

# the EFT community news

SPECIAL ISSUE 2018



International Centre for Excellence  
in Emotionally Focused Therapy

## Vision Statement

ICEEFT is the home and centre for mental health professionals committed to expanding Emotionally Focused Therapy in the world and creating a professional network for those interested in this model.



## A Welcome from the Director

*Sue Johnson*

Welcome to our 2018 Special Issue of *the EFT Community News*, the ICEEFT newsletter that our members receive four times each year. We encourage you to share this sample, our Special Issue, with your therapist colleagues who might be interested in learning more about Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and ICEEFT.

Many of the articles in this issue are modified and updated versions of articles from previous newsletters and have been selected to give new readers general information and a taste of what the ICEEFT community is up to.

With approx. 6,000 members, ICEEFT is a growing and thriving community of therapists who I am delighted to call my colleagues. Whether you are already an EFT enthusiast or just interested in learning more, I would like to invite you to join ICEEFT; you will receive quarterly newsletters and other benefits such as reduced prices on training videos.

I hope that you will enjoy reading this issue.

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## What is EFT?...Emotionally Focused Therapy

EFT is a structured approach to psychotherapy, best known as a couple intervention but is also used with individuals and families. This approach, developed by Dr. Sue Johnson, evolved alongside the science of adult attachment and uses attachment theory, a developmental theory of personality, as a framework for understanding clients' emotional lives and the patterns that shape their most significant relationships. A substantial body of research now exists outlining the effectiveness of EFT for couples, including positive follow-up studies and process of change studies. (For more information on EFT research please visit [www.iceeft.com](http://www.iceeft.com) and look under the "About Us & EFT" menu.) This approach is used successfully with many different kinds of couples with varying cultural backgrounds. Training in EFT for couples is systematic and a pathway to formal certification with the International Center for Excellence in EFT can be found at [www.iceeft.com](http://www.iceeft.com). There are now 67 centres affiliated with ICEEFT around the world offering ongoing training for therapists in the model. A group relationship education program, Hold Me Tight®: Conversations for Connection, is also available and has been adapted with versions for Christian couples, those facing cardiac disease and distressed adolescents and their families. The evidence is that the effectiveness of EFT lies in a shift from emotional disconnection and insecure bonding interactions, to the creation of positive bonding conversations where fears and needs are distilled and shared in ways that shape the emotional accessibility and responsiveness that is the essence of a loving bond.

Please [click here](#) or visit [www.iceeft.com](http://www.iceeft.com) and look under the "About Us & EFT" menu to access lists of various EFT Publications including books, chapters, articles and non-English publications.

### Strengths of Emotionally Focused Therapy

✓ EFT is based on clear, explicit conceptualizations of relationship distress and adult love. These conceptualizations are supported by empirical research on the nature of marital distress and

adult attachment.

- ✓ EFT is collaborative and respectful of clients combining experiential Rogerian techniques with structural systemic interventions.
- ✓ EFT change strategies and interventions are specified.
- ✓ Key moves and moments in the EFT change process have been mapped into nine steps and three change events.
- ✓ EFT has been validated by over 35 years of empirical research. There is also research on the change processes and predictors of success.
- ✓ EFT has been applied to many different kinds of problems and populations.
- ✓ EFT expands and reorganizes key emotional responses — the music of the attachment dance.
- ✓ EFT creates a shift in partners' interactional positions and initiates new cycles of interaction.
- ✓ EFT fosters the creation of a secure bond between partners.

### An Example of the Change Process

In a therapy session, a husband's numb withdrawal expands into a sense of helplessness, a feeling of being intimidated. He begins to assert his need for respect and, in doing so, becomes more accessible to his wife. He moves from, "There is no point in talking to you. I don't want to fight," to, "I do want to be close. I want you to give me a chance. Stop poking me and let me learn to be there for you." His wife's critical anger then expands into fear and sadness. She can now ask for and elicit comfort. She moves from, "You just don't care. You don't get it," to, "It is so difficult to say — but I need you to hold me — reassure me — can you?" New cycles of bonding interactions occur and replace negative cycles such as pursue-withdraw or criticize-defend. These positive cycles then become self-reinforcing and create permanent change. The relationship becomes a safe haven and a healing environment for both partners.

For a more detailed description of EFT and more information, [click here](#) or go to [www.iceeft.com](http://www.iceeft.com).

## EFT — The Leading Edge



Sue Johnson

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

Several research projects deserve special mention. The Ottawa study to show that EFT can change the security of the bond between couples was very successful, as was the accompanying brain scan study showing that with EFT, we can change the way partners' brains respond to contact comfort and perceived threat. As John Bowlby told us, a felt sense of security makes the world a safer place. After EFT, women's brains seem to be significantly less reactive to the threat of electric shock when their husbands, now a safe haven cue, hold their hands. Another study in Ottawa examined the process of change in couples struggling with the forgiveness of injuries and found results similar to the other 8 studies of change in EFT. My colleague, Dr. Wayne Denton, reported positive findings in his study of EFT with depressed couples and there are several studies showing positive outcome using EFT with PTSD couples.

