

Key Strategies Training

Lesson Four:

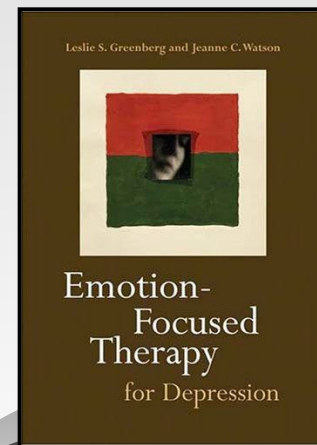
Exploring Feelings using Emotion-Focused Strategies

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Emotion-Focused Therapy

- Emotion-Focused Therapy was developed by Leslie Greenberg
- Directly targets emotional processing
- Combines the passive following of person-centered therapy with the active guidance of gestalt therapy (Greenberg, 2011)



Primary, Secondary, & Instrumental Emotions

Instrumental Emotions

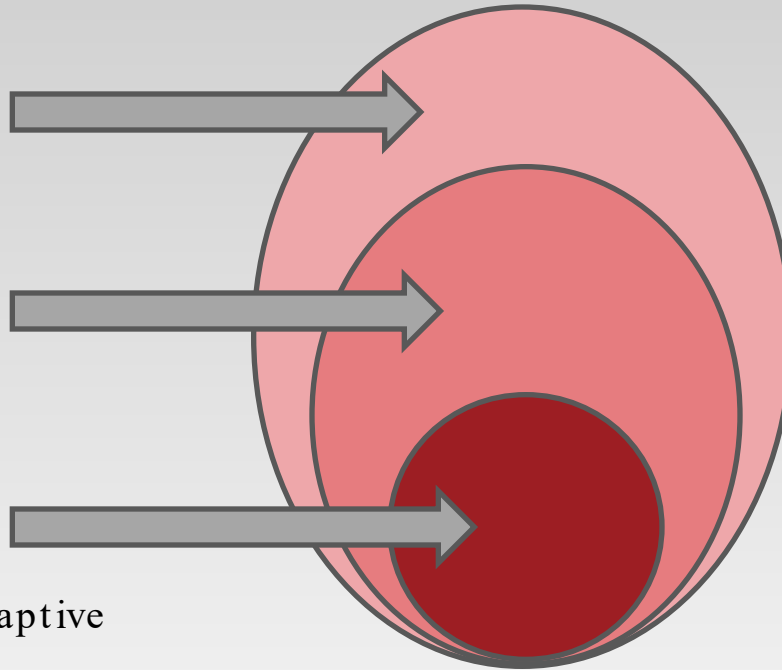
are displayed to others to serve a social purpose.

Secondary Emotions

are a reaction to a primary emotion or to a thought.

Primary Emotions

are at the core of experience but may not be recognized or displayed outwardly. Primary emotions may be adaptive or maladaptive.



Emotional Adaptation

Emotions have evolved to help people *adapt* to the environments they encounter.

Primary Adaptive Emotion Responses

“The normal function of emotion is to rapidly process complex situational information to prepare the person to take effective action.”

(Elliott, Watson, Goldman, & Greenberg, 2004)

Adaptive Emotional Responses

- *Fear* is an adaptive response to...
danger.
- *Anger* is an adaptive response to...
violation.
- *Sadness* is an adaptive response to...
loss.
- *Guilt* is an adaptive response to...
doing something *wrong.*
- *Pride* is an adaptive response to...
doing something *well.*

Maladaptive Emotional Responses

- ***Fear*** is maladaptive when you are not in danger.
- ***Anger*** is not helpful when you have not been violated.
- ***Sadness*** is maladaptive when there has not been a loss.
- ***Guilt*** and ***Shame*** may be harmful when you have not done anything wrong.
- ***Pride*** may be maladaptive when you haven't done something well.
- Any of these emotions can be ***maladaptive*** when they are disproportional to the situation.

