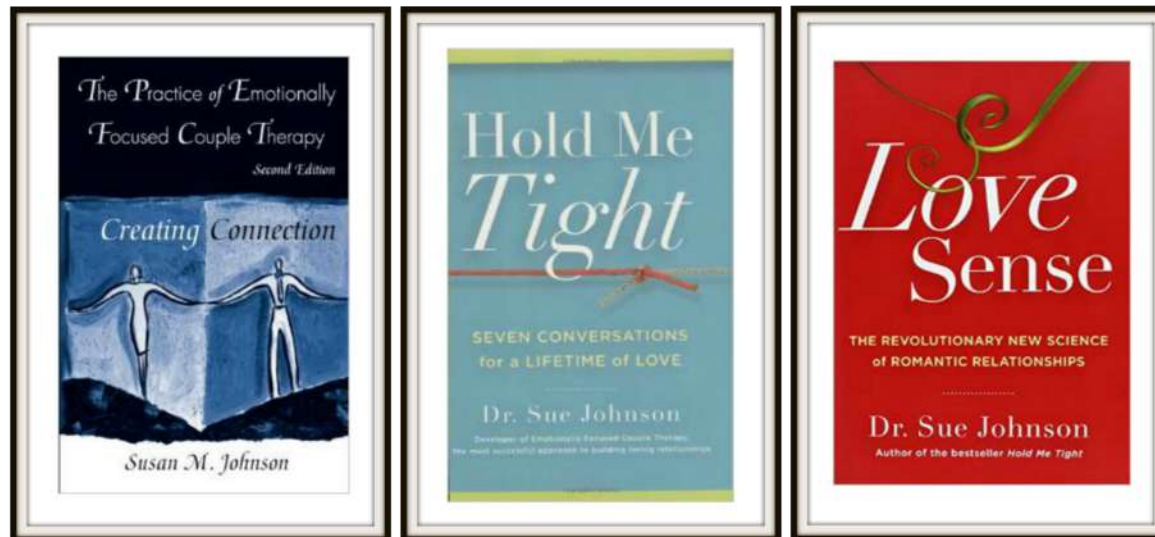


THE SCIENCE & SOUL OF COUPLES THERAPY

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DISCLOSURE (NO SUPPORT):

Sue Johnson

I have not received and will not receive any commercial support related to this presentation or the work presented in this presentation.

LOVE

MOST USED WORD / RATED MOST IMPORTANT GOAL

It is:

- A mysterious mixture of sex and sentiment ?
(If so: cannot understand it, make or keep it).
- A science of love is impossible.

Or is it:

- An exquisitely logic survival system ?
- Our foremost and most basic need – from the cradle to the grave ?
- Our only defense against “emotional starvation”.
- A haven of safety and strength. Effective Dependency.

EMPATHIC RESPONSIVENESS IS THE ESSENCE OF EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY

The empathic responsiveness of the therapist creates safety. The goal is to guide partners into this responsiveness with each other.

“Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant with the weak and the wrong.

Sometime in your life you will have been all of these.” (Lloyd Shearer)

Most Basic EFT Intervention: Empathic Reflection

- **Creates safety**
- **Focuses and slows processing**
- **Better organizes & distills experience – creates coherence**



THE PROBLEM:

W: Do you love me? (accusing tone)

H: Of course I do. How many times have I told you?

W: Well it doesn't feel like it (tears, looks down, turns away)

H: (Sighs-exasperated) Well, maybe you have a problem then. I can't help it if you don't feel loved. (Set mouth, lecturing tone.)

W: Right. So it's my problem is it? Nothing to do with you, right? Nothing to do with your ten feet thick walls. You're an emotional cripple. You've never felt a real emotion in your life.

H: I refuse to talk to you when you get like this. So irrational. There is no point.

W: Right. This is what always happens. You put up your wall. You go icy. Till I get tired and give up. Then, after a while, when you want sex you decide that I am not quite so bad after all.

H: There is no point in talking to you. This is a shooting gallery. You're so aggressive.

Rigid pattern- blame/withdraw.

No safe emotional connection-escalating danger and isolation.

EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED COUPLES THERAPY

Looks within at how partners construct their emotional experience of relatedness.