A pilot study using EFT with military veterans was completed at the Baltimore, Maryland, Dept. of Veteran's Affairs. There is also an active group of EFT therapists in the VA hospitals in the USA who continue, with the help of colleagues such as Dr. Kathryn Rheem, to offer EFT to traumatized

soldiers and their partners. EFT continues to reach new populations and these studies, among others, continue to solidify EFT's research base and provide EFT clinicians with a solid foundation for clinical practice.

Various training DVD's include: *Facing the Dragon Together: EFT with Traumatized Couples*, an 8 hour video that outlines how EFT offers a systematic way to work with couples while the ghost of trauma hovers in the background; *Risking, Reaching and Responding* — two live sessions from EFT Stage 2 including key moments of change events; and a 24 hour DVD based on a 2017 Externship including 2 live sessions. These videos are available as digital downloads as well as DVDs.

My new book entitled, *Attachment Theory in Practice: Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) for Individuals, Couples and Families* is now available. *Love Sense*, my previous book, provides a revolutionary understanding of why and how we love, based on cutting-edge research.

Now in 23 languages, my book, *Hold Me Tight* (HMT) continues to reach new couples every day. The HMT® Relationship Education and Enhancement Program which includes the HMT book, a *Facilitator's Guide* and the DVD, *Hold Me Tight®: Conversations for Connection*, is a program for groups (couples and individuals) and is being used successfully and with increasing frequency in many countries throughout the world. Research about its efficacy has been undertaken with positive results. Three new variations of this program have now been completed for Parents and Teens / a *Created for Connection* program for Christian couples and *Healing Hearts Together* (for couples with one partner having had a cardiac event). AND .... Our on-line version of the Hold Me Tight® program was released in early 2018.

The 2004 book, *The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: Creating Connection* which includes outcome data, continues to sell well not only in English but has now been translated into many different languages.

## the EFT community news

The demand for the basic 4-day EFT Externships and Core Skills trainings continues to grow in Europe, Oceania, Asia and in North and South America — offered by over 55 ICEEFT-Certified EFT Trainers. We continue to receive consistent rave reviews about the quality of these events. The *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* has published studies that testify to the impact of these trainings on participants' professional and personal lives.

Enormously successful conferences such as the EFT Summits — in San Diego in 2017 and in New York in 2012 — continue to inspire us all. EFT is now

regularly presented at numerous conferences in North America and Europe — often in conjunction with special topics such as Sex and Attachment — providing leading edge science to practitioners from all over the world.

I invite you to visit the ICEEFT website for a more comprehensive lists and descriptions of EFT events and research. We are, every day, learning, discovering and growing as a model.

Sue Johnson, EdD, CPsych  
Director of ICEEFT & Ottawa EFT Centre  
Founder of Emotionally Focused Therapy

## THERAPIST TOOLBOX



### The Moment of Meeting: First EFT Session

Despite many years of working with couples, I still get a little nervous and excited before the first session. It is almost like a first date where you are not quite sure who they are and what exactly is going to happen. Except, of course, they are even more nervous than you are! The couple is in distress, both hoping for help and afraid that help may not be possible. The first session is also a bit like the moment dogs meet in a park: Who are you? How will you react to me? Will you be playful or attack?

We all remember the famous Yogi Berra quote “If you don’t know where you are going, you will end up somewhere else.” Couples generally come in to therapy trying to tell us about ways they understand problems in the relationship and bring examples and evidence: Power struggles, character flaws, and communication difficulties. It is important to be focused in order for the first session to be productive. I generally have 3 major goals for the first session:

- ✓ Create alliance

- ✓ Track the negative cycle
- ✓ Provide hope

Here are my signposts for a successful first session:

- I feel connected to both partners
- I begin to have a sense of their cycle
- I am reframing their interactions, content and affect through an attachment lens
- I am able to focus on the present moment
- I structure an enactment and process it
- I end with a plan

How do we accomplish these goals? I start by remembering that I am a process consultant and my role is to reflect what is going on in their relationship, rather than to offer solutions to content problems. I listen to their stories and look at their interactions through the attachment lens: Who is angry and protesting the distance and disconnection? Who is defending against criticism and messages of failure? How are bids for



Zoya  
Simakhodskaya

connection made and responded to? Is the shutting down a sign of reactivity or detachment or another attempt to get a response? As always, in EFT we use RISSC (**R**epeat; use **I**mages; use **S**imple words; go **S**low; use a **S**oft voice; use **C**lient words) and focus on reflecting and validating over and over again. This not only slows down the process and gives the couple a sense of being heard, understood and accepted, but also gives us a chance to resonate with their emotions and create a better alliance. We take any opportunity to touch primary emotions, connect them to secondary emotions and validate the reasons for negative action tendencies.

Building an enactment will give us an opportunity to see whether they can do it and how responsive they are. It can often create a new positive moment for the couple, which I will use to celebrate their strengths and provide hope. "You (female partner) never knew how overwhelmed he was by the conflict, feeling as if he is in a car that is spinning out of control and he doesn't know how to stop it, so all he can do is to stop talking and shut down. And I see how your whole body turned to him just now and you are saying to him, 'I never knew how terrible it was for you and I feel bad that I caused this.' And you (male partner) for the first time feel heard by her. I am so impressed that you both were able to be open here today. This is what we will be working towards and building on together."

