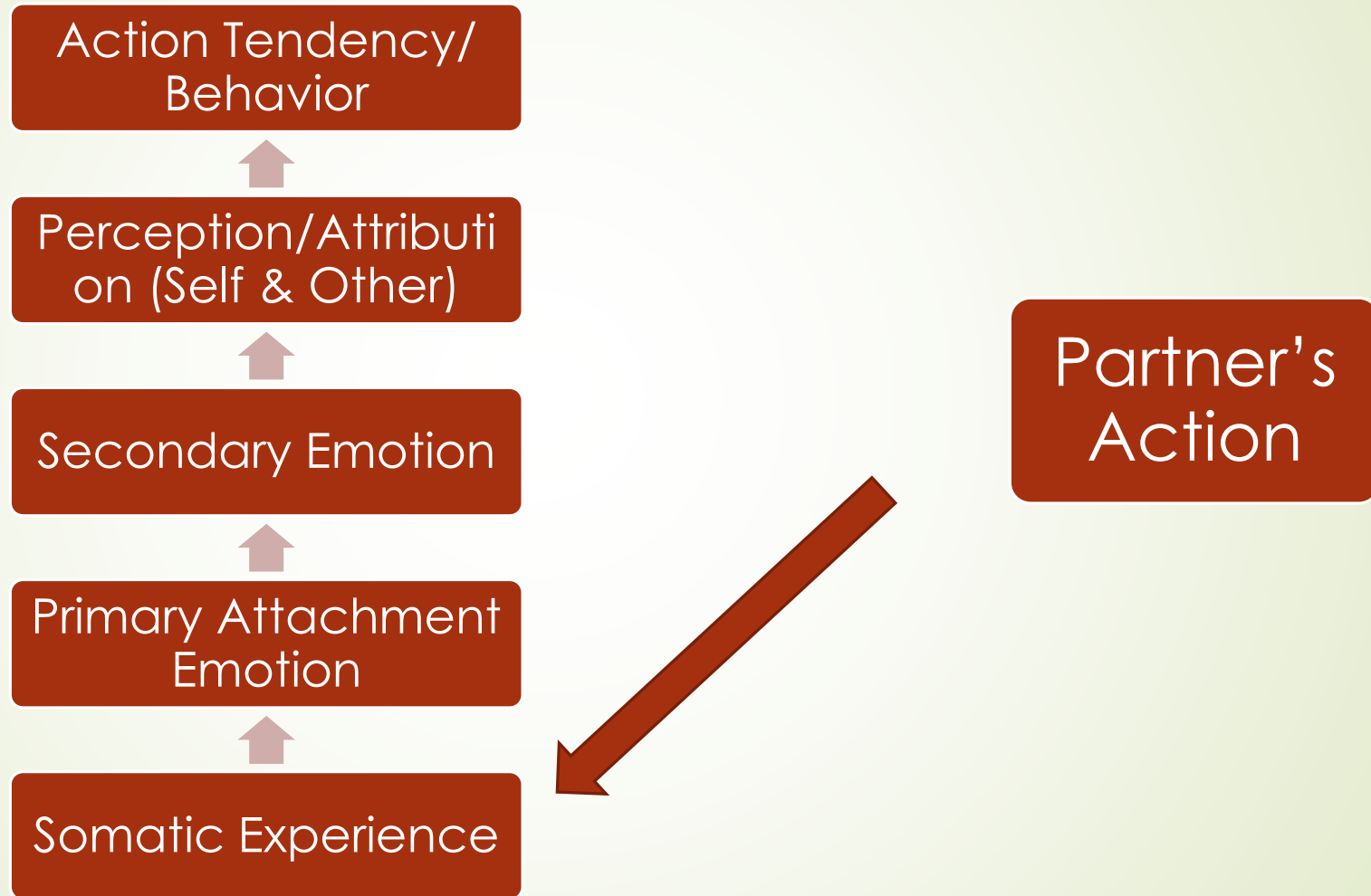
Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