- (Using Rogerian Interventions)

Looks between at how partners engage each other

- (using Systemic Interventions and tasks)

In Order To:

- Reprocess / expand emotional responses
- Create new kinds of interactions / change the dance
- Foster secure bonding between partners

website: WWW.ICEEFT.COM

EFT: STAGES AND STEPS

STAGE ONE: DE-ESCALATION

1. Assessment
2. Identify negative cycle / Attachment issues
3. Access underlying attachment emotions
4. Frame problem – cycle, attachment needs/fears

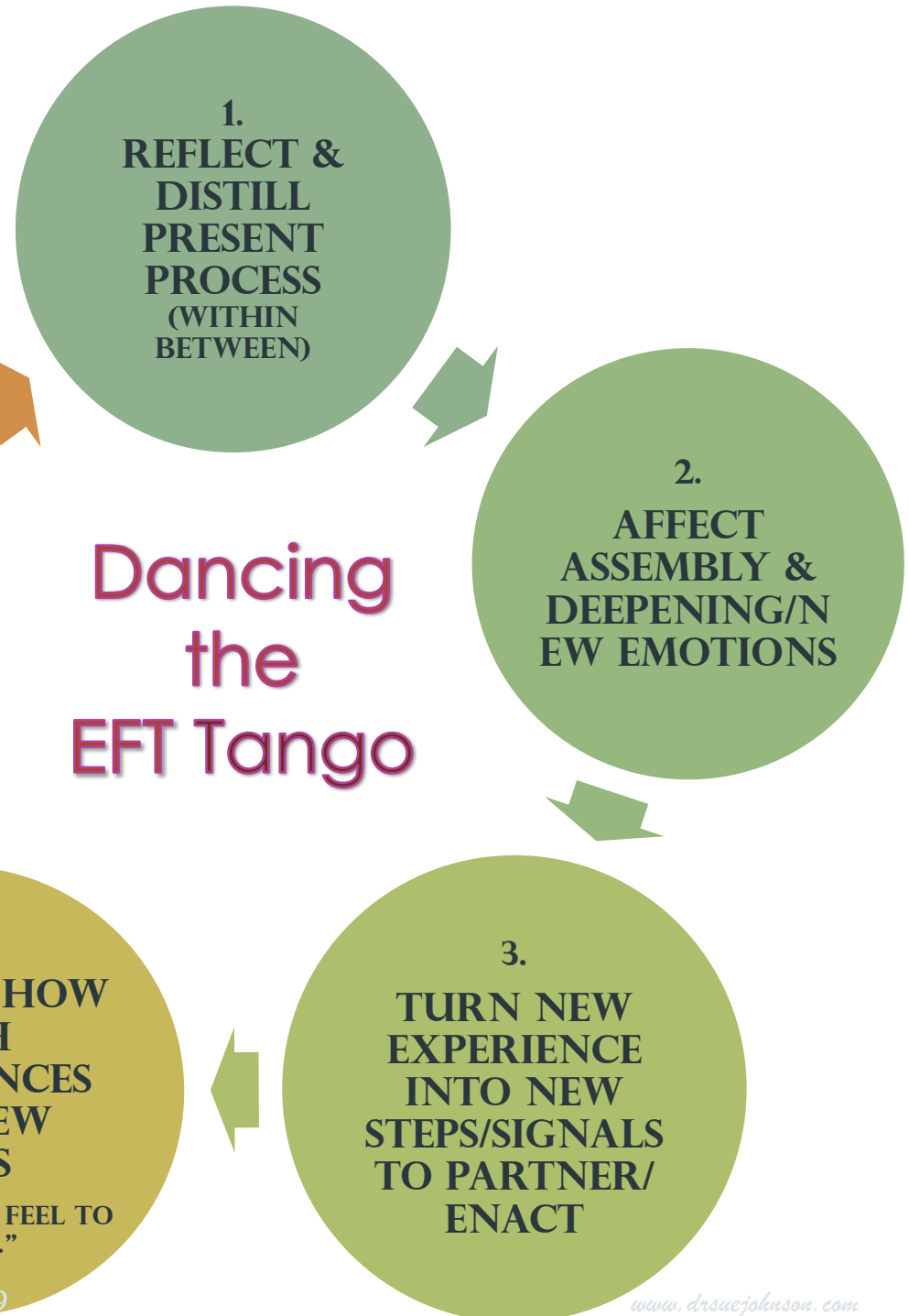
STAGE TWO: RESTRUCTURING THE BOND

5. Access implicit needs, fears, models of self
6. Promote acceptance by other – expand dance
7. Structure reach & respond – express attachment needs – bonding interactions.

STAGE THREE: CONSOLIDATION

THE 5 BASIC MOVES OF EFT

Repeat these 5 moves again and again, as you move through the steps and stages of EFT.



EFT RESEARCH

Meets the gold standard set out by bodies such as APA for psychotherapy research. EFT epitomizes the very highest level set out by this standard.