There are some special considerations in this general process. If a couple arrives in the midst of a crisis and emotions are escalated, I may not be focusing so much on doing enactments and trying to get a sense of their full cycle. I will work to contain high reactivity by validating the pain and fear, while setting limits. It is also important to pay attention to signs of potential contraindications for treatment, such as physical violence, ongoing affairs or serious substance abuse. For example, if there is mention of physical violence, I will ask questions to learn the extent of it, whether one of the partners is afraid and whether there is a commitment to stopping the violence. Another example of adjusting my approach is when I begin to get a sense that the

partners have different agendas for the relationship and couples therapy. It is important to reflect that information back to them and frame the focus of the assessment process, figuring out whether we can find a common goal for treatment. When ending the session, I might say something like, "I have a sense from our short time together that both of you have been unhappy and stuck in a negative pattern for quite a long time. You (leaning out partner) have come to a point where you are not really sure there is any hope for the relationship. And you (leaning in partner) had not realized how hopeless he has become and you are wanting to work on the relationship to make it better. What I can offer is an opportunity to clarify what your negative pattern is and how you got here. Then you can make a better decision about whether to stay together or go apart."

As an EFT therapist, I am a potential attachment figure for the couple, "the wiser one." And this wisdom comes from the knowledge that from the first moment the couple walks into my office, I have the EFT map and attachment theory foundation to ground and guide me.

Zoya Simakhodskaya, PhD  
EFT Therapist, Supervisor & Trainer  
New York Center for EFT



## ICEEFT Facts

- There are 67 ICEEFT affiliated Centres, Communities & Organizations (See the listing on page 20.)
- There are currently approximately 6,000 ICEEFT members
- There are over 55 Certified EFT Trainers
- There are approx. 850 Certified EFT Therapists worldwide, including approx. 290 Certified EFT Supervisors

## ICEEFT is International!



*Yolanda von Hockauf*

Although she grew up in England, Sue Johnson is Canadian and ICEEFT was founded in Ottawa, Canada. Starting in the 1980's, Sue travelled to locations throughout North America and soon thereafter, to countries in Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand "planting the seeds" of EFT. Many EFT enthusiasts from Canada, USA and later, other countries such as South Africa, Mexico and South America, stepped forward to help grow the EFT model throughout the world.

Since then, ICEEFT Trainers have been actively training therapists around the globe, offering the full range of EFT Externships, Core Skills, supervision, special advanced topics and facilitating Hold Me Tight® Program workshops. The ICEEFT International Committee and Board actively works to help make EFT training accessible to diverse educational and economic situations around the world.

EFT Training is offered in many languages such as Dutch, French, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Finnish,



*Iceland*



*Turkish group in Athens*

Swedish, Danish, German, Greek, Italian, Russian, Hebrew, Romanian, Afrikaans, etc. Currently, there are ICEEFT members from 40 countries and ICEEFT-Affiliated Organizations in 15 countries — and the numbers keep growing!

*Hold Me Tight* (Sue Johnson's book for the general public based on EFT) has been translated into or is "in press" in 23 languages and *Creating Connection* –

*China*





*Iran*

*The Practice of Emotionally Focused Therapy and Love Sense* are also available in several languages.

The international expansion of EFT is enriching the model as we learn to adapt the core concepts of attachment, emotion and intimate relationships to a range of cultures. This is done in collaboration with each country and truly makes ICEEFT and EFT "international"! The photos shown here are just a small sampling.

Yolanda von Hockauf, MEd, RMFT  
EFT Therapist, Supervisor & Trainer  
Director, Vancouver Couple &  
Family Institute



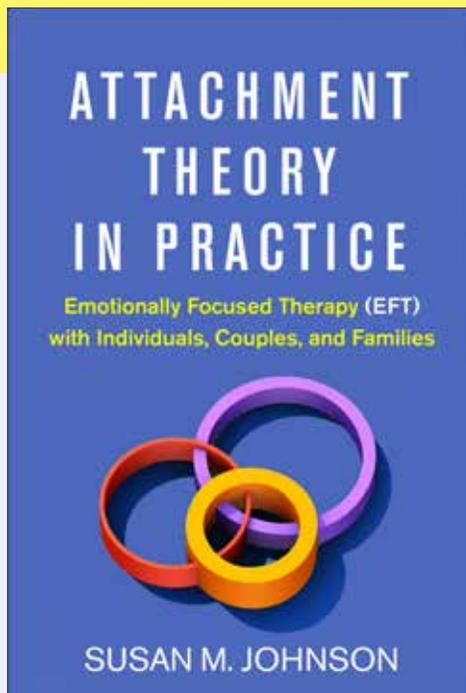
*Romania*

*Bulgaria*



*Costa Rica*





### by Dr. Sue Johnson

Drawing on cutting-edge research on adult attachment — and providing an innovative roadmap for clinical practice

— Dr. Sue Johnson argues that psychotherapy is most effective when it focuses on the healing power of emotional connection.

This book shows how EFT aligns perfectly with attachment theory as it provides proven techniques for treating anxiety, depression and relationship problems. Each modality (individual, couple and family therapy) is covered in paired chapters that respectively introduce key concepts and present an in-depth case example. Special features include instructive end-of-chapter exercises and reflection questions.