Maladaptive Emotions

- *Emotion Focused Therapy* (EFT) suggests that emotions are vital in the construction of the self and are key variables in how one interacts with their environment.
- The adaptive value of emotions lies in their ability to alert an individual of both potential negative and positive outcomes of present or future environmental experiences (Greenberg & Paivio, 1997).
- *Maladaptive emotions* often involve “over-learned responses” from previous experiences that begin to negatively affect an individual’s ability to function in their current environment (Greenberg, 2008).

Maladaptive Emotions

Psychological problems are often associated with maladaptive emotions, including:

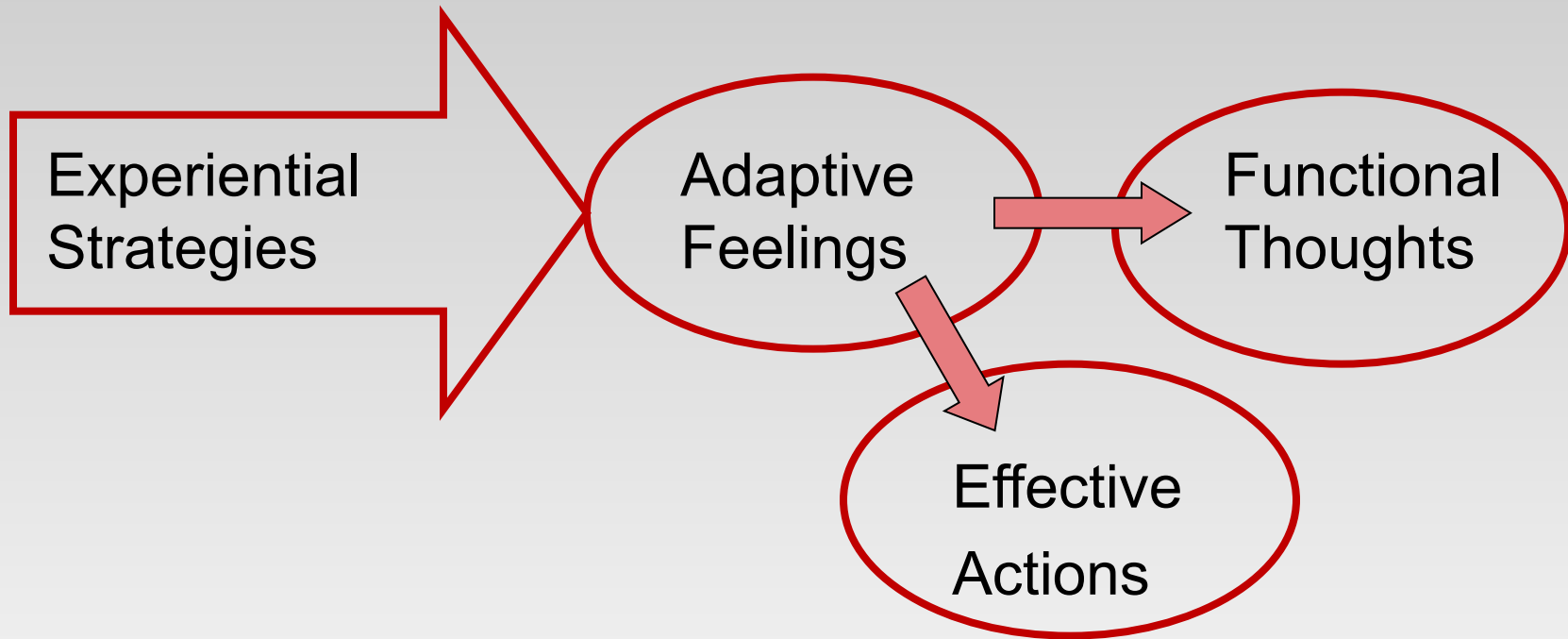
- Unresolved grief
- Fear of day-to-day stressors
- Overwhelming guilt and shame
- Anger at self and others

(Greenberg, 2011)

Emotion-Focused Strategies

- Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) uses feelings as a point of clinical leverage to encourage multidimensional change.
- EFT strategies encourage adaptive feelings, explore personal experiences, and promote awareness and growth.
- Adaptive feelings help people evaluate situations, organize for effective action, and match situations in a proportional manner.