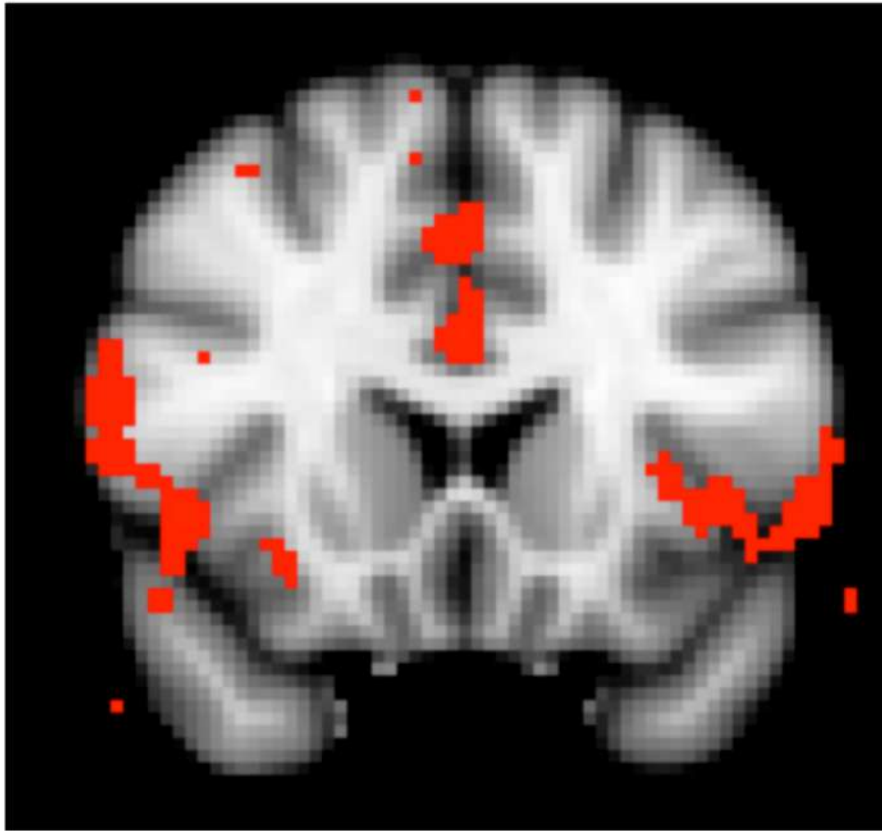
The meta-analysis (Johnson et al, 1999) of the four most rigorous outcome studies conducted before the year 2000, showed a larger effect size (1.3) than any other couple intervention has achieved to date – 70-75% recovered on DAS with significant improvement – 86-90%

Studies consistently show excellent follow-up results – some studies show that significant progress continues after therapy. Nine studies on the process of change validate EFT interventions.

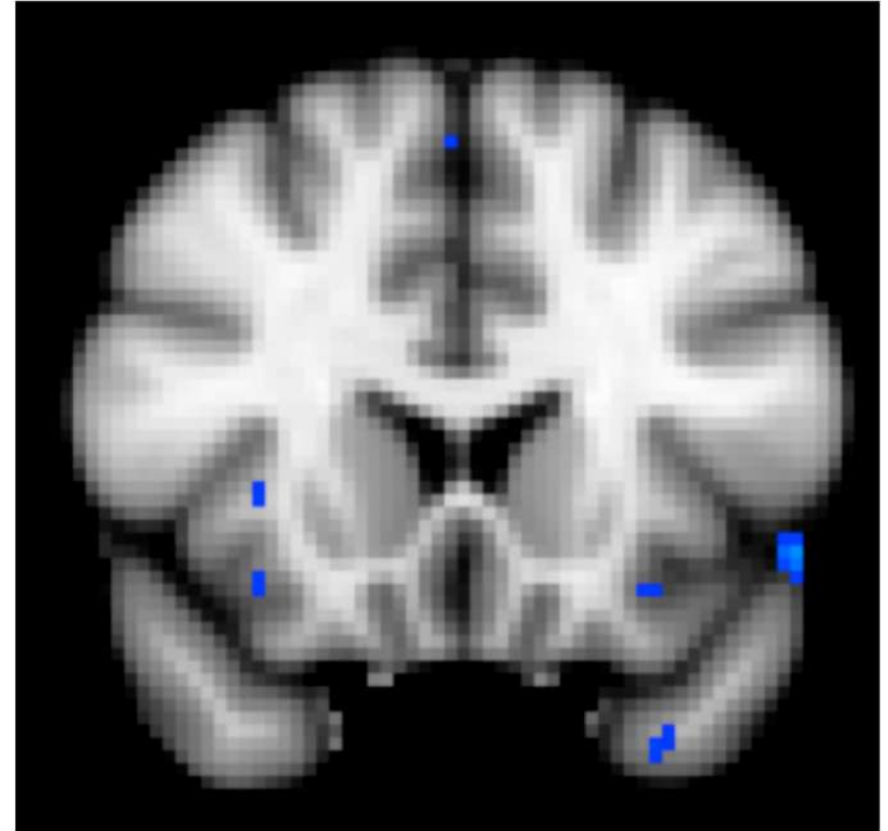
The generalizability of EFT across different kinds of clients and couples e.g. depression and PTSD – results are consistently positive.

