



## Carolina Center for EFT

### CORE SKILLS TRAINING

#### Session Two: Steps 3-4 of EFT

#### Changing the Music: Cycle De-escalation

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The process topics and core skills will be applied to role-plays, and case consultations

**NOTE:** Chapters most relevant to Core Skills 2 Workshop:

Chapter 5, "The Tyranny of Unheeded Attachment Fears: Unpacking Emotion in the De-escalation Change Event" (Steps 3 and 4), in Brubacher (2018) *Stepping into Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: Key Ingredients of Change*.

Chapter 6, "Changing the Music: Toward De-escalation/Stabilization," in Johnson (2019), *The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: Creating Connection*

Chapter 3, "Interventions" and chapter 5, "Steps 3 and 4: De-escalation," in Johnson et al (2005). *Becoming an Emotionally Focused Therapist: The Workbook*.

LINK for Externship Articles and Chapters: [carolinaeft.com/articles-and-chapters-for-externship.html](http://carolinaeft.com/articles-and-chapters-for-externship.html)

## **Session Two: Steps 3-4 of EFT**

### **Learning Objectives**

1. To have an increased knowledge base of Steps 3 and 4 of EFT.
2. To improve skills in validating secondary emotional reactions and exploring each partner's underlying emotional experience.
3. To actively engage with and focus on emotional experience occurring in the here and now.
4. To monitor the alliance with the "observing" partner and keep that partner engaged in the process.
5. To appropriately apply the interventions to steps 3 and 4 – i.e.: Validation, evocative reflections and questions, heightening, empathic conjecture, tracking and reflecting cycles, expanding emotional experience using "RISSC" skills, reframing the problem in terms of the cycle, and choreographing enactments.
6. To create positive attachment frames to reframe negative cycles of interaction.
7. To identify Stage 1 de-escalation and differentiate it from Stage II change events.

## Changing the Music: Cycle De-escalation

Step 3: Access unacknowledged feelings underlying the interactional positions

Step 4: Reframe the problem in terms of the underlying feelings and attachment needs

Defining the terms;

- **Underlying feelings** = primary feelings (Usually sadness/pain or fears that are often covered over by more reactive secondary emotions of frustration, anger, or numbness.) Accessing emotion in EFT includes promoting *active engagement with emotional experience in the here and now.*
- **Interactional positions:** The position each partner takes in the negative cycle to pursue or withdraw. The pursuer is the partner who is typically anxious and pursues for contact and connection. The pursuer tends to take a critical, fighting stance when in separation distress. The withdrawer is typically avoidant and tends to move away and shut down and tends to move into fight, flight or freeze responses when in separation distress.

**How do you know when you have reached de-escalation?** (See Johnson, 2004. p.144, 145.)

- There is more safety (less reactivity) in the relationship. Partners are aware of and sometimes able to stop their automatic reactivity.
- The interactions are more fluid, but the basic organization of interactions has not changed.
- Each partner's experience of self and other is less constricted.
- Each partner has an experiential sense of the alarm bell that rings for them in the relationship (their core fear) and how they typically react to this danger. They are also beginning to sense how their reactive position triggers their partner's core fear.
- There is greater awareness of how their cycle /patterns of interaction block engagement and leave them feeling powerless.
- A sense of efficacy emerges: "If we created [this cycle], may-be we can make it better."

*Each partner has a felt sense of their reinforcing cycle as the real problem: "The more I do \_\_\_\_ (what I typically do when under stress), the more you fear/dread \_\_\_\_ (your biggest attachment fear). And the more you fear/dread \_\_\_\_ (your biggest attachment fear, the more you do the very thing that triggers me to do \_\_\_\_ (what I typically do when under stress).*

**What does de-escalation look like for Pursuers?**

- Relief to see the withdrawn partner is not indifferent or uncaring, but is hiding to protect him/herself from the enormity of his/her partner's actions.
- Beginning to access own longings for connection; still very angry and mistrusting, but not as hostile, and beginning to talk about his/her sadness and desperation.

### **What does de-escalation look like for Withdrawers?**

- Relief to see partner is being hostile not because of random aggressiveness but because he/she is making a desperate response to his/her position of hiding.
- Is now speaking about his/her paralysis instead of just going numb.