EFT, Emotion, & Attachment Theory

- ▶ Primary (Attachment) Emotions = Core Felt Response to Attachment Figure Interactions
 - ▶ **Anger** at Hurt (Contextualized)
 - ▶ **Sadness** at Loss
 - ▶ **Fear** at Threat of Abandonment, Loss or Annihilation
 - ▶ **Joy** or **Excitement** at Connection
 - ▶ **Care, Concern** and **Compassion** for loved ones
- ▶ Secondary (Reactive) Emotions = Feelings about or covers Core Feelings
 - ▶ Anxiety, Shame or Guilt about vulnerability
 - ▶ Numbness (usually as response to flooding)
 - ▶ Anger that is dysregulated (rage, criticism, venting, etc.)

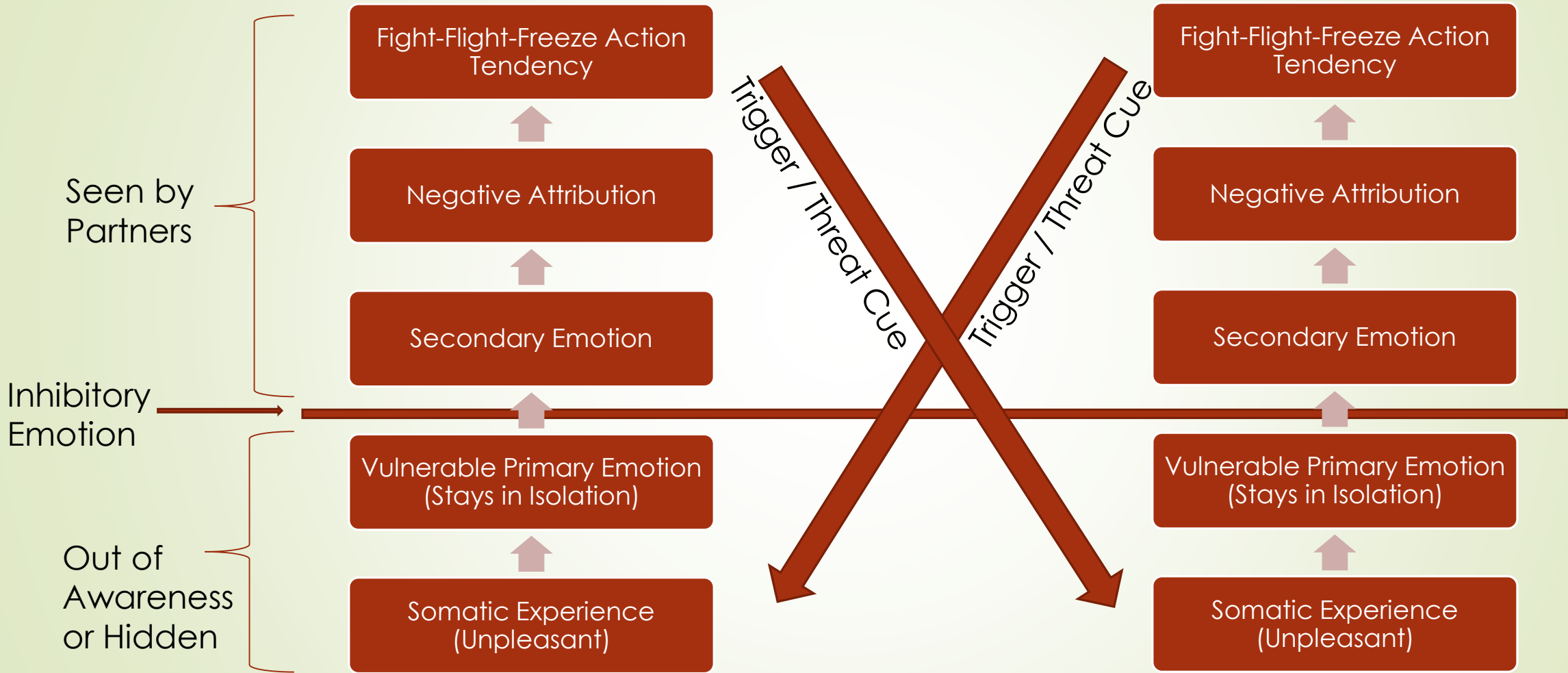
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Attachment Emotional Process



Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

Negative Interaction Cycle



Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



A Couple's Escalation: Sound On

➤ https://youtu.be/_bqhVqTuFO4

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



Our Couple: Jamie & Blaire



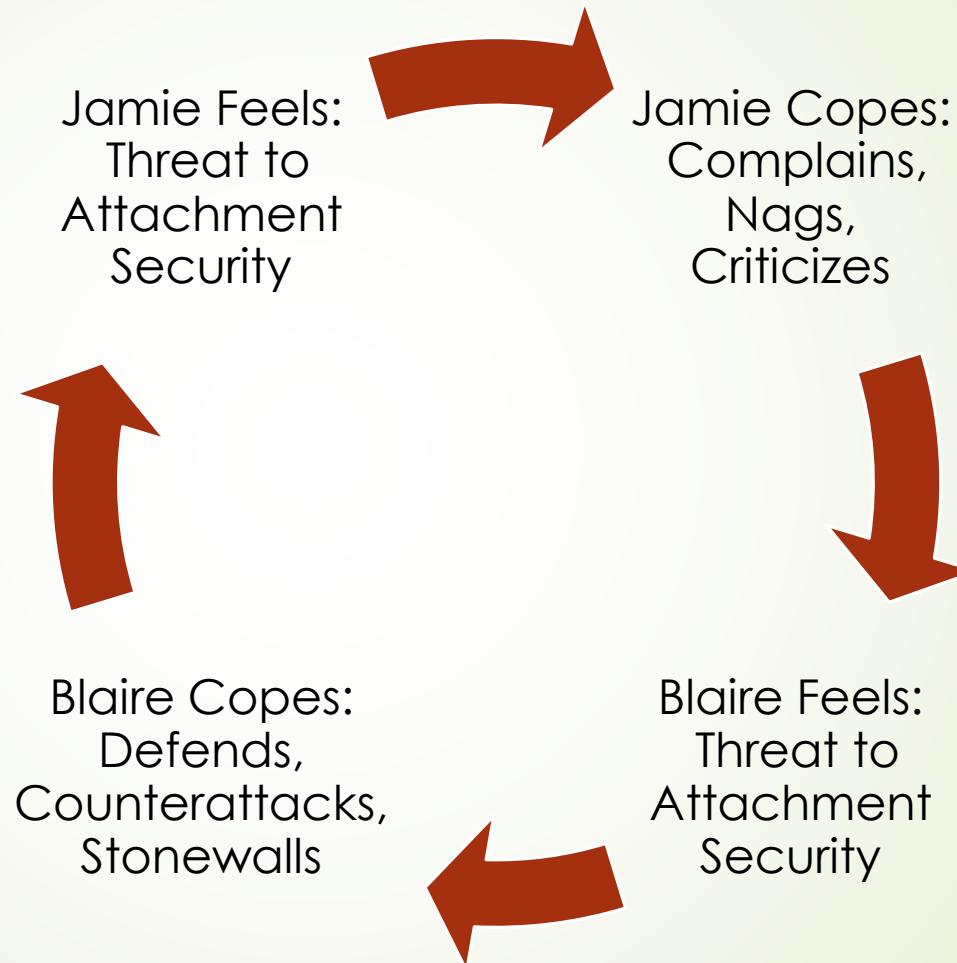
Blaire Defends,
Counterattacks,
Stonewalls