A recent study on EFT effects on attachment security with an FMRI component shows that EFT changes attachment security and the way contact with a partner mediates the effect of threat on the brain.

CHANGING RESPONSIVENESS TO THREAT WITH EFT



Pre-Therapy Partner Handholding



Post-Therapy Partner Handholding

THE FOCUS OF EFT (THE 4 P'S)

EXPERIENTIAL

- PRESENT MOMENT (Emotion brings past alive. Past used to validate present blocks, styles, fears).
- PRIMARY AFFECT – Focus on / Validate

SYSTEMIC

- PROCESS (across time) – PIVOTAL MOMENTS
- POSITIONS / PATTERNS of interaction – self sustaining feedback loops

THE THERAPIST IS A PROCESS CONSULTANT !

EMOTION

Cue- Rapid appraisal of environment – Body arousal

Meaning/Reappraisal – Action Tendency (Arnold)

- Source of information – fit between environment cues and needs / goals
- Vital element in meaning
- Primes action response
- Communicates – organizes social interactions

Six core emotions (facial expressions) and adaptive actions.

ANGER	Assert, defend self
SADNESS	Seek support, withdraw
SURPRISE/EXCITEMENT	Attend, explore
DISGUST / SHAME	Hide, expel, avoid
FEAR	Flee, freeze, give up goal
JOY	Contact, engaging

Panksepp's attachment "panic"

EFT CORE ASSUMPTIONS

1. Rigid interactions reflect/create painful emotional states – absorbing states reflect/create rigid interactions (self-sustaining loop).
2. Partners are **stuck** in habitual ways of dealing with emotions/engaging with others at key moments.
3. Emotion is seen as target and **agent** of change – music shapes the dance.
4. Change involves new **experience** and new relationship events.
5. Effective couple therapy shifts the security of the bond – A.R.E. you there for me? – It's all about attachment.





CODE OF ATTACHMENT TELLS US:

Primary need is “felt security” with other

A safe haven - to go to

A secure base – to go out from

“ARE you there for me?”

Are you Accessible – Do I matter ?

Are you Responsive to my need – Can I depend ?

Are you Engaged with me ?

Emotional presence is “solution”

ADULT ATTACHMENT THEORY AND SCIENCE
HAS CRACKED THE CODE OF ROMANTIC LOVE.

*The profound vulnerability of our offspring structured our social and emotional organization as well as our nervous system. We are Homo Vinculum – the one who bonds.
Love is a wired in survival system.*



THESE LAWS OFFER THE COUPLE THERAPIST A WAY TO:

See and make sense of the drama of relationship distress – tune into pivotal moments

See and make sense of the megawatt emotions in this drama

See and accept the needs and longings that drive the drama

Find the blocks to empathy and safe engagement

Find the key moments of disconnection and potential connection

Shape small healing moments of bonding in every session

Shape secure attachment

MORE SECURE PARTNERS CAN:

1. Retain emotional balance. Less flooded with anxiety or anger when disconnected / threatened. Less reactive / defensive.
2. Tune into emotions and formulate coherent direct messages re needs.
3. Remain flexible and open, tuning response to context and reflecting on experience / interaction. (Meta-perspectives).
4. Trustingly take in comfort and care – returning to physiological homeostasis.
5. Deal with ambiguous responses with less catastrophizing / numbing.

MORE SECURE PARTNERS CAN:

6. Give the benefit of the doubt and resist fixed negative appraisals of other.
7. Maintain a coherent and positive sense of self.
8. Turn toward others and respond with empathy and caring – renew bonds.
9. Turn back into the world and explore – learn and adapt to new situations.
10. Complete the co-ordination tasks of caregiving and sexual connection more effectively.

If EFT fosters secure connection , then it potentially fosters all of the above.



The most exciting breakthroughs of the 21st century will not occur because of technology but because of an expanding concept of what it means to be human.

John Naisbitt