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## What the experts are saying...

*“Johnson’s impeccable scholarship and extraordinary clinical acumen are evident throughout this marvelously written book. Filled with compelling and instructive case studies, this surely will become the go-to book about the practice of attachment-informed psychotherapy. This book should be read by every clinician and every student of psychotherapy.”*

—Jay L. Lebow, PhD, ABPP, LMFT, Senior Scholar and Clinical Professor, The Family Institute at Northwestern University

*“A lucid treatise on psychotherapy... Johnson has written an outstanding work that will have an impact on our field for a great many years.”*

—Irvin Yalom, MD, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry, Stanford University

*“This book is a magnum opus that finally gives therapists a practical and very readable guide to using EFT principles across psychotherapy modalities. A ‘must read’.”*

—John M. Gottman, PhD, The Gottman Institute, Seattle, Washington

*“This wise and fascinating book is true to the scientific literature, beautifully written, and rich with engaging, moving case examples.”*

—Phillip R. Shaver, PhD, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Psychology, University of California, Davis

*“With wit, insight, and intellectual brawn, Johnson unpacks the key elements of attachment theory, and reveals the healing power of EFT in different therapeutic contexts. There are nuggets of brilliance and wisdom in every chapter.”*

—Jeffrey A. Simpson, PhD, Distinguished University Teaching Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology, University of Minnesota

For more information, visit [www.guilford.com/p/johnson10](http://www.guilford.com/p/johnson10)

## EFT Summits

*Editor's Note: Thanks to EFT Trainers Jim (2010), Leanne and David (2012) and Rebecca (2017) for contributions to this article. And special thanks to EFT Trainer Robin Williams Blake (Toronto), our unofficial/official photographer!*



Jim  
Thomas



Leanne  
Campbell



David  
Fairweather



Rebecca  
Jorgensen

To date, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) has been the nucleus of four conferences (Summits).

### Ottawa ~ 2006

The first EFT Summit was held in Ottawa, Canada in May, 2006, organized by ICEEFT and supported by the Ottawa Couple and Family Institute. Over 300 EFT Therapists came to hear Sue Johnson and her colleagues talk about the growing world of EFT: Theory and practice; experiences with various populations; trainings; research; and future directions.

It was at this initial summit that Sue delivered the landmark plenary address: "A New Era for Couple Therapy: Theory, Research and Practice in Concert," which was published the following year in the

*Journal of Systemic Therapies* and has since been included in the selection of articles given to every externship participant. The success of that first Summit led to an agreement at the 2008 EFT Trainers Retreat that ICEEFT, working with affiliated centres, would coordinate future periodic EFT Summits. In addition to EFT, these conferences would include prominent plenary speakers whose work included complementary and/or interesting perspectives that gave EFT therapists a valuable sense of where EFT fits into the larger picture of current psychotherapy and neuroscience.

### San Diego ~ 2010

In bright, sunny San Diego, close to 400 therapists converged on the Doubletree Golf Resort for 3 days of EFT heaven in January, 2010.

From Sue Johnson's electrifying opening plenary remarks (which propelled the crowd into chants of "Sue, Sue" like a group of Springsteen fanatics shouting "Bruce"), the tone was set. What fun to interact with colleagues who practice experiential therapy and retain that full presence in their daily lives! The combination of mindfulness and authenticity in our EFT community was wonderful to experience firsthand.

There were workshops that provided insight on working with diverse populations, including an exploration of unique factors that could impact gay and lesbian couples' attachment dance. Jim Coan captivated the crowd while sharing research on the neurobiology of

attachment — not an easy task to interest clinicians in brain research, but he made tangibly relevant what we all experience with couples and families everyday in our work. When Barry McCarthy and Sue Johnson got into a friendly debate about attachment and sexual intimacy, everyone knew that they were all in the right place at the right time.



Jim Coan during  
his plenary address.

EFT therapists clearly believe in their clients' innate need for and ability to create connection. Truly a great conference!

## New York City ~ 2012

And then there was New York City in July, 2012, starting at the Roosevelt Hotel with a warm welcome to the over 500 attendees. From Sue's inspiring opening speech to a procession of powerful keynote speakers — each with their own individual take on central issues of love, relationships, emotions and connection — to the thoughtful and passionate presentations by EFT enthusiasts from near and afar, the excitement was constant and the appreciation to be able to attend such a special event was universal.



*The crowd does the EFT Hand Dance (2012).*

Highlights included the “living room scene” where the keynote speakers, Sue Johnson, Phil Shaver, Dan Hughes, and Diana Fosha, gathered together, sharing and revealing poignant moments in their own lives that helped guide their personal and professional development and what brought them to the places where they are today.

From the excitement, chaos and vigor of “the city that never sleeps” to the grounding, quiet, solid power that is the essence of EFT, everyone was bonded together by a common respect and appreciation for its powerful process and the magic that it so often brings to couples in distress and despair. It was a privilege to be a part of it!

## San Diego ~ 2017

The warmth of the location was a prelude to the warmth and richness experienced over the next two and half days, beginning with Sue Johnson's opening keynote address on Thursday evening.