### **What is the end goal of Step Four/De-escalation?**

- New kind of dialogue emerging: instead of rapid reactivity, beginning to be emotionally engaged with each other.
- Couple has co-created with the therapist their own meaningful story of how the pattern defines their relationship and how they create this pattern. This story fits with their emotional experience of the relationship.
- Conflicts are calmer; feel closer.
- Partners are “owning” positions and underlying emotions:
  - E.g. Withdrawer owns and talks about his/her paralysis or fear instead of going numb.
  - E.g. Pursuer owns and talks about her desperateness, sadness and need for connection instead of reacting automatically.

## 2. Review of Basic Cycles:

Review of five basic cycles and positions, in which distressed couples get stuck, and which the EFT therapist should be skilled at recognizing and empathically exploring.

The most typical cycle is:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Essentially there are two other basic cycles, but in practice EFT therapists sometimes speak of 4 others. What are they?

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Question:** What are the basic levels of the cycle as seen in the unfolding process of emotion, sometimes portrayed in the metaphor of the infinity loop?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Answer: The levels of the cycle (all elements of emotion):**

- Perceived cue of attachment threat – trigger
- Behaviors – action tendencies – the moves
- Cognitive appraisals – attachment meanings – views of self and other
- Secondary and primary emotions – the music of the dance
- Frequently below awareness:
  - Bodily arousal, primary emotion
  - Attachment longings and needs

**The infinity loop can be a metaphor for:**

- the negative cycle of a distressed couple's attachment drama
- the information-processing model of emotion.

**The elements of the process of emotion: (See Figure on p. 20)**

Cue/trigger → limbic appraisal → bodily arousal → cognitive appraisal → action tendency

### 3. The Three Tasks in Cycle De-escalation

**Task 1. Identify and empathically explore the cycle.** (Step 2, Identification of the cycle, continues through all of stage 1).

How do you delineate the cycle and label the pattern that each partner relies on *in times of vulnerability*?

What typical behaviors and statements about behaviors describe each partner's position?

**What emotion-laden statements are commonly used by pursuers and withdrawers?**

Withdrawers often say...	Pursuers often say...

(EFT Workbook, p. 146). List examples on your own; can refer to appendix p.18, this document.

**Task 2. Access unacknowledged underlying primary emotions. (Step 3)** See Figure on p. 21:Doorways into Primary Emotion)

How does identifying each partner's position in the cycle help to attune to what each partner may be feeling?

(For more on typical statements and underlying feelings associated with each position, see Appendix p. 19. You can also refer to workbook pp 131, 146, 148)

How do we validate secondary emotions in the attachment context?

How do you help each partner access unacknowledged feelings underlying their position (of pursue/complain/demand/criticize or withdraw/placate/distance/stonewall/defend) in the cycle?

How do you work with the different parts of emotion to help an inexpressive partner access their previously unarticulated experience?  
 What are common underlying emotions of pursuers and withdrawers?

Withdrawers often feel...	Pursuers often feel...

(EFT Workbook, p. 148) List examples on your own; can refer to appendix p.19, this document.

In turn, primary emotions are expanded to reveal implicit unmet attachment needs. Give example of unmet attachment needs embedded in the emotions you have identified above.

**Task 3. Frame the negative cycle -- the negative pattern that they trigger in each other -- as the enemy:** Frame key reactive behaviors/positions as the “attachment-panic response” to the emotional experience underlying each position. I.e.: Help partners sense how the negative cycle both triggers and is triggered by underlying (unexpressed) primary emotions.

How does Attachment Theory provide a powerful frame for understanding the “connecting purpose” of the negative cycle?

What are the underlying intents of the pursue/demand and withdraw/distance/defend responses?

**When are you ready to move to step 4?**

- When partners have an understanding of the negative cycle, the default position that each partner relies on when their attachment needs are activated and have a felt sense of the key emotions that underlie these positions in the cycle.
- When you understand the implicit positive, “connection- seeking intent” in the destructive behaviors of the negative cycle: how the cycle is maintained by a search for connection and ways of managing the disconnection.
- When you can reframe each partner’s position in the cycle, using attachment language (e.g. “I hide because I am afraid of failing you or hearing your criticism.” “I become enraged with you because I can’t get you to respond to me.”)

## Putting it all together – The cycle reframe of the couple’s distress

The therapist outlines (a) the **moves** (Step 2) that each partner makes in the cycle and (b) the **emotional music** (Step 3) that primes these moves. The therapist then puts the moves and the music together, to accurately reflect how they prime and maintain each other.

