

EFT Research

Following the short summary is a list of studies and commentaries on Emotionally Focused Therapy research.

Short Summary of EFT Research

Question: Does EFT conform to any “Gold” standard in terms of research validation and the standards set out for psychotherapy?

In terms of the gold standard set out by bodies such as APA for psychotherapy research, EFT epitomizes the very highest level set out by this standard. Over the last 30 years, the EFT research program has systematically covered all the factors set out in optimal models of psychotherapy research.

The meta-analysis (Johnson et al, 1999) of the four most rigorous outcome studies conducted before the year 2000, showed a larger effect size (1.3) than any other couple intervention has achieved to date. Studies consistently show excellent follow-up results, and some studies show that significant progress continues after therapy. EFT has a body of process research showing that change does indeed occur in the way that the theory suggests. This level of linkage between in-session process and rigorous outcome measurement is unusual in the field of psychotherapy.

EFT is the only model of couple intervention that uses a systematic empirically validated theory of adult bonding as the basis for understanding and alleviating relationship problems. The generalizability of EFT across different kinds of clients and couples facing co-morbidities such as depression and PTSD has been examined and results are consistently positive. Outcome and process research addressing key relationship factors, such as the forgiveness of injuries, has also been conducted with positive results. EFT studies are generally rigorous and published in the best peer reviewed journals.

In brief, EFT researchers can show that, as set out in the Johnson 2004 seminal text, *Creating Connection: The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy*, EFT works very well, results last, we know HOW it works so we can train therapists to intervene efficiently and we know it works across different populations and problems. It also links congruently to other bodies of research such as those examining the nature of relationship distress and adult attachment processes.

Recent research involves outcome studies of couples facing trauma and stressful events (the Dalton and MacIntosh studies, and a study on EFT effects on attachment security with an fMRI component.) The fMRI study shows that EFT changes the way contact with a partner mediates the effect of threat on the brain. A short video, *Soothing the Threatened Brain*, summarizing this study can be viewed on drsuejohnson.com/videos. There is an outcome study in progress of the new educational program based on EFT (Hold Me Tight® Program: Conversations for Connection). A pilot study has also been completed at the VA in Baltimore on EFT with veteran couples dealing with PTSD.

Completed and ongoing EFT research consistently supports the efficacy of the Emotionally Focused Therapy model.

Outcome Research

1. [Wittenborn, A.K., Liu, T., Ridenour, T.A., Lachmar, E.M., Rouleau, E., & Seedall, R.B. \(2018\).](#) "Randomized controlled trial of emotionally focused couple therapy compared to treatment as usual for depression: Outcomes and mechanisms of change." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. DOI: 10.1111/jmft.12350.
2. Wiebe, S.A., Elliott, C., Johnson, S.M., Burgess Moser, M., Dalgleish, T L., Lafontaine, M-F. & Tasca, G.A. (In press). "Attachment & sexual satisfaction in Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy." *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*.
3. [Weissman, N., Batten, S.V., Rheem, K.D., Wiebe, S.A., Pasillas, R.M., Potts, W., Barone, M., Brown, C.H., & Dixon, L.B. \(2017\).](#) "The Effectiveness of Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy With Veterans With PTSD: A Pilot Study." *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 17(1), 25-41.
4. [Lee, N.A., Furrow, J.L., & Bradley, B.A. \(2017\).](#) "Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy for Parents Raising a Child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder: A pilot study." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 43(4), 662-673.
5. [Wiebe, S., Johnson, S. M., Burgess-Moser, M., Dalgleish, T., Lafontaine, M., & Tasca, G. \(2017\).](#) "Predicting follow-up outcomes in Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: The role of change in trust, relationship-specific attachment, and emotional engagement." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 43(2), 213-226.
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9. [Soleimani, A.A., Najafi, M., Ahmadi, Kh., Javidi, N., Hoseini Kamkar, E., & Mahboubi, M. \(2015\).](#) "The effectiveness of emotionally focused couples therapy on sexual satisfaction and marital adjustment of infertile couples with marital conflicts." *International Journal of Fertility and Sterility*, 9(3), 393-402.
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11. [Ahmadi, F.S., Zarei, E. & Fallahchai, S.R. \(2014\)](#). "The Effectiveness of Emotionally-Focused Couple Therapy in Resolution of Marital Conflicts between the Couples Who Visited the Consultation Centers." *Journal of Education and Management Studies*, 4(1), 118-123.
12. [Soltani, M., Shairi, M.R., Roshan, R., & Rahimi, C. \(2014\)](#). "The Impact of Emotionally Focused Therapy on Emotional Distress in Infertile Couples." *International Journal of Fertility and Sterility*, 7(4): 337-344.
13. [Johnson, S.M., Burgess Moser, M., Beckes, L., Smith, A., Dalgleish, T., Halchuk, R., Hasselmo, K., Greenman, P.S., Merali, Z. & Coan, J.A. \(2013\)](#). "Soothing the threatened brain: Leveraging contact comfort with Emotionally Focused Therapy." *PLOS ONE*, 8(11): e79314.
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15. [McLean, L.M., Walton, T., Rodin, G., Esplen, M.J., & Jones, J.M. \(2013\)](#). "A couple-based intervention for patients and caregivers facing end-stage cancer: outcomes of a randomized controlled trial." *Psycho-Oncology*, 22(1), 28-38.
16. [Soltani, M., Molazadeh, J., Mahmoodi, M., & Hosseini, S. \(2013\)](#). "A Study on the effectiveness of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy on Intimacy of Couples." *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol.82, 461-465.
17. [Denton, W.H., Wittenborn, A.K., & Golden, R.N. \(2012\)](#). "Augmenting antidepressant medication treatment of depressed women with emotionally focused therapy for couples: A randomized pilot study." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, Vol.38, Supplement s1, 23-38.
18. [Halchuk, R., Makinen, J. & Johnson, S. M. \(2010\)](#). "Resolving Attachment Injuries in Couples using Emotionally Focused Therapy: A 3 year follow-up." *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*, 9, 31-47.
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21. [Naaman, S., Johnson, S.M., & Radwan, K. \(2008\)](#). "Evaluation of the clinical efficacy of emotionally focused therapy on psychological adjustment of couples facing early breast cancer," (Doctoral Dissertation). School of Clinical Psychology, University of Ottawa, Canada.
22. [Couture-Lalande, M.-E., Greenman, P.S., Naaman, S. & Johnson, S.M. \(2007\)](#) "La thérapie de couple axée sur l'émotion (EFT) pour traiter les couples dont la femme a le cancer du sein: Une étude