Sue's primary questions were: Where is the field of psychotherapy going and where is EFT in terms of this field? Summarizing 30 years of clinical practice and research on EFT, Sue outlined for the 650 attendees, some of the dilemmas of psychological intervention and the EFT perspective on these dilemmas, focusing on attachment science, emotion research and the interpersonal perspective on change.

Louis Castonguay (highlighting how research and practice can nourish each other through greater collaboration), Dr. Gabor Maté (addiction finds its roots in attachment issues) and Jeffrey Simpson

(how early life attachment affects adult health) all provided stimulating and valuable plenary presentations.

There were also a myriad of presentations on various EFT topics including attachment injuries, withdrawal re-engagement, treating depression, EFT and

*The Panel: Gabor Maté, Jeffrey Simpson, Louis Castonguay, Sue Johnson, Rebecca Jorgensen and Scott Woolley.*





*Dr. Sue Johnson's opening plenary address.*

sexuality, healing affairs, EFFT, treating addiction, cross cultural relationships, and HMT with adolescents.

EFT has effectively come a long long way in 30 years. Leaving the Summit, there was a sense of accomplishment at how far we have come and confidence about the future that awaits us. What

makes it bright is that we are facing it together, as friends, as family. And while we may still have a lot to learn, we most assuredly have a lot to share about what constitutes effective psychotherapy. Learning and sharing is what EFT is all about.

Plans are afoot for the next EFT Summit in 2020!

## Emotionally Focused Family Therapy — EFFT



*Gail Palmer*

Emotionally Focused Family Therapy promotes the development and renewal of secure attachment bonds among distressed family members. To this end, the EFFT therapist helps build stronger families through: 1) recruiting and strengthening parental emotional responsiveness to children; 2) accessing and clarifying children's attachment needs; and 3) facilitating and shaping care-giving interactions from parent to child. It is the privileging of emotion and the creation of affectively charged bonding experiences that alter the family system and shift negative interactional cycles into positive bonding events that transform the family climate and ultimately define the family as secure.

Therapists who are adept at moving couples through the Stages and Steps of the model can apply the EFT Tango to their work with families. The EFT Tango

process is the same with families as with couples, with some noteworthy differences. The most obvious difference is the increased level of complexity with multiple family members. It is essential that the family therapist have a target for change to help navigate the multiple realities and perspectives existent in family life. Like EFCT, the therapist is utilizing the attachment lens to understand family struggles however the attachment bond between parent and child is different than the romantic relationship between committed lovers. In families we are working with the care-giving component of attachment. We conceptualize family distress as resulting from fixed negative patterns of interaction that block the caregiver's ability to effectively nurture their child. The EFFT therapist focuses on accessing and processing blocks to caregiving and care seeking with each family member. This therapeutic process is guided by the influence of the hierarchal nature of the parent-child relationship. The parent-child relationship lacks mutual responsibility to meet one another's attachment needs. Parents are responsible to meet children's attachment and care-giving needs and children do not have this responsibility towards their parents. Parents, however, do bring themselves to this role of parent and the more self aware and transparent the parent is in their interactions with their children, the safer and more secure they are to their children.

## the EFT community news

The EFFT therapist, therefore, guides the attachment dance to catalyze parental accessibility and responsiveness, increasing parental supportiveness and sensitivity to the child. In healthy emotional and psychological development, a parent nurtures the child toward adulthood, tuning in to the child's cues for comfort and cues for wanting to explore. The EFFT therapist then focuses on the attachment needs and longings in the child and helps to create the safe, secure environment for these needs to be met.

The EFFT therapist creates these changes in the family system by assembling and deepening emotions to create new, bonding conversations. How EFFT structures these dyadic conversations depends on the level of reactivity within the family, the nature of the presenting problem and the family constellation. The EFFT therapist works with varying combinations of dyadic or triadic family groupings and at other times with the family as a whole. The EFFT therapist needs to carefully assess the needs of each family member to determine how therapy can most effectively reach the goal of creating a stronger, more secure base.

This requires flexibility and openness from the therapist. Since the EFFT therapist is tapping into an evolutionary, biological human need to care for the young, family sessions frequently move more quickly than Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy.

### Case Example

Following a very difficult separation, a couple seeks family therapy for themselves and their three teenage children as they begin to plan their marital reconciliation. The EFFT therapist begins by tracking the interactions to make explicit the negative cycles in the family. She reflects and validates both Dad's efforts to reach his children by telling them how they should be behaving and feeling, and Mom's efforts to protect the connections by mediating and blocking the interactions between Dad and the children. Each of the children have their own way of protecting themselves in the cycle, ranging from becoming angry and "freaking out" to being quiet and complacent. The EFFT therapist views the parents' reactive positions as being driven by their inherent desire to take care of their children and honours this longing directly through acknowledging and validating their caregiving motivations. The EFFT ther-

apist understands and validates that it is the parents' own deep guilt and shame and feelings of sadness and loss from the marital separation that is scrambling their natural ability to emotionally attune to their children. Through slowing the interaction down, focusing on the emotional music of the dance, and highlighting the good intentions of the parents, the EFFT therapist begins to change the music and move the family towards cycle de-escalation. Dad is able to share that he is "on overdrive" in an urgent effort to replace the time he lost with his children. Mom shares that she is blinded by her need to protect due to feeling guilty over not protecting the children from the couple's fights in the past. The more transparent the parents are, the more likely they can keep their emotional balance and attune to the needs of their children. The therapist can then help the children feel safe by validating and making sense of their reactive positions, and helping them to take risks in the session. Children are encouraged to open and share their pain directly with their parents in a way that it can be healed. The children share their loss, sadness, fears and helplessness. All the children seek to be seen for their unique experience, and to voice how the parents' separation and reconciliation affects them emotionally. The therapist supports the parents to hear these messages by shoring up and reinforcing their natural care-giving responses. The parents are then able to reach back and respond to their children. They offer comfort and support and invite the children's participation and inclusion in the future changes the family is facing.