The therapist paints the picture for the couple and if necessary explores and expands it until there is a good understanding of the pattern and the emotions that prime each partner’s moves. When the couple does understand the cycle and the emotions that drive the cycle, they frequently reach the stage of de-escalation.

### Reactive and Complex Cycles:

It is particularly challenging to identify each partner’s position and to map the cycle when the cycle is reactive (a reversal of the original pursue/withdraw pattern), complex or highly escalated. Exceptions to the typical patterns and the underlying motivations are when withdrawers attack or seem to pursue or when pursuers withdraw or shut-down.

Examples to consider:

Is a partner who demands more time, more fun and/or more sex, a pursuer or a withdrawer?  
Is a partner who expresses a desire for more emotional closeness and sharing, yet who rarely complains and is the first to leave a fight, a pursuer or a withdrawer?

Understanding the partners’ underlying intentions frequently helps us in this process. Intentions we typically tune into are the pursuing partners’ search for closeness and the distancing partners’ motivation to avoid being overwhelmed with a sense of failure.

Simple attachment reframes for the typical pursue/withdraw cycle acknowledge which common underlying intentions?

- pursuers’ demanding, critical, and blaming behaviors, are framed as \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- withdrawers’ distancing and placating behaviors are framed as \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

What are some possible intentions that are helpful to understand in determining partners’ positions in these cycles?:

1. When withdrawers attack
2. When withdrawers pursue
3. When pursuers shut down
4. When pursuers withdraw



#### 4. Guidelines for Cycle De-escalation

- Use a non-blaming description of the couple's dance.
- Use simple language and a straightforward approach.
- Use reflections that include **the perception/attributions** of the partner. "You see him as not really trying or wanting to change."
- Use reflections that acknowledge **the impact** of each partner's actions on the other. E.g.: "And when she doesn't respond, it's like she does not care and that is really frightening."
- Validate secondary emotions in the negative cycle and evoke primary emotions.
- Work first with one partner, then the other. (One side of the infinity loop, then the other). Stay long enough with one partner to gain an experiential sense of the step 3 underlying emotion.
- Help couple begin to recognize the cyclical, reinforcing nature of the cycle.
- Most importantly, attend to, resonate with, and evoke each partner's emotional experience at different points in the cycle. Acknowledge and access the emotions and bring them into the present.
- Use process replays to catch and track the cycle as it happens.
- Reframe the problem: in terms of the underlying emotions and unmet attachment needs. Name the cycle as enemy. Track and punctuate the pattern, validating **and** noting impact of actions on partner.
- Use reflection and repetition to draw the picture of their unique cycle and replay their music (emotion) and the dance (the moves they are drawn into), until couple can see that it is the cycle that is the problem and they are aware of their own positions and some of the feelings underlying that position.
- Aim for a cognitive meta-perspective and a felt sense of the negative cycle (or dance, tornado, black hole, vortex, fencing match or other metaphor) in which they are stuck.

### **Key Moves in the Process of De-escalation, steps 3 & 4:** (See EFT Workbook, p. 144)

1. **When** partners increasingly express their secondary emotions **that is your cue to** validate these emotions, while at the same time draw out their partner's experience as they become more aware of their partner's secondary emotions using reflections, evocative responses and empathic conjectures. (Reframing is already happening: E.g.: Rather than seeing partner as distant and unfeeling, they see spouse as feeling numb or frozen. p. 144)
2. **When** a partner displays intense or incongruent non-verbal expressions (e.g. partner laughs while partner blames them) **that is your cue to** explore their inner emotional experience, using reflections, evocative responses and empathic conjectures, in a RISSC manner, to connect their intense or incongruent nonverbal behaviors with their internal experience. (E.g. exploring inner experience of the laughing may open to a feeling of helplessness/inadequacy).
3. **When** one partner exits or minimizes their partner's exploration of newly accessed primary emotion **that is your cue to** evoke the underlying emotional experience of the one who reacts to this newly expressed emotion, using reflections, evocative responses and empathic conjectures, in a RISSC manner. (E.g. validate the disbelief; evoke the emotions at hearing newly expressed helplessness or sadness).
4. **When** partners accurately identify their specific patterns of interaction that negatively effects their relationship **that is your cue to** (a) reflect each partner's position in a neutral, non-blaming way and (b) validate and reflect this cycle as thwarting their best attempts to connect. (E.g. The more you see him behind 10 foot walls, the harder you push to get through. Kate you push hard to close the gap between you. Dorion, you step back and go numb to keep the peace between you).