Emotion-focused interventions are designed to have a primary impact on feelings and a secondary impact on thoughts and actions.



Exploring Feelings

EFT-1. Focusing on feelings related to clients' presenting concerns

EFT-2. Understanding the context and function of specific feelings

EFT-3. Analyzing feelings to determine if they are adaptive or maladaptive

EFT-4. Discovering unexplored emotional experiences that may be outside of awareness

Changing Feelings

EFT-5. Experimenting with new feelings and helping clients overcome emotional blocks

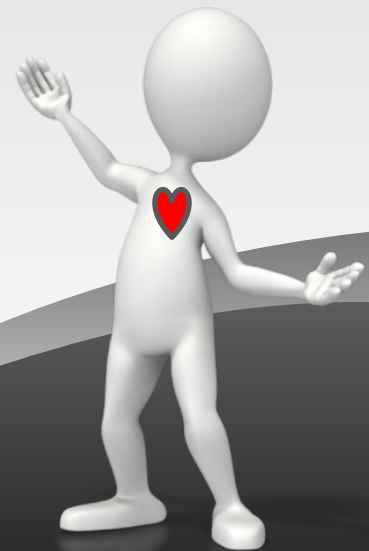
EFT-6. Generating adaptive feelings as an alternative to problematic emotional patterns

EFT-7. Reflecting on emotional responses to consolidate meaning

EFT-8. Assessing emotional change, looking at multidimensional impact, and considering a shift in focus

Exploring Emotions

“Therapists seek first to explore... ambiguity to understand what is occurring inside the client. They then help clients understand their feelings more clearly using techniques for enhancing emotional processing skills” (Greenberg & Watson, 2006, p. 154).



Strategies for Exploration

- **EFT-1:** Focusing on Emotions
- **EFT-2:** Understanding the Impact of Emotions
- **EFT-3:** Analyzing the Adaptive Value of Emotions
- **EFT-4:** Discovering Emotional Patterns outside Awareness



EFT-1: Focusing on Emotions

Focusing on emotions related to clients' presenting concerns

Theoretical Context

“The first and most general goal in EFT...is to promote emotional awareness. Client’s ability to articulate what they are experiencing in their inner world is a central focus of EFT” (Greenberg & Watson, 2006, p. 75).



EFT-1: Focusing on Emotions

Strategy Marker

When a counselor observes that maladaptive emotions seem to play a key role in promoting and maintaining dysfunctional patterns in a client's life, it may be helpful to focus attention on these distressing feelings and help the client identify specific emotions.



EFT-1: Focusing on Emotions

Suggestion

A counselor first listens for the presence of emotional responses in the client's presenting concerns. This can be accomplished by focusing on a recent event and asking, "What were you feeling in that situation?"



EFT-1: Focusing on Emotions

Expected Consequence

Helping clients focus on and identify feelings will lead to increased awareness of emotions preparing clients for the future work of determining how their affective responses function in their life.



EFT-1: Focusing on Emotions

Example:

- **Counselor:** *How are you feeling right now as you're talking about your mother?*
- **Client:** *I feel angry and worried because she is never satisfied with me.*
- **Counselor:** *Tell me about being angry.*
- **Client:** *It eats away at me, like a constant pain. I'm always on edge. It's exhausting!*