Attachment theory guides the family therapist directly to the heart of the matter with their families. In session, the EFFT therapist accesses new softer emotional experiences and creates change through structuring enactments where children share openly and vulnerably and parents listen and offer comfort. Attachment guides the family therapist to facilitate moments of secure bonding, rather than to solve problems or to fix family members. In conclusion, EFFT provides the map for how to facilitate and engage families in building their own safe haven, and in doing so, strengthens family bonds.

Gail Palmer, MSW, RMFT  
EFT Therapist, Supervisor & Trainer  
Co-Director, ICEEFT and OCFI Inc.

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*Dr. Sue Johnson is a visionary leader in the field of relationships and often called "the best couple therapist in the world."*

**holdmetightonline.com**

## Trainers' Tips on Opening and Closing EFT Sessions



Lorrie Brubacher

How do you begin an EFT session? How do you effectively bring an EFT session to a close? There are a range of EFT-congruent options for beginning and ending sessions. The EFT Trainers were polled and seventeen trainers contributed their reflections on how they prepare for sessions and typical approaches they use to open and close sessions with couples.

### Preparing for Sessions

#### 1. Review notes before a session

It can make an enormous difference in session to begin with a clear focus that comes from taking the time to prepare. Review notes and significant images or client words that capture attachment emotions and dance steps. Reflect upon specific nuances of the couple's unique cycle, their pain and isolation, and their longing for connection.

#### 2. Identify where the couple is on the EFT map

Prior to every session, think about the current EFT Stage/Step. In Stage 1, ask yourself, "Am I aware of each partner's typical position in the cycle and of how they are triggered into their typical action tendencies?"

In Stage 2, review the risks they have been taking and the safety they have been developing.

#### 3. Choose a goal for the session

For example, write, "Stage 1 goal for today: Clarify the cycle," or "Identify specific trigger for pursuer's despair," or "Access primary emotion of withdrawer."

Tune into your relationship with the couple to enhance the primary goal for each session. Partners will experience the therapist as a safe haven for comfort and a secure base from which they can explore/create change.

### Opening Sessions

#### 1. Establish a focus for the session

From the couple's content quickly focus on the process, underlying perceptions, reactions, and responses, to explore the Stage/Step of EFT that you hope to cover in the session.

Be explicit about the focus for this session and get the couple's buy-in around that. For example, "We are really understanding how you guys are getting stuck and one thing I have been wondering about is what is fueling the caught places. Can we focus there?"

#### 2. Engage in the present moment

When partners describe recent events, bring the process into the here-and-now by asking how they are feeling as they recount the event.

Check if they were able to step out of the negative dance, and/or to share their underlying fears and needs directly with their partner.

#### 3. Connect the present process to the previous session

Review highlights and images from the last session, emphasizing the cycle in Stage 1 or the disclosure of a primary emotional experience in Stage 2.

Recap and invite their thoughts or comments about the last session.

Follow-up on homework, if discussed.

#### 4. Examples of open-ended beginnings

"How are you with each other today, right now, as we begin our time together?"

"Has anything significant happened during the week where you felt especially connected / disconnected?"

#### 5. The manner of opening sessions is different in Stage 1 and Stage 2

Whether beginning with a general check-in or with more specific reflections, images or questions, all EFT therapists begin with an intention to move from the content into exploring the relevant Step of EFT as quickly as possible.

**Stage 1:** Example: "In our sessions, we have been exploring the dance that you both get caught in. I

wonder if you are noticing it more at home?"

**Stage 2:** Build directly on the previous session. Recap the work you have done, check in to see how each one is doing, and ask if it would be alright to return to the reengagement or softening task you were exploring. Be sure to get the "observing" partner's consent as well.

## Closing Sessions

### 1. Summarize, meta-process or step back to reflect upon the work of the session

This includes presenting an overview of the cycle and/or heightening the shift, bonding moments, attachment longings, or even the stuckness experienced in the session if it has been a difficult one.

### 2. Engage the person of the therapist

Therapists acknowledge the apparent powerlessness in the face of the cycle. For example, "I am really sad along with you at how the cycle sucked you both in today, leaving you both feeling defeated and alone."

When the session needs to end before completing a task, therapists can express sadness that the session needs to end even though the work is incomplete. Recapping where their work will pick up at the next session and asking for willingness to pick up at this point, helps to convey hope and direction.

EFT therapists engage themselves by commending the couple on their hard work and courage and letting them know how they have been moved by the vulnerability or determination shown in session.