### **5. What happens if you move to Stage Two too quickly?**

- Unable to achieve Level 2 change
- Clients do not have an experiential sense of their cycle
- Deeper emotions that pull them into the cycle have not been dealt with
- Reach an impasse: withdrawer will not engage and pursuer will not soften
- Emotional bond will not deepen

## EFT Skills for Steps 3 and 4

### 1. Empathic Attunement

Attunement is maintaining the flow with what the client is saying and attuning deeply to what the client is not quite able to put into words, but is conveying with their non-verbals. It is stepping into the clients' worlds and getting *a felt sense* of each one's experiences and of their cycles (both negative and positive) of interaction.

### 2. Empathic Reflection

**Reflection: Basic empathic reflections are used throughout the steps and stages of EFT.**

Reflection conveys to the client, "I hear you. I am with you." Reassures client and helps build safety.

**Question: What do you reflect?**

- content – especially attachment-related words and phrases (signifies to client you are listening; builds the attachment focus)
- client's emotional experience (slows pace and opens gateway to exploring and deepening client's experience; helps to better organize his/her experience, and provides a "platform" for client to go to another level)
- non-verbal communication (strong affect and exchanges between couple, such as rolling eyes or reaching to comfort),
- incongruence between verbal and nonverbal communication
- secondary and primary emotions.
- the cycle

Empathic reflection is not a question; it gently and tentatively mirrors what you have noticed. E.g.: "There are tears in your eyes as you say that....this must be a very deep loss for you." OR As a client folds his arms and turns away from his partner saying, 'You just shut me out,' an empathically attuned reflection could be: "It's like your body is even saying that you are feeling shut out." "So when you feel shut out, you turn away and close off."- Helps client tune into own experience and builds awareness.

Also reflect (or track) the cycle. Use process replays to catch the cycle as it happens. E.g. "Sarah, you see that when you come on heavy to Rob, he seems to shrink away even further

and you feel even more lonely.” OR “In the moment: Sarah, as you increased the volume of telling Rob that you **really need him to listen** to you, he actually stiffened in his chair and looked away.”

Use reflection and repetition to draw the picture of their unique cycle and replay the music (emotion) and the dance (the moves they are drawn into). This following **Step 4 reframe** is an example:

Kate, you are trying so hard to reach Dave and get him to talk with you that you get louder and more and more frustrated that he is so quiet. Dave, you hear that she is frustrated with **you** and that you have let her down, so you try to stay out of her way and not do or say anything that will upset her. In fact you almost put up a thick wall between you to protect yourself from feeling so badly that you have hurt her. Kate, you see his distance and quietness, not as signs that he cares and doesn't want to upset you, you see him as harder and harder to get close to and you get almost frantic to find ways to pull him in. All the while both of your best attempts keep pushing you farther and farther apart and feeling more and more lonely.

The more you, Kate see Dave behind 10 foot walls, the harder you push to get through. You push hard to close the gap between you. Dave, you step back and go numb to keep the peace between you.” (reframes the problem in the cycle, including their intentions. This attachment drama makes sense.)

### 3. Validation

**What do you validate?**

**What impact does validation have?**

Validate client's emotional experience:

- Descriptions of past experience
- Present here-and-now experience
- Secondary (reactive) emotion (usually anger or denial of any feelings).  
Place secondary emotion in context of client's experience (and in context of the cycle) and validate.

**Validation** builds alliance, affirms and legitimizes clients' responses and experience and supports clients to further explore their experience. E.g.: “I hear that when you see that look, you feel small and insignificant, and then it's understandable that you shut down.” In steps 3 and 4 validation is used in particular to make sense of secondary and primary emotions in the context of the attachment cycle.

Forming a validation statement. Begin with:

“That makes sense that...”

“I hear what you are saying...”

“From your point of view.”

“Yes, I can see how...”