Jamie
Complains,
Nags, Criticizes



Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

Our Couple: Jamie & Blaire



Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



A Couple's Escalation: Non-verbals

➤ https://youtu.be/_bqhVqTuFO4

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

Our Couple: Jamie & Blaire

Jamie Feels:
Sadness
Fear of
Abandonment

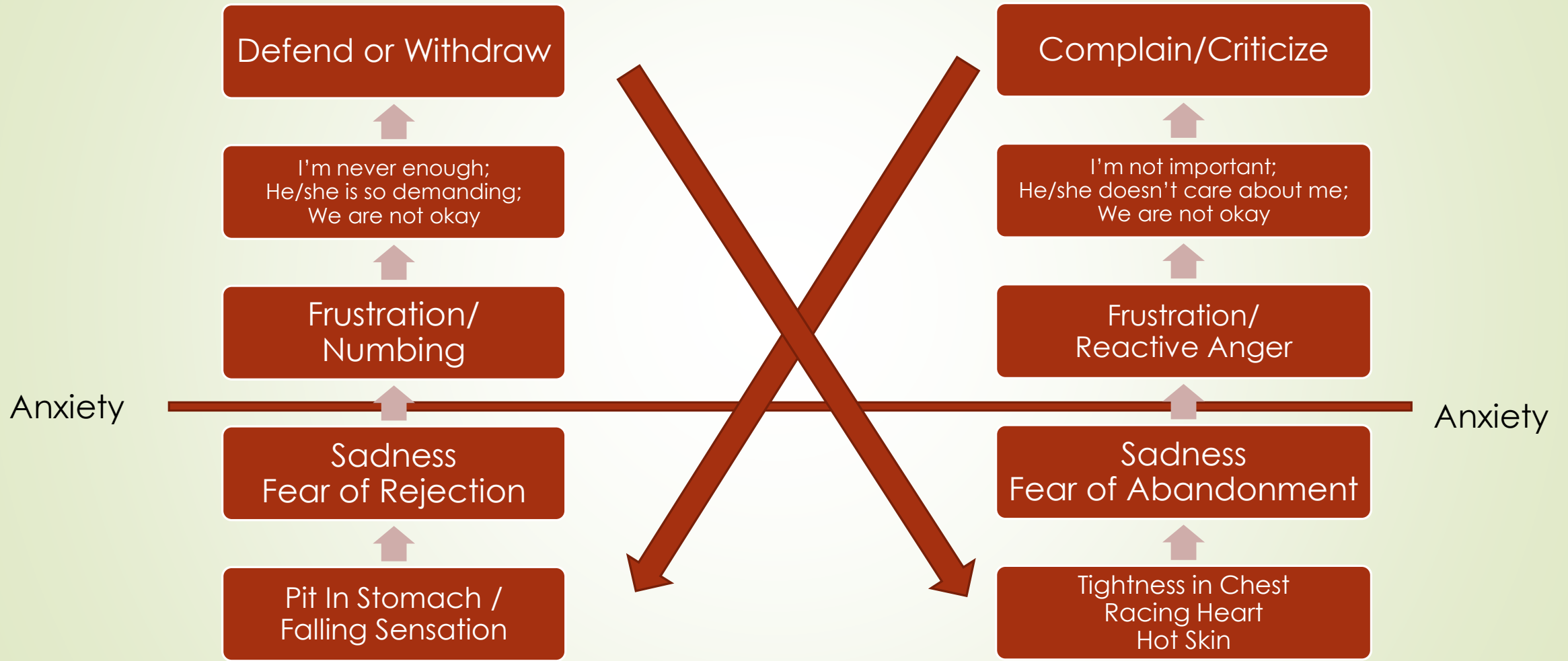
Jamie Complains,
Nags, Criticizes
(Attempt to Connect
to Manage Threat)

Blaire Defends,
Counterattacks,
Stonewalls (Attempt
to Downregulate to
Manage Threat)

Blaire Feels:
Sadness
Fear of
Rejection

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

Jamie & Blaire Negative Cycle



Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidotes → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

EFT's Therapeutic Antidotes

Stage 1 (First Order Change)

Experience the Cycle as the Enemy
"Make the Covert – Overt"



Stage 2 (Second Order Change)

Restructure the relationship through Corrective Emotional Experiences
Expressing, receiving, and responding to Primary Emotion and Associated Attachment Needs & Longings

