

Key Strategies Training

Lesson Five:

Transforming Feelings using Emotion-Focused Strategies

**Leslie Kelley
& Jeff Harris**



Lesson 4: 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

Transforming Emotions

“The goal in EFT...is change in self-organization through increased emotional awareness and regulation, and the use and transformation of emotion” (Greenberg & Watson, 2006, p. 9).

Lesson 5: Transforming Feelings

EFT-5. Experimenting with emotions

EFT-6. Modifying emotions

EFT-7. Generalizing and consolidating emotions

EFT-8. Assessing emotional change & impact

EFT-5: Experimenting with Emotions

Experimenting with new feelings and helping clients overcome emotional blocks

Theoretical Context

“As blocks to experience and expression emerge, therapists need to focus on them and help clients become aware of and experience how they interrupt their feelings or needs...Therapists need to work more specifically on accessing new feelings. Focusing clients’ attention on possibilities...is one important general principle of accessing new feelings” (Greenberg & Watson, 2006, p. 241; 251).



EFT-5: Experimenting with Emotions

Strategy Marker

When clients are unable to overcome blocked feelings which may impede further therapeutic progress, the therapist can begin to help clients experiment with new emotions by focusing on alternative ways of experiencing life events that were not previously considered.



EFT-5: Experimenting with Emotions

Suggestions for Use

Counselors may help clients overcome blocked emotions by encouraging the expression of feelings previously discouraged or forbidden. For example, a counselor may ask a client to emphasize or exaggerate blocked emotional experience by saying to the client, “You’re saying that you are angry at your mother, but you don’t sound very mad. Try saying it like you are really angry.”

EFT-5: Experimenting with Emotions

Expected Consequence

Clients who become more aware of blocked emotions and new feelings may discover hidden aspects of experience which will likely lead to change. The goal of this strategy is to assist clients in direct experiential learning and increased self-awareness.



EFT-5: Experimenting with Emotions

Example:

- **Client:** *I can't express these feelings of fear toward my mother or she'll just get angry.*
- **Counselor:** *Let's try an experiment. Imagine your mother being harsh and critical. Imagine how you feel. What would you like to say?*
- **Client:** *When you tell me I'm wrong all the time, I feel scared you won't love me anymore, like I'm 6 years old again.*

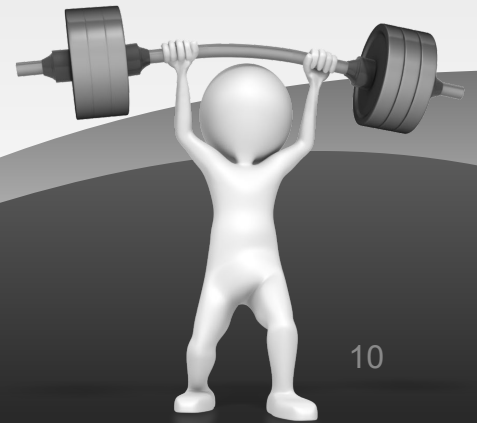


EFT-6: Modifying Emotions

Generating adaptive feelings as an alternative to problematic emotional patterns

Theoretical Context

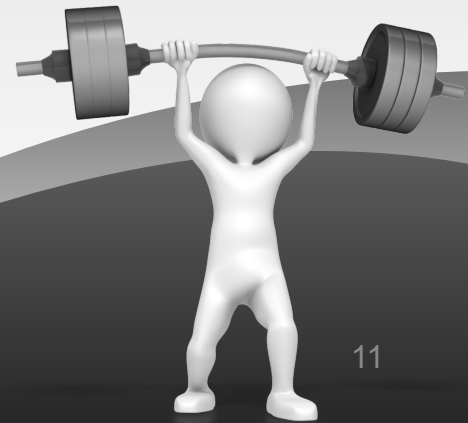
“Once clients have accessed core dysfunctional emotion schemes...such as feeling shamefully worthless or helplessly insecure, the scene is set for mobilizing alternative emotional responses based on adaptive needs and goals to expand clients’ repertoire and transform the maladaptive state.”
(Greenberg & Watson, 2006, p. 281).



EFT-6: Modifying Emotions

Strategy Marker After clients have experimented with new ways of emotionally responding to situations in their life, an important next step is to foster change by implementing a regimen of utilizing new feelings adaptive to the client's current situation.