#### 4. Evocative Responding: Questions and Reflections

- Evokes: “calls for” emotional experiences in each partner that access and touch the underlying emotions.
- Evocative questions: E.g.: “How do you feel when you talk about being so alone in this relationship?”
- Basic Empathic Reflections can be evocative. “When I look at you I see a deep sadness in your eyes.” “You are wringing your hands, as though you feel quite anxious,” (said with a raised tone at the end, conveying tentativeness, inviting client to see if this matches his/her internal experience).
- Repetitions of poignant words and phrases is also evocative. (“Chilled. You feel chilled.” Or “Shattered.”)
- Evocative responses expand on “hot” images, metaphors, bodily cues that occur in session to help client access those emotions that are just outside of their awareness or ‘on the leading edge” of their awareness. E.g. “What is it like for you when...?” “How do you feel when...?” “What happens to you when...?”

e.g. of evoking and expanding a hot image:

[Dorion says, “She has that look again. Like just before the bee is going to sting.” I evoke more of his experience by saying, “Like just before the bee is going to sting? Tell me more about what this is like.” (Using RISSSC ) OR I ask “What is that like inside for you to sense the bee is about to sting? (to evoke his inner awareness). OR I ask, “What do you see on her face? (to get to his meanings/attributions and view of self and other e.g. “She is...” “I am...)

Example of evoking and expanding on a bodily cue: A client folds his arms and turns away from his partner saying, ‘You just shut me out.’ You can evoke his experience by asking, “If you could put words to what your body is feeling, what is it saying?” OR “I am wondering what is going on for you right now, as you folded your arms and turned away?” Or you can ask, “What does the tightness in your chest say to you?”, to evoke meanings/attributions]

## 5. Heightening

- Intensify, clarify, deepen an emotion through persistent focus, reflection and empathy that allows for the partner to identify and accept their emotional experience

Repeat a poignant phrase: E.g.: “You feel, in Kate’s presence, like you are walking a plank, and if you slip the sharks are going to get you!” Repeating a poignant phrase to facilitate a client to connect with it on an emotional level.

Use language that is one notch more provocative than the client’s words to capture his/her experiencing: E.g. “You mentioned that it’s safer to use anonymous internet sex when you are bothered by your job than to be open with your wife. Now you say it’s a bit uncomfortable to turn to her when you’d like some comfort. Perhaps it’s more than a bit uncomfortable?

Perhaps it’s very risky to reach out to her?” OR He says, “It’s scary when my wife gets that look.” You go one notch deeper as you say, “ Almost like your stomach starts churning and you feel sick that once again you are not making her happy?”

Interpersonal heightening is often done with enactments. When a partner has accessed newly experienced/newly owned emotion, have him or her enact it to their partner: “Can you tell her, that when she says how fed up she is, that your head starts buzzing and you feel your whole body go numb?” “Can you tell her how lost you feel when she tells you she is not happy?”

## 6. Empathic Conjecture

Therapist needs to be truly “in contact” / empathically immersed in client’s experience and in the attachment frame.

- Offer an interpretation or reflection that is just on the leading edge of client’s experience.
- Purpose it to allow client to expand on their present experience - to take their experience one step further
- Use references to attachment history, knowledge of the relationship and/or attachment needs and longings and attunement to nonverbal signals, to draw an inference that can help a partner accept and understand their own experience
- Be tentative (conveying respect and implying invitation for client to reshape or reject if necessary).
- Slice it thinly (stay sufficiently close to client’s awareness of their experience).

- E.g.: To a distancing partner: “Even though you keep your distance, my sense is that part of you longs to feel wanted?”  
“You don’t want to keep leaving her out in the cold, yet I sense that partly you don’t feel safe letting her see who you really are?”

## 7. Reframing

1. “Catching the bullet” takes the sting out of client’s attacks and reframes the attack within an attachment perspective. “You don’t know how to tell her about the pain you feel – how it burns in your gut for days, after she makes a sharp comment to you, so instead you say – ‘There is something wrong with you – with your whole family!’” “It is so hard for you to hear that he gets *overwhelmed* when he sees your tears – so hard and foreign to hear – that you almost want to stop him from talking.”

2. Step four is a reframe of their relationship distress. See the example above under “Empathic Reflection” on p. 12.

To reframe, draw on your knowledge of the attachment drama and the emotions and intentions typically associated with their positions in their cycle. Understand the “connecting purpose” of the negative cycle: cycle is maintained by a search for connection and peacefulness and ways of managing the disconnection and chaos. There is a positive, “connection- seeking intent” in their destructive behaviors.