EFT-2: Exploring Context and Function

Understanding the context and function of specific feelings

Theoretical Context

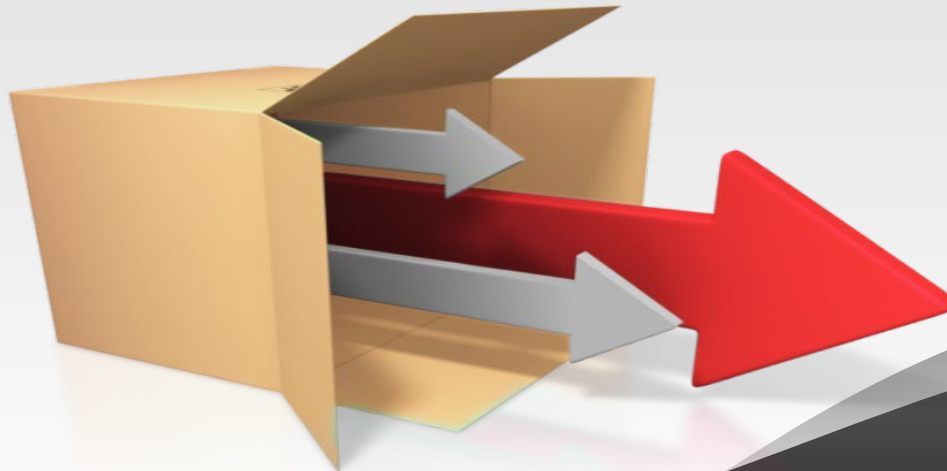
“Therapists can help clients become aware of and understand their feelings by attending to the triggers, or situational stimuli, that spark the feelings. Identifying the triggers helps clients and therapists begin to understand how clients construe the events in their lives and react to those events” (Greenberg & Watson, 2006, p. 175-176).



EFT-2: Exploring Context and Function

Strategy Marker

After identifying specific feelings, it may be useful to identify emotional triggers as well as understand how emotions may be interacting with thoughts and actions.



EFT-2: Exploring Context and Function

Suggestion

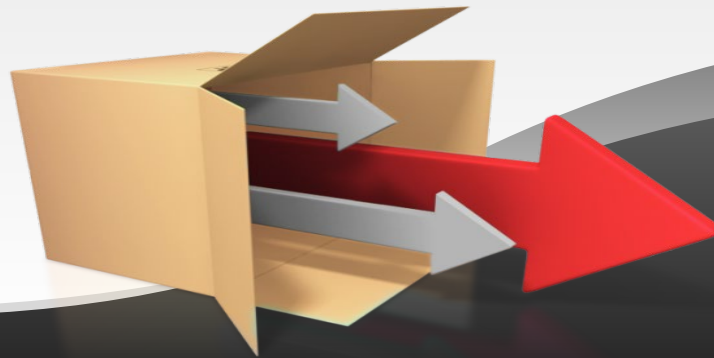
Counselors can assist clients in connecting unclear or vague feelings leading to an inability to respond in an adaptive manner by exploring emotions related to life events and asking clients what happened just before and after they began feeling the emotion.



EFT-2: Exploring Context and Function

Expected Consequence

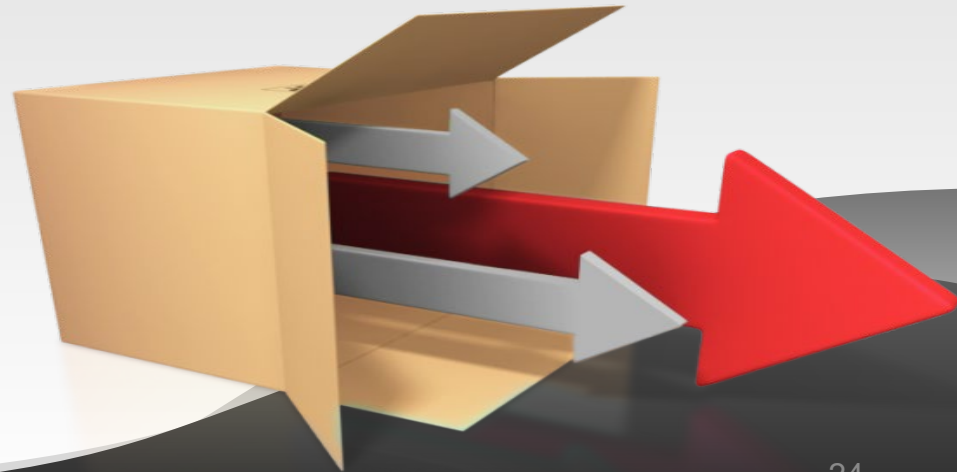
Clients who become more aware of their emotions and how they function in their lives can better articulate those emotions and learn to evaluate them as they occur. The goal of this strategy is to assist clients in understanding triggers and consequences of their feelings as well as to understand how the interaction of maladaptive emotions, dysfunctional thoughts, and ineffective actions creates and maintains distress in their lives.