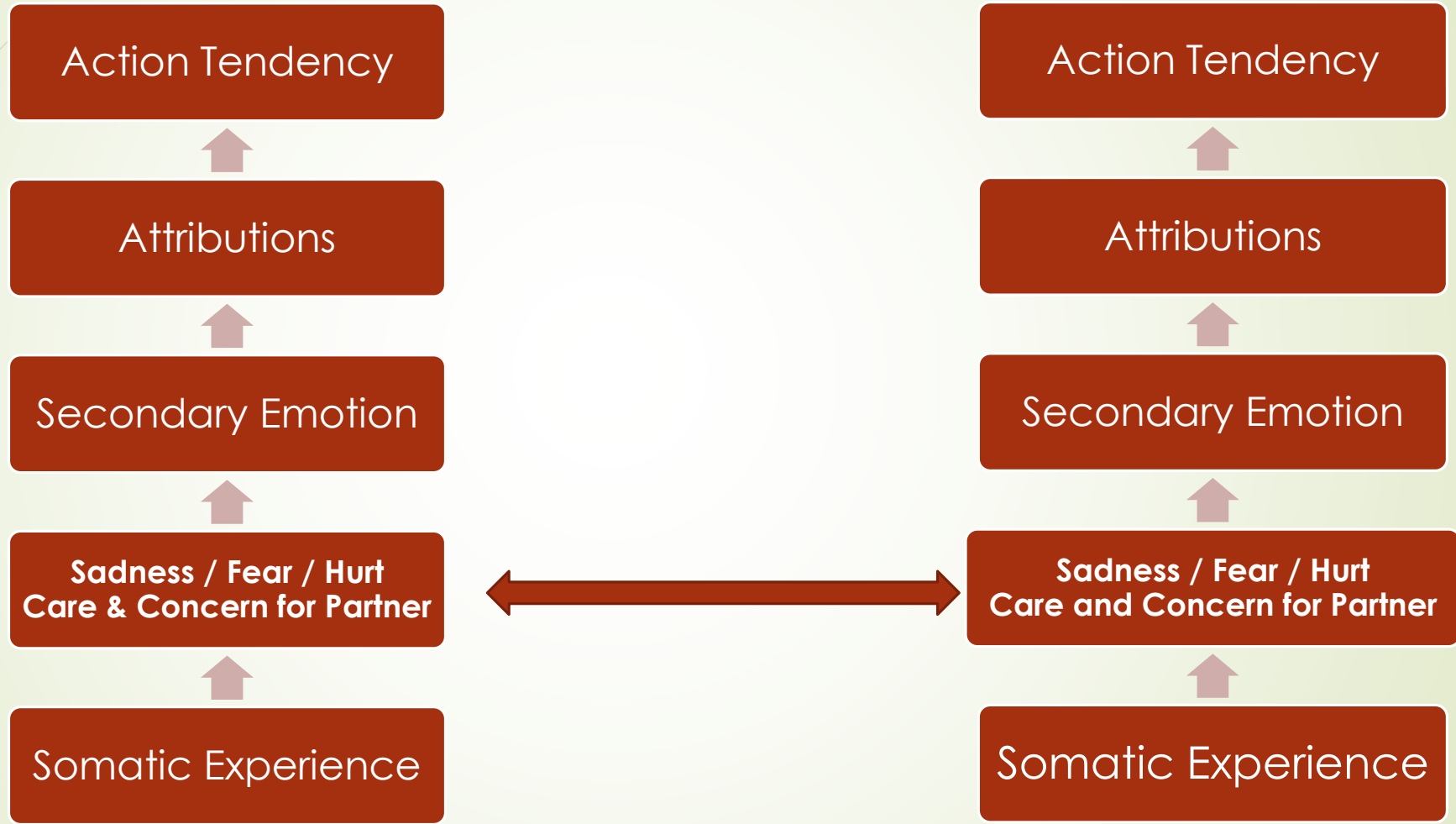


Stage 3 (Integration)

Synthesize Changes and Protect Bond

Relationship Distress → **Therapeutic Antidote** → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

Antidote: Sharing Primary Emotion



Relationship Distress → **Therapeutic Antidotes** → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

Our Couple: Jamie & Blaire

Jamie Feels:
Compassion,
Concern, Care,
Closeness,
Earned
Security

Jamie Increasingly
Shares:
Fears, Sadness,
Longings for
Closeness

Blaire Increasingly
Shares:
Fears, Sadness,
Longings for
Assurance

Blaire Feels:
Compassion,
Concern, Care,
Closeness,
Earned
Security

Relationship Distress → **Therapeutic Antidotes** → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



Questions Thus Far?