- exploratoire / Emotionally focused therapy (EFT) for couples with a female partner who suffers from breast cancer: an exploratory study." *Psycho-Oncology*, 1(4), 257–264. (*Journal of the Psychological, Social and Behavioral Dimensions of Cancer*).
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 24. [Dessaulles, A., Johnson, S. M. & Denton, W. \(2003\)](#). "Emotion-Focused Therapy for Couples in the Treatment of Depression: A Pilot Study." *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 31(5), 345-353.
 25. [Clothier, P., Manion, I., Gordon-Walker, J. & Johnson, S. M. \(2002\)](#). "Emotionally Focused Interventions for Couples with Chronically Ill Children: A two year follow-up." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 28(4), 391-398.
 26. [Denton, W., Burlison, B., Clark, T., Rodriguez, C. & Hobbs, B. \(2000\)](#). "A Randomized Trial of Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples in a Training Clinic." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 26(1), 65-78.
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 28. [Johnson, S., Maddeaux, C. & Blouin, J. \(1998\)](#). "Emotionally Focused Family Therapy for Bulimia: Changing Attachment Patterns." *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 35(2), 238-247.
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35. [Johnson, S. & Greenberg, L. \(1985\)](#). "The Differential Effects of Experiential and Problem Solving Interventions in Resolving Marital Conflict." *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 53, 175-184. (EFT, CBT and controls tested.)