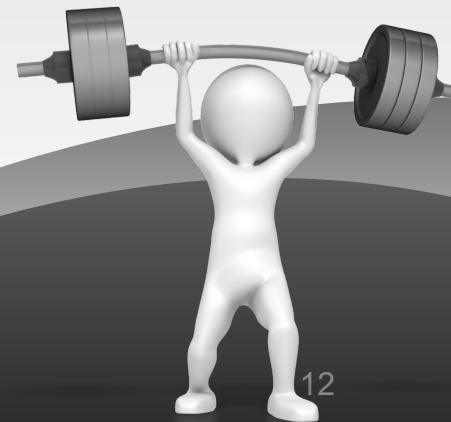
Clients may elicit many differing emotional responses so it is important to have explored which responses are adaptive.



EFT-6: Modifying Emotions

Suggestions for Use

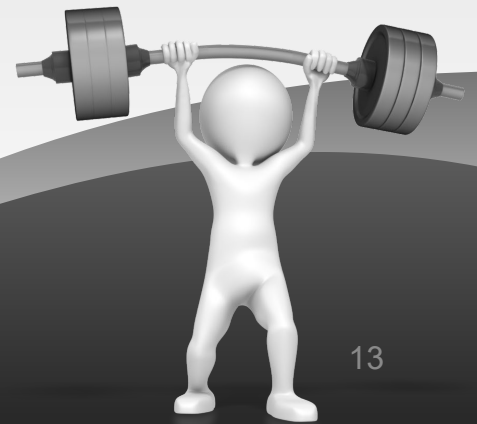
When clients are unable to manage the ways in which they emotionally respond to events in their lives, it may be beneficial to help them systematically change their emotional responses by focusing attention on this process within psychotherapy. Subsequently, clients may target recurring situations outside of therapy in which to experiment with a new way of responding.



EFT-6: Modifying Emotions

Expected Consequence

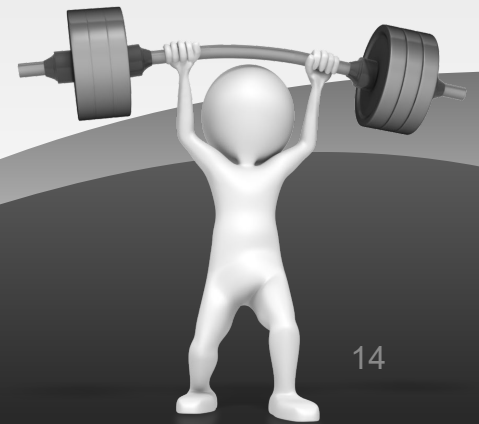
Clients who are able to make changes to problematic emotional patterns may initially experience conflict as they are behaving in ways which others may not recognize. Over time, however, clients are expected to be more capable of expressing their core primary feelings with those who are central within their lives.



EFT-6: Modifying Emotions

Example:

- **Client:** *I can't hold this fear anymore, I'm going to be crushed.*
- **Counselor:** *It's too much. You just need...*
- **Client:** *I just need a break. I need to feel okay with me, to be good enough the way I am.*
- **Counselor:** *How does it feel to express your needs?*
- **Client:** *I feel a huge sense of relief. It's liberating.*

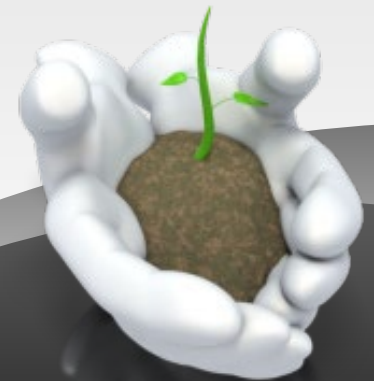


EFT-7: Generalizing & Consolidating

Reflecting on emotional responses to consolidate meaning

Theoretical Context

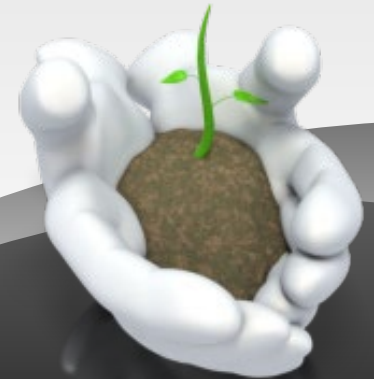
“When clients reflect on their experiences, they make connections between different elements of their lives, begin to posit alternative explanations for their experiences, revise their views of themselves or their history, and develop new narratives” (Greenberg & Watson, 2006, p. 303).