### 3. Validate and affirm risks taken and courage shown

Concrete, vivid and specific feedback about what they have done in session makes the work more alive and engaging and hence contributes more readily to transformative change.

### 4. Seed an attachment image of the direction in which the couple is headed

For example, "I can see that if you continue to explore these fears that suck you into these self-protection modes, that soon you, John, will be able to let Ann in just a little more to that place that feels so undeserving, and you will experience that she really does admire you. And Ann, you will begin to feel safe enough to retire the sentinel that scrutinizes his every move. You will begin to sense how very precious you are to him. You will both experience it is safe to count on one another."

### 5. Be intentional and explicit in preparing for closure

During the last quarter of a session, consider how to bring the work to a close in a safe and coherent way. During the final 5 to 15 minutes, engage the couple in the closure process. For example, "We're going to have to stop soon – how are you doing right now? Let's go over what we talked about today. There are a lot more feelings going on than we first knew, in particular that fear of asking for reassurance. Can we pick up on that next week?"

### 6. Evoke partners' feedback and collaboratively create a coherent picture or story of what happened in the session.

For example:

- "How was this session for you today?"
- "How was it for you to experience each other in this more vulnerable or honest way today?"
- "Did you see (experience) your partner (or yourself) in a new or more vulnerable way?"
- "How did you experience the negative cycle today? What did you notice about how you get sucked into old patterns?"

Invite them to direct their reflections to one another. If a change event is achieved, heighten their contribution.

### 7. Responding to requests for homework

Some trainers are very focused in their choice of Step and Stage specific homework while others seldom give homework, noting that in EFT, an experiential therapy, corrective emotional experiences happen in-session and thus homework is unnecessary. Nevertheless, couples frequently request it, and many trainers encourage reading *Hold Me Tight* or *Love Sense* or *An EFT Workbook for Couples*.

### 9. Note taking for therapists

During session, jot down key client words and images that capture emotional experiences, attachment fears and needs, and triggers and attributions in the cycle. At the end of the session, asterisk or underline salient words and images, note key elements of session and identify the Step to focus on in the next session.

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EFT Therapist, Supervisor & Trainer  
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# EFT Resources — Books, Videos, Online Programs, etc.



## International Centre for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy

Many therapists are in a quandary as to which EFT training materials to purchase. The following is an attempt to show the variety of options available. Choose which is best for you at that time based on your level of EFT experience and the area of EFT you want to focus on developing first. Most training videos are available as digital downloads or as physical DVDs.

ICEEFT also offers lists of EFT Publications, including EFT Books and non-English publications. All lists contain links to publisher websites to purchase.

You are certain to benefit from any of the valuable training materials available from ICEEFT. Please visit [www.iceeft.com](http://www.iceeft.com) for more information.

## EFT PUBLICATIONS/ REFERENCE LISTS

Our website, [iceeft.com](http://iceeft.com), offers various lists of EFT Publications including:

- ✓ EFT Books
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- ✓ Non-English EFT Publications
- ✓ EFFT Publications

All lists contain links to publisher websites for further information or to obtain copies.

ICEEFT also offers a “Summary of EFT Research” document, including a reference list and corresponding publisher links.

## EFT BOOKS

There are a variety of books about EFT available, such as:

- ▶ **NEW!** *Attachment Theory in Practice — Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) with Individuals, Couples and Families* by Sue Johnson
- ▶ *The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: Creating Connection*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., by Sue Johnson
- ▶ *The Emotionally Focused Casebook: New Directions in Treating Couples*, edited by James Furrow, Sue Johnson & Brent Bradley
- ▶ *Becoming an Emotionally Focused Therapist: The Workbook* by Sue Johnson, Brent Bradley, James Furrow, Alison Lee, Gail Palmer, Doug Tilley & Scott Woolley
- ▶ *Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy with Trauma Survivors: Strengthening Attachment Bonds* by Sue Johnson
- ▶ *Hold Me Tight* by Sue Johnson
- ▶ *Love Sense* by Sue Johnson
- ▶ *Created for Connection* by Sue Johnson with Kenneth Sanderfer
- ▶ *Attachment Processes in Couple and Family Therapy*, edited by Sue Johnson & Valerie Whiffen
- ▶ *An Emotionally Focused Workbook for Couples* by Veronica Kallos-Lilly & Jennifer Fitzgerald
- ▶ *Stepping Into Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: Key ingredients of change* by Lorrie Brubacher

Many EFT books have been translated into a variety of languages. For a complete list, to order and for other information, please visit [www.iceeft.com](http://www.iceeft.com).



## ONLINE LEARNING

- ▶ AIRM Training Program (by Lillian Buchanan & Lorrie Brubacher)
- ▶ Emotionally Focused Therapy Step by Step: A complete Online Course (with Dr. Rebecca Jorgensen, Dr. Scott Woolley, Lisa Palmer-Olsen & Mark Kaupp)

There are also online programs with Dr. Sue Johnson and other EFT Trainers available from PESI. Visit [www.pesi.com](http://www.pesi.com) and search “Emotionally Focused Therapy” or “Dr. Sue Johnson.”