Information Overload?



How EFT Works

Technique & Skills



EFT Technique & Skills

- ▶ EFT Encourages the Therapist to:
 - ▶ Work in a Client-Centered humanistic fashion, privileging alliance, personhood and strengths
 - ▶ Work with all aspects of emotion explicitly with warmth, compassion, and active, engaged stance in session
 - ▶ Lead and Follow client interactions in the room, and choreograph new moves
 - ▶ Privilege Experience over Insight
- ▶ EFT Does Not Encourage:
 - ▶ Coaching or Teaching
 - ▶ “Top Down” Psychoeducation
 - ▶ Pathologizing or Diagnosis

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

➤ 3 Principles to Guide Any Intervention

1. Build and Maintain **Alliance and Attunement**
2. **Assemble, Organize, and Reframe Emotion** in Attachment Terms
3. **Restructure Interactions** around Primary Attachment Emotions and Longings

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

1. Reflection of Emotional Experiences
2. Validation
3. Evocative Responding
4. RISSSC
5. Heightening
6. Empathic Conjecture
7. Tracking and Reflecting Patterns
8. Reframing Experience in Terms of Attachment
9. Enactments

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

Reflection of Emotional Experiences

- “I hear you, Jamie, when Blaire “goes numb” and freezes, this internal alarm goes off, and you are instantly feeling alone and sad.”
- “I hear you, Blaire, when Jamie “gets hot” and criticizes you, a chill sets over you, and you begin to worry if this is going to be it for you in the relationship.”

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

Validation:

- “It makes sense to me that you feel that alarm when you read the freeze as if Blaire doesn’t care about you. That would alarm anyone who cares.”
- “It makes sense to me that you feel that sinking feeling about the thought of losing the relationship with Jamie.”

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

Evocative Responding:

- “Jamie, what happens inside of you, deep down, just before you go into a critical mode?”
- “Blaire, you say that you hear that attacking tone in Jamie’s voice, and you go cold. What else do you notice, even right now as we talk about this happening?”

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

“RISSSC”:

- **Repeat** back what you hear
- **Imagery** from client's mind
- **Simple** reflections
- **Slow** pacing
- **Soft** tone of voice
- Use **Client's** Words

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

Heightening:

- ▶ “Jamie, this fear you speak of, this fear of Blaire walking out on you, it grips your heart and squeezes, yeah? It is so hard to be in this feeling, so alone.”
- ▶ “Blaire, I get how bad this is. How awful and dreadful it is to feel on the edge of being rejected from the relationship. Thinking “I can never get this right.” You care so much about being “the good guy” to Jamie?”

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

Empathic Conjecture:

- To the leading edge of the person's experience... not far beyond:
- "If I'm in your shoes, Jamie, I'm feeling sad as well as scared. It's as if you've already been left. Am I in the ball park here?"
- "Blaire, help me out here if I'm getting this wrong, but it sounds as though you are hurting in these moments?"

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

Tracking and Reflecting Patterns:

- “Does it happen the same at home as it was just now, where it feels too risky to reveal these softer feelings, and instead you get caught in your anger and want to fire away or pull back in silence?”

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

Reframing Experience in Terms of Attachment:

- “Of course you’re sad, Jamie, and of course anger fills in the space when the sadness is so hard to talk about. This connection is too important to give up.”
- “Of course you feel afraid, Blaire. The idea that you could be rejected and lose the relationship with the person you prize the most could be terrifying. And numbness and freezing are what we do when we don’t see a positive impact coming from talking about that fear.”