Reframe partner’s position in the cycle, using attachment language. Critical pursuit can be reframed as attempts to “close the distance in the relationship.” Withdrawal can be reframed as an attempt to “calm the relationship down.” More reframe examples: (Workbook pp. 148, 149)

"Fighting against the enemy"

"Fighting for connection"

"Protecting the Relationship"

"Protesting the Loss of connection"

*Hold me tight* reframes negative cycles of interactions with the metaphors of the “Demon Dialogues”: Find the Bad Guy, The Protest Polka and Freeze and Flee.

## 8. Enactments:

Effective Enactments include these phases:

1. Setting the stage – create a clear context (e.g. their cycle), have adequate emotional intensity/engagement, have partner anticipate contact.

2. Directing – asking one partner to make contact with other. Maintain focus, block detours, validate hesitancy, refocus.
3. Processing - each partner’s experience of the enactment: Validate, process fears, promote acceptance, reinforce and consolidate new attachment-significant experience.

Examples of Setting up Step 3 and 4 enactments:

“Can you turn to her and tell her that when you walk away and say, ‘I’m not talking with you like this,’ [repeat his movement with your hands pushing back] that you are pulling back to keep safe? That you don’t feel safe in the storms of your fights?”

“Can you tell him that you are so frustrated with his hiding **from you**, and not that you are frustrated with him **for being depressed**?”

**Stage One enactments are primarily used:**

(1) To enact present positions so they may be directly experienced and expanded.

E.g. “I do shut you out. It’s true. I get so tired of hearing what I have done wrong, that I do shut you out.” “I do tear you to pieces. I see that I do make you look very incompetent.” There is movement already in being able to own one’s position rather than to simply habitually enact these reactive moves.

(2) To turn new emotional experience into new interactions. In step 3 this will have less emotional intensity than in step 7.

E.g. When a partner accesses previously hidden primary emotion. “What happened Darrel as Rhonda just said, ‘I can’t ever count on you,’ and you looked down?” “I think what you have been saying is that you experience Rhonda as being critical and then you shut down.” (negative cycle of interaction) “And you say that when you shut down you feel you have disappointed her again, let her down, and failed” (underlying emotional experience) “and you feel isolated and alone.” (attachment concerns) “Can you tell her right now what that is like for you to feel like you are always disappointing her in this relationship?” (See EFT Workbook, for continuation of this example. pp. 91 - 96.)

Enactments:

- Emotional engagement is necessary for enactments to be effective
- Focused on disclosing experience not discussing issues
- Aimed to promote responsive contact and not longer dialogues



## 9. Working experientially

Utilize all of the above interventions, and the skills of R.I.S.S.S.C. to help you to follow and access emotion in the here and now, to track the cycle as it happens, and to stay close to the clients' experience, yet on the leading edge in the attachment frame.

R.I.S.S.S.C. → use **R**epetition, **I**mages, speak **S**oftly, **S**lowly and **S**imply and use **C**lients' words.

## APPENDIX

### Typical Statements from Withdrawers and Pursuers

Withdrawers often say...	Pursuers often say...
"You never come near me or touch me"	"My heart is breaking". "I am going to die".
"I never get it right or satisfy her"	"He is never there – he is always at work".
"I don't bother – what's the point?"	"He never looks at me when I talk to him. He just watches TV".
"I am amazed that she can take something so small and blow it out of proportion".	"There are birthdays that are forgotten, or Mother's Day when no-body gives me a card".
"I don't know what I feel. I'm lost".	"I do it by myself and just take care of things on my own".
"She gives me that look and I'm paralyzed"	"I am way down on his list – after his work, the kids, his family and then maybe me".
"She never initiates sex – it's always up to me".	He's not there – no-one has ever been there.
"I can never get it right, or to her standards. It's like she has a scorecard and I always come up short. That's all I hear, anyway, is what I do wrong, never what is going right.)".	He won't listen. He never listens – it doesn't matter how long I talk to him or how many examples I give him or how hard I try - I can never get through to him."
"I feel like she's got me dangling from the end of a rope that is going to fray at any minute and it's going to be all over".	"It's like we are roommates or brother and sister. Any hope for passion or romance is futile – he just doesn't want it".
I don't feel anything – nothing at all."	Other couples seem to have lives that are full, and they enjoy each other. We don't have anything".