## EFT VIDEOS — DVDs & Digital Downloads

- ▶ On Target Couple Interventions in the Age of Attachment (with Dr. Sue Johnson)
- ▶ Training DVD #1: Healing Broken Bonds (with Dr. Sue Johnson)
- ▶ Training DVD #4: Interventions in EFT (with Dr. Sue Johnson)
- ▶ Training DVD #5: Re-engaging Withdrawers (with Dr. Sue Johnson)
- ▶ EFT: Building Bonding Conversations to Shape Attachment — An Externship in EFT (with Drs. Sue Johnson & Scott Woolley; 24 hour, 8 disc set)
- ▶ Shaping Secure Connection: Stages One and Two of EFT (with Drs. Sue Johnson & Marlene Best)
- ▶ Emotionally Focused Therapy in Action (with Dr. Sue Johnson)
- ▶ Emotionally Focused Therapy with Same Sex Couples (with Dr. Sue Johnson)
- ▶ Working Successfully with Same Sex Couples: The Path to Secure Connection (with Dr. Sue Johnson)
- ▶ Caught in the Struggle: Emotional Dysregulation in the EFT Therapist (various EFT Therapists & Supervisors, LACEFT)
- ▶ Attachment Cradle to Grave (with Drs. Sue Johnson & Dan Hughes)
- ▶ Hold Me Tight®: Conversations for Connection (with Dr. Sue Johnson)
- ▶ Finding the Connection (with Dr. Scott Woolley & Yolanda von Hockauf)
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- ▶ Risking, Reaching and Responding: Transforming Relationships in Stage Two of EFT (with Dr. Sue Johnson & Gail Palmer)
- ▶ Facing the Dragon Together: EFT with Traumatized Couples (with Dr. Sue Johnson)
- ▶ EFT Stage 1 — Chinese (with Dr. Ting Liu)



## International Centre for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy

### ICEEFT Mission Statement

ICEEFT serves as a centre of excellence for the promotion of secure, resilient, and successful relationships between partners and within families. Our mission includes the further expansion and refinement of the Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) model through process and outcome research. Another aspect of our mission is to educate health professionals and to increase public awareness about the efficacy of EFT and its role in strengthening relationship bonds.

### A Brief History of ICEEFT

In 1998, Sue Johnson and a core group of her EFT colleagues decided to open the Ottawa Couple and Family Institute (OCFI) with the goal of having like minded therapists provide services to the Ottawa community, as well as to create a home for EFT research and training.

Over the next several years, the Institute was expanded by adding therapists, initiating various research studies and increasing EFT training programs. We developed a structure to specify

requirements to certify EFT therapists, supervisors and trainers. We instituted a Listserv to provide a forum to connect and share ideas and questions for people who had taken an EFT Externship and wanted to stay in touch with this new EFT Community. We also created a Directory of therapists, supervisors and trainers and Sue developed several EFT training DVD's.

With the continuing growth of all aspects of the Institute, we decided in 2004 to split the organization. The OCFI was incorporated to provide EFT therapy services to the Ottawa community, whereas research, educational courses and EFT training became the focus of the new International Centre for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy (a not-for-profit corporation). In the interest of efficiency and cost effectiveness, ICEEFT and OCFI continue to work out of the same office.

In the summer of 2008, the EFT Trainers met for the first annual retreat near Ottawa to assess the current state of our organization and to look at future possibilities. Discussions focused on how to enhance, grow and formally expand ICEEFT further.

### Attendees at the 2018 EFT Trainers' Retreat



From that retreat we took a leap forward to create a general membership of ICEEFT and to invite all those who have completed an EFT Externship to become more involved. For those interested but not yet having taken an externship, an associate level of membership was added in 2011. In 2018, there are now approx. 6,000 members, 67 ICEEFT-affiliated Centres, Communities & Organizations around the world and 22 EFT outcome studies and 11 EFT process & predictors research publications demonstrating the efficacy of EFT. Our newsletter, *the EFT Community News*, was launched in Spring of 2009 and has subsequently been published quarterly.

## General Membership Requirements & Benefits

The General Membership is open to anyone who has undertaken an approved EFT Externship. Associate Membership is available to anyone. The ICEEFT Board and Trainers want to expand ICEEFT, to facilitate greater communication and sharing within the EFT therapy community, and provide an

opportunity for greater networking and growth of EFT in general. **You are invited to join and grow with us.**

To become a member, an online application form is available at [www.iceeft.com](http://www.iceeft.com).

### Benefits of membership include:

- ✓ Quarterly electronic / printable newsletters & access to newsletter and article archives
- ✓ Discounts for conference (Summit) registration (15%)
- ✓ Discounts for purchase of training DVD's (15%)
- ✓ Listing on the website Directory (optional / not available to Student and/or Associate Members)
- ✓ Opportunities for volunteer involvement on Committees or other ICEEFT initiatives
- ✓ Invitation to submit questions, EFT tips or items for publication in our newsletter.
- ✓ Attend periodic free webinars with EFT Trainers
- ✓ Be part of the EFT Listserv and Forum (option not available to Associate Members)

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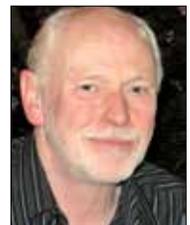
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