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



EFT Technique & Skills

Setting Up Enactments (Choreographed New Actions):

- ▶ “Jamie, what do you imagine it would be like to turn to Blaire and talk about ‘I do get caught in my anger, and I do criticize you in those moments. My criticism wants to be closer to you, and I know that may sound strange, but really deeper down, what I don’t tell you is that I’m feeling deeply afraid about not being able to reach you.’?”
- ▶ “Blaire, could you turn to Jamie and talk more from that pit in your stomach about that sadness, that fear?”

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



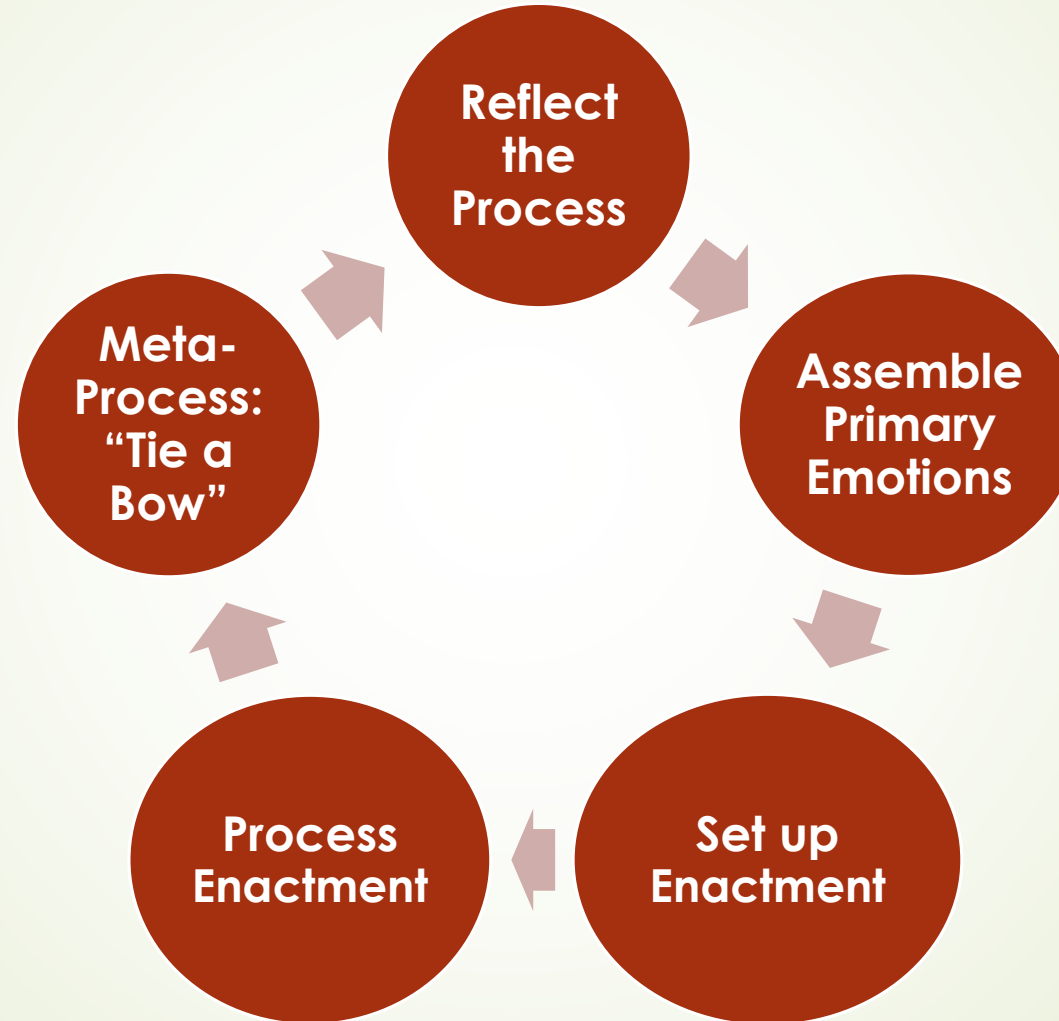
EFT Technique & Skills

Processing Enactments:

- “What was that like to say that?”
- “What was that like to hear him/her talk about (repeat the primary emotion in the context of the interaction)?”