Johnson et al., 2005, *The EFT Workbook*, p. 146

### Common underlying emotions

Withdrawers often feel....	Pursuers often feel.....
Rejected Inadequate Afraid of failure Overwhelmed Numb-frozen Unwanted Empty Shame	Hurt Alone Unwanted Invisible Isolated Abandoned Unimportant Disconnected Desperate

Johnson et al. (2005) pp. 135-136

### Emotions are cues to unmet attachment needs

<b>Withdrawer:</b> Typical Feelings	Implied attachment needs
Rejected Inadequate Afraid of failure Overwhelmed Numb, frozen Unwanted Empty Shame Exhaustion (from trying to be acceptable)	Acceptance Appreciation Safety, security, acceptance Soothing, calming Comfort, cherished To be wanted To be connected, valued, needed To feel acceptable/worthy To feel acceptable/wanted
Fear of suffocation, being remade	Acceptance / Appreciation
<b>Pursuer :</b> Typical Feelings	Implied attachment needs
Hurt Alone Unwanted Invisible Isolated Abandoned Unimportant Disconnected Desperate	Comfort, reassurance Connection Response Safety Security

Brubacher, 2009

# Chapter Five

## The Tyranny of Unheeded Attachment Fears: Unpacking Emotion in the De-escalation Change Event (Steps 3 and 4)

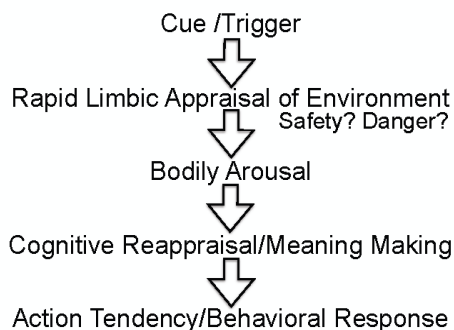
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### Setting the Stage for Understanding Emotion

Chapter five sets the stage for understanding emotion as a dynamic process, and describes the various paths into primary emotion that remains outside of immediate awareness.

“While brushing wisps of snow off her car windows after a long day of work, Emily thinks of how far she has come since she began learning EFT. The car windows cleared, she is happy to notice her own window into emotion is also clearing. “I’ve come a long way since I thought emotion equals feelings and that to do EFT I needed most of all to get people to talk about feelings.” Her confidence in using emotion as the target and agent of change is expanding, as she is integrating what it means that emotion is a multi-faceted process (perceiving safety or danger, sensing bodily arousal, cognitively reassessing, being motivated to act). She is feeling empowered and more confident to patiently unpack this process with her couples, validating and respecting the cues which signal danger to them, until each partner is able to find words for their nuanced version of attachment panic.” – from the conclusion to Chapter 5.

Figure 5.1 Emotion as a Rapidly Unfolding Process

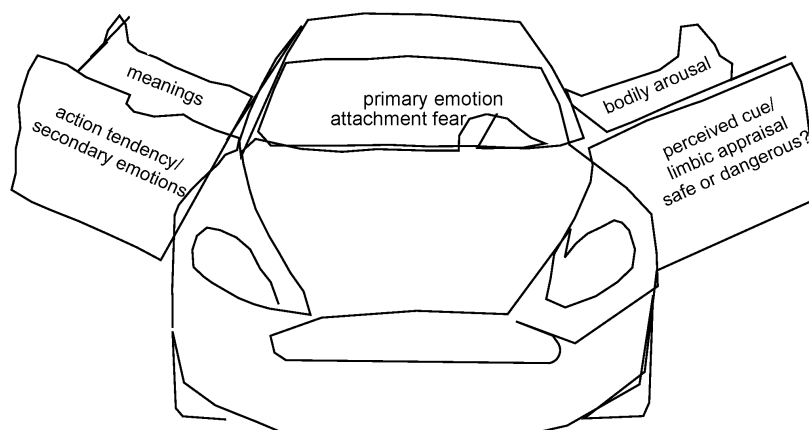


- visual of Arnold's (1960) view of emotion

# What a therapist sees and hears in Steps 3 and 4

Emotional danger cues that trigger threat responses between partners and the rapidly unfolding process of emotion are portrayed in explicit detail for an overview of Step 3. Step 4 is characterized by partners' emerging recognition and ownership of how they get pulled into and pull their partner into the repetitive negative cycle. Naming the typical positions of pursuit or withdrawal that each one takes, expressing vulnerable underlying emotions driving their self-protective positions, and getting a felt sense of this interactive dance as the core problem of their distress are what a therapist sees and hears in Step 4.

