

Emotion in Psychotherapy ^[1]

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Emotion has played an important role in the treatment of individuals, families and groups of people that are suffering from psychological conditions. Two therapies that utilize emotion as a psychotherapeutic approach are Emotionally-focused Therapy (EFT) and Process Experiential Therapy.

Emotionally-Focused Therapy

A short-term psychotherapy, Emotionally-focused therapy or EFT rests in its assumption that an emotion has an inner adaptive potential. The therapy aims to activate this innate potential of emotions in order to help a person change his view of any unwanted self-experience, or alter his current problematic emotional state. Simply put, EFT involves the therapeutic use of emotions to facilitate the proper self-management of such emotions.

Basic Principles of EFT

EFT is focused on the six basic principles of the therapeutic use of emotions. These are comprised of:

1. EFT is based on the Attachment Theory. A person's relationships are his "attachment bonds". The security of such attachment bonds should be properly addressed by the therapy to render it effective.
2. Change refers to a new experience of one's self, new experience of the person to which the client is attached, and the new events in their relationship.
3. The therapy uses a system in which absorbing emotional states are created and reflected by rigid interaction patterns.
4. The target of change and the agent of change is emotion.
5. The therapy's process consultant is the therapist himself.
6. The client's partner is not unskilled or sick, but is stuck in his customary dealing with emotions.

Stages of EFT

EFT includes 8 to 20 sessions of therapy that is usually applied to clients with anxiety problems and traumatic experiences (e.g. post-traumatic stress disorder). EFT includes the following steps or stages:

Stage 1: Stabilization

Stabilization is the stage where assessment and de-escalation occurs. The first four steps of the therapy are under this stage, which include:

Step 1: Assessment

Step 2: Determining negative cycle and attachment problems or issues

Step 3: Gaining access to the roots of attachment emotions

Step 4: Reframing the problem into a cycle and identifying attachment needs and fears

Stage 2: Bond Restructuring

This stage is also referred to as “change phase” and involves step 5 to step 7:

Step 5: Gaining Access to assessed needs, fears, and self-models

Step 6: Acceptance Promotion (the client and his partner accept the needs, fears and models of self)

Step 7: Structuring Emotional Engagement (the client and his partner begin to stop old behavioural patterns)

Stage 3: Integration

Also called as "consolidation phase", Stage 3 includes steps 8 and 9:

Step 8: Assuming New positions in the Cycle (client and his partner enact new experiences)

Step 9: Creating New solutions to matter-of-fact issues

The end-result of EFT [3] is to gain a new attachment bond that becomes the strength of the client and his partner.

Process Experiential Therapy

A new psychotherapy approach, Process Experiential Therapy uses emotion in processing a client's cognitive and affective aspects. It involves a true and empathic relationship between the client and the therapist. They work together to achieve a balance between “process directiveness” and “relational directiveness”. These terms simply mean that the client and the therapist are in a collaborative relationship with the aim of exploring (i.e. processing) the experiences of the client and constructing new meanings of those experiences. In this therapy, emotions are organizing processes that improve the client's problem solving and adaptation capabilities, as well as enhance his endurance to positive change and self-promotion.

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[1] <https://staging.explorable.com/node/1108>

[2] <https://staging.explorable.com/users/sarah>

[3] <http://www.iceeft.com>