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner

In-Session Flow ("The 5 Moves")



Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → **Tasks & Interventions** →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



Stage 1 Couple Example

- ▶ Lorrie Brubacher, LPC, RMFT
 - ▶ Certified EFT Trainer, Supervisor and Therapist
 - ▶ Director of Carolina Center for EFT

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



Stage 2 Couple Example



Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → Becoming an EFT Practitioner



Training

- ▶ 2-day workshop @ UNC Dec 6-7 (not applied towards certification)
- ▶ Training Towards Certification
 - ▶ Basic training: 4-Day Externship
 - ▶ Core Skills (4 weekends over a year)
- ▶ Master classes and Special Topics
 - ▶ Addictions
 - ▶ Trauma
 - ▶ Infidelity
 - ▶ Family Therapy Format
 - ▶ Individual Therapy Format
 - ▶ Cultural Adaptation

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → **Becoming an EFT Practitioner**



Supervision

- Offered by Certified Supervisors and Approved Supervisor Candidates
- Focuses on:
 - Alliance & Attunement
 - Conceptualization
 - Experiential and Systemic Skills
 - Self-of-the-Therapist (as needed and desired)
- Minimum of 10 hours required towards Certification

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → **Becoming an EFT Practitioner**



Support

- Peer Support Groups (run by Supervisors, Certified Therapists, and Additionally Trained EFT therapists)
- Regional Listservs (Determined by Centers and Trainers)
- International Listserv (Run by ICEEFT – comes with membership)
- EFT Summits (happen every few years)

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → **Becoming an EFT Practitioner**

Certification

- ▶ Completion of Externship and Core Skills Trainings
- ▶ Completion of Minimum 10 Hours EFT Supervision
- ▶ Submission of Two Recorded Sessions Approved by Supervisor
 - ▶ Transcribed Dialogue with Interventions Noted
 - ▶ Demonstration of Stage 1 and Stage 2 work
- ▶ Professional References
- ▶ Documentation of:
 - ▶ Professional Degree
 - ▶ Psychotherapy Licensure
 - ▶ Professional Liability Insurance
 - ▶ Professional Organization Membership

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → **Becoming an EFT Practitioner**

Books by Sue Johnson

➤ Professional Texts

- Attachment Theory in Practice: Emotionally Focused Therapy with Individuals, Couples and Families (2019)
- Creating Connections: The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (2004)
- Becoming an Emotionally Focused Couple Therapist: The Workbook (2005)
- Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors: Strengthening Attachment Bonds (2005)

➤ Books for Laypeople

- Love Sense: The Revolutionary New Science of Romantic Relationships (2013)
- Hold Me Tight: 7 Conversations for a Lifetime of Love (2008)

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → **Becoming an EFT Practitioner**



Books by Trainers

➤ Professional Texts

- Stepping Into Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (Lorrie Brubacher)
- Emotionally Focused Casebook (James Furrow et al.)
- Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy for Dummies (Brent Bradley et al.)
- Emotionally Focused Family Therapy: Restoring Connection and Promoting Resilience (Furrow et al., 2019)

➤ Books for Laypeople

- Sacred Stress (George Faller)
- Emotionally Focused Workbook for Couples: The Two of Us (Veronica Kallos Lilly)

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → **Becoming an EFT Practitioner**



Other Resources

- ▶ Workshops
 - ▶ Hold Me Tight (Couples)
 - ▶ Hold Me Tight/Let me Go (Families with Teen Children)
- ▶ Web Trainings
 - ▶ EFT Lab
 - ▶ Attachment Injury Resolution Model
- ▶ Web Sites
 - ▶ www.iceeft.com
 - ▶ www.carolinaeft.com
 - ▶ www.triangleeft.com

Relationship Distress → Therapeutic Antidote → Tasks & Interventions →
Demonstrations → **Becoming an EFT Practitioner**



Thanks!

Questions? Feedback?