Figure 5.2 Doorways into underlying primary emotion



## What therapist and clients do in Steps 3 and 4

**Step 3** includes further exploring the negative cycle identified in Step 2. The therapist replays the danger cues and together partners and therapist unpack the elements of partners' emotion that create the negative cycle. Therapist interventions that are used to validate secondary, reactive response and to open doorways into unacknowledged primary emotion are illustrated in detail. The tasks and experiences of partners' expanding their experience of emotion and disclosing their underlying emotions previously hidden from awareness are described.

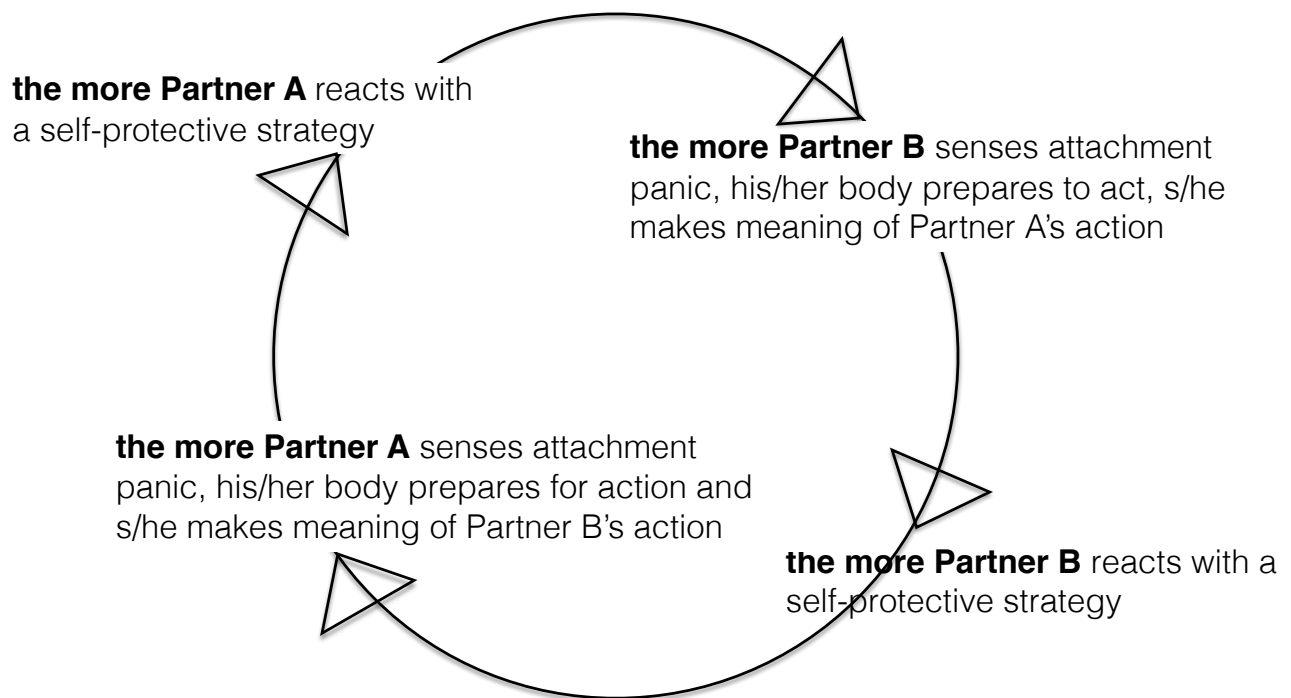
**The Step 4** process of "reframing the problem as a simple dance to powerful emotional music that until now had not been clearly put into words" is detailed.

# How a therapist does Steps 3 and 4

In this section the therapist's therapeutic stance and conscious attention to his or her own emotional balance are explored. Additionally, suggestions are given to help therapists to tune into common patterns of how emotional experience is organized for partners in positions of pursuit or withdrawal and to immerse themselves in the unique experience of each partner's unfolding experience.

The generic visual below, while not in the book, illustrates the basic pattern described in the couple cases throughout the book.

Circular Causality of a Couple in Distress:  
motions drive behavior, shape meaning, make us feel.



“In EFT, clinicians understand the couple as a system: What one person does or says has an impact on what the other feels, does, or says, and so on in a circular fashion. This is the notion of circular causality (Bertalanffy, 1968), which is at the heart of the EFT conceptualization that couples' difficulties are primarily the result of self-reinforcing interaction patterns” (Greenman & Johnson, 2013, pp 48-49).