EFT-2: Exploring Context and Function

Example:

- **Client:** *I feel hopeless, like things will never get better.*
- **Counselor:** *I wonder if there are certain times that these feelings impact you more strongly?*
- **Client:** *When I'm with my mother, and pretty much anytime I think about how she criticizes me.*
- **Counselor:** *How do you act on those feelings?*
- **Client:** *I don't do anything.
I just feel bad inside.*



EFT-3: Analyzing Emotions

Analyzing feelings to determine if they are adaptive or maladaptive

Theoretical Context

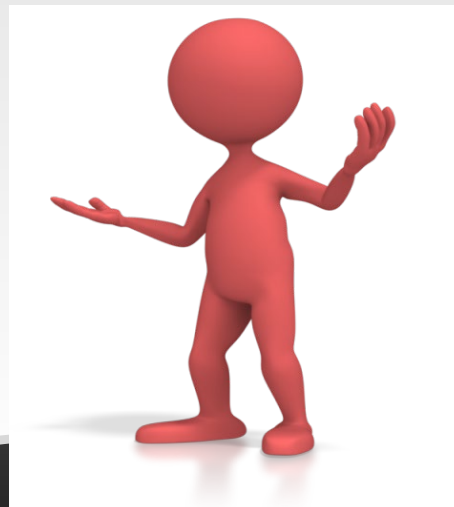
A “crucial distinction to be made is between primary emotions that are adaptive, which are accessed for their useful information, and primary emotions that are maladaptive, which need to be transformed” (Greenberg & Watson, 2006, p. 69).



EFT-3: Analyzing Emotions

Strategy Marker

An important step in emotion-focused work is to evaluate feelings to determine whether they are adaptive or maladaptive. The goal of this analysis is to identify which emotional responses are in need of modification and will thereby lead to effective global change.



EFT-3: Analyzing Emotions

Suggestion

Counselors can help clients differentiate between their healthy and unhealthy emotional responses by exploring whether emotions are experienced in a manner congruent with a situation. Maladaptive emotions may be overwhelming, avoided, intellectualized, blocked, or not expressed despite being felt.



EFT-3: Analyzing Emotions

Expected Consequence

Clients who become more aware of their emotions as adaptive or maladaptive are better equipped to reflect upon, evaluate and make changes in their reactions to life events. Feelings which are found to be maladaptive, once identified, can begin to be replaced with more adaptive, healthy emotional responses.



EFT-3: Analyzing Emotions

Example:

- **Counselor:** *What about your relationship with your mother provokes anger?*
- **Client:** *She criticizes me so harshly.*
- **Counselor:** *Do you think your anger is helpful?*
- **Client:** *Sometimes I think it protects me from her. At other times I think it separates us.*



EFT-4: Discovering Patterns

Discovering unexplored emotional experiences that may be outside of awareness

Theoretical Context

“Primary and core emotions are often accessed through differentiation and exploration of the secondary emotion, and accessing...the primary emotions is the fundamental aim” (Greenberg & Watson, 2006, p. 208).



EFT-4: Discovering Patterns

Strategy Marker

When the therapist observes that a client may be avoiding or unaware of deeper feelings, a counselor can focus the client's attention on cues and possibilities that may help uncover hidden emotional responses.



EFT-4: Discovering Patterns

Suggestion

In order to access undiscovered emotions, a counselor must attend to incongruence between content and affect, drawing attention to the possibility of underlying feelings in the client's concerns.



EFT-4: Discovering Patterns

Expected Consequence

Helping clients discover unexplored emotional patterns will lead to a new experience of those patterns in the future allowing clients to become more aware of how the feelings work in their everyday lives.



EFT-4: Discovering Patterns

Example:

- **Client:** *My mother always tells me what to do. I'm not a child!*
- **Counselor:** *It's tough being treated like a child.*
- **Client:** *It feels like I'm going to get into trouble all the time and it scares me.*
- **Counselor:** *So, underneath your anger at your mother, are you feeling afraid?*