EFT-7: Generalizing & Consolidating

Strategy Marker

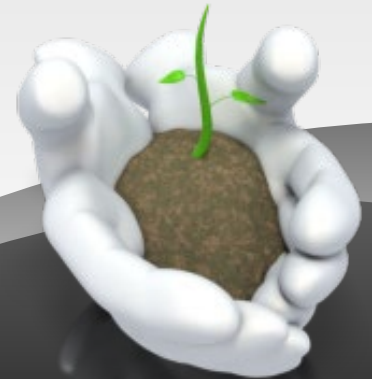
Clients who have modified emotional patterns in psychotherapy may be ready to generalize these results to other areas of their lives. Reflecting on these changes may help consolidate meaning and construct a new narrative leading to consistent emotional expression across situations.



EFT-7: Generalizing & Consolidating

Suggestions for Use

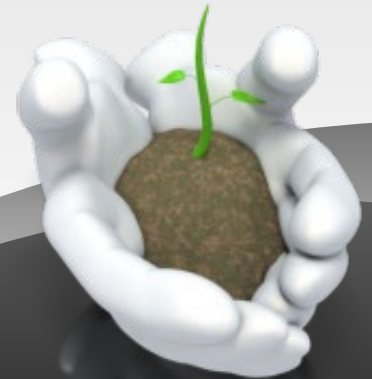
A counselor may encourage a client to become aware of emotional inconsistencies from situation to situation by asking, “Now that you feel that you have made significant progress, how does that affect other areas of your life?” or “How does it change your life story?”



EFT-7: Generalizing & Consolidating

Expected Consequence

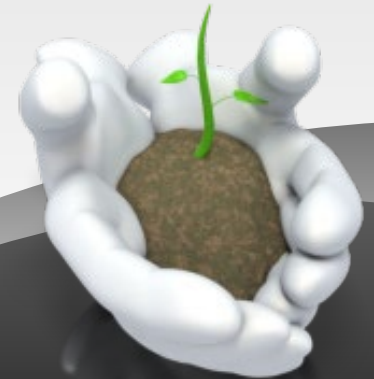
Clients who have changed problematic emotional patterns and have generalized these changes throughout their lives are expected to be more capable of contacting and expressing their feelings and may be ready to consider termination.



EFT-7: Generalizing & Consolidating

Example:

- **Client:** *Learning to recognize and express my fear has made me feel better.*
- **Counselor:** *How has this change affected your life?*
- **Client:** *I feel like I'm learning how to care for myself and stand up for myself.*
- **Counselor:** *Is there someone else in your life that you'd like to try sharing these feelings with?*



EFT-8: Assessing Change & Impact

*Assessing emotional change, looking at
multidimensional impact,
and considering a shift in focus*

Theoretical Context

Greenberg and Watson (2006) mentioned that a client may be “stuck” while focusing on emotions “if he or she experiences a primary maladaptive emotion persistently in the same manner, such that the manner of experiencing and emotional awareness do not progress” (p. 73).



EFT-8: Assessing Change & Impact

Strategy Marker

After significant emotion-focused work has been undertaken, it may be important to measure the impact of change on emotional, cognitive, and behavioral functioning, thereby determining whether further therapy is indicated and whether this work should focus on thoughts, actions, or feelings.



EFT-8: Assessing Change & Impact

Suggestions for Use

When therapists feel that a client has accomplished significant affective gains or that a client is stuck and unable to make further progress by focusing on emotions, it may be helpful to shift focus to thoughts or actions by discussing the potential benefits of shifting focus and beginning to utilize cognitive or behavioral strategies.



EFT-8: Assessing Change & Impact

Expected Consequence

It is predicted that clients who have undertaken several sessions targeting feelings and are not ready for termination may benefit from additional work focusing on thoughts or actions.



EFT-8: Assessing Change & Impact

Example:

- **Client:** *I've made progress being able to tolerate my fear and anger about my mother, but I still seem to have difficulty acting the same old ways.*
- **Counselor:** *Perhaps we should shift focus and look at specific actions you can use with your mom to enact your new feelings.*