Process & Predictors Research

1. [Burgess Moser, M., Johnson, S.M., Dalglish, T.L., Wiebe, S.A., & Tasca, G. \(2017\)](#). "The impact of blamer-softening on romantic attachment in Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. Published online 17 Aug 2017. DOI: 10.1111/jmft.12284.
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3. [Sandberg, J.G., Brown, A.P., Schade, L.C., Novak, J.R., Denton, W.H. & Holt-Lundstad, J. \(2015\)](#). "Measuring Fidelity in Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFT): A Pilot Test of the EFT Therapist Fidelity Scale." *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 43(3), 251-268.
4. [Schade, L.C., Sandberg, J.G., Bradford, A., Harper, J.M., Holt-Lunstad, J. & Miller, R.B. \(2015\)](#) "A Longitudinal View of the Association Between Therapist Warmth and Couples' In-Session Process: An Observational Pilot Study of Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 41(3), 292-307.
5. [McRae, T.R., Dalglish, T.L., Johnson, S.M., Burgess-Moser, M., & Killian, K.D. \(2014\)](#). "Emotion Regulation and Key Change Events in Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy." *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 13(1), 1-24.
6. [Greenman, P., & Johnson, S. \(2013\)](#). "Process Research on EFT for Couples: Linking Theory to Practice." *Family Process, Special Issue on Couple Therapy*, 52(1), 46-61.
7. [Zuccarini, D.J., Johnson, S.M., Dalglish, T. & Mäkinen, J. \(2013\)](#). "Forgiveness and reconciliation in Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples: The Client Change Process and Therapist Interventions." *Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy*, 39(2), 148-162.
8. [Swank, Lauren E. & Wittenborn, Andrea K. \(2013\)](#) "Repairing Alliance Ruptures in Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: A Preliminary Task Analysis". *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 41(5), 389-402.
9. [Furrow, J.L., Edwards, S.A., Choi, Y., & Bradley, B. \(2012\)](#). "Therapist presence in emotionally focused couple therapy blamer softening events: promoting change through emotional experience." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, Vol.38, Supplement s1, 39-49.
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13. [Talitman, E. & Johnson, S. \(1997\)](#). "Predictors of Success in Emotionally Focused Marital Therapy." *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 23(2), 135-152.
It is interesting to note that in this study, couples continued to significantly improve from the end of therapy to follow-up.
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EFT Relationship Education Program Research

1. Kennedy, N.W., Johnson, S.M., Wiebe, S.A., & Tasca, G.A. (In Press). "Conversations for Connection: An Outcome Assessment of the Hold Me Tight Relationship Education Program for Couples." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*.
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Reviews of EFT Research / Commentaries

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11. [Caldwell, B. E., Woolley, S. R., & Caldwell, C. J. \(2007\)](#). "Preliminary estimates of cost-effectiveness for marital therapy." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 33(3), 392-405.
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18. [Johnson, S.M. \(1997\)](#). "A Critical Review of Marital Therapy Outcome." *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 42(3), 323.

Meta-Analyses

1. [Wood, N. D., Crane, D. R., Schaalje, G. B., & Law, D. D. \(2005\)](#). "What works for whom: A meta-analytic review of marital and couples therapy in reference to marital distress." *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 33(4), 273-287.
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2. [Johnson, S., Hunsley, J., Greenberg, L. & Schindler, D. \(1999\)](#). "Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy: Status & challenges (A meta-analysis)." *Journal of Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 6, 67-79.
NOTE: Also listed under Outcome Research
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Research on EFT Training / Learning EFT

1. [Sandberg, J.G., Knestel, A., & Cluff Schade, L. \(2013\)](#). "From Head to Heart : A Report on Clinicians' Perceptions of the Impact of Learning Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy on Their Personal and Professional Lives." *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 12(1), 38-57.
2. [Sandberg, J.G. \(2011\)](#). "Introduction to the Special Section on Learning Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy." *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 37(4), 377-379.
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4. [Sandberg, J.G. & Knestel, A. \(2011\)](#). "The Experience of Learning Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy." *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 37(4), 393-410.
5. [Palmer-Olsen, L., Gold, L.L. & Woolley, S.R. \(2011\)](#). "Supervising Emotionally Focused Therapists: A Systematic Research-Based Model." *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 37(4), 411-426.

Miscellaneous

1. [Sandberg, Jonathan G., Busby, Dean M., Johnson, Susan M., & Yoshida, Keitaro \(2012\)](#). "The Brief Accessibility, Responsiveness, and Engagement (BARE) Scale: A Tool for Measuring Attachment Behavior in Couple Relationships." *Family Process*, 51(4), 512-526.
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Programs Based on EFT Research

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2. [Johnsons, S.M., & Sanderfer, K. \(2017\)](#). *Created for Connection: The Hold Me Tight® Program for Christian Couples – Facilitators Guide*. Ottawa, Canada: ICEEFT.
3. [Aikin, N., & Aikin, P.A. \(2017\)](#). *Hold Me Tight®/Let Me Go Program for Families with Teens — Facilitators' Guide*. Ottawa, Canada: ICEEFT.
4. [Johnson, S.M. \(2009\)](#). *The Hold Me Tight® Program: Conversations for Connection – Facilitators Guide*. Ottawa, Canada. ICE EFT.
5. [Johnson, S.M., & Rheem, K. \(2006\)](#) *Becoming a couple again: A post-deployment program for military couples*. Washington, DC: Strong Bonds-Strong Couples, Rheem Media.