

EFT Stages and Steps (for couples)

Emotionally Focused Therapy has been broken down in to three stages, and 9 steps. They are as follows:

Stage 1 – Assess and De-escalate

One of the therapist's primary goals during this stage of EFT is to ensure that the therapy setting feels comfortable, stable, and safe enough for both partners to talk openly and honestly. If either partner is having second thoughts about therapy (e.g. questioning the therapists' competence or trustworthiness), this is the time to discuss them.

It's at this early stage (as with many types of couple's therapy) that the therapist starts to get an initial picture of the couple's interaction patterns – both good and bad. The therapist goes over this with the couple. This process helps shift the couple's perception that they're victims of the problem to one of working together – with each other and with the therapist – against it. It's important that both partners feel a genuine sense of alliance with the therapist.

Steps:

- 1 – Identify the key relationship problems the couple is experiencing.
- 2 – Identify the negative interaction cycle where the conflicts come up.
- 3 – Examine each partner's attachment emotions that are at the core of the negative cycle.
- 4 – Help the couple look at the problem from a new perspective (i.e. "reframe" it) with regards to where it occurs in the cycle, which emotion need to be identified and explored, and how it relates to their attachment needs.

Stage 2 – Restructuring the Couple's Bond

During this stage, the therapist helps the partners start changing the positions or emotional stance they assume during these negative interactions. The therapist helps each partner broaden his or her range of emotional response so they can start having more authentic and positive interactions. In order for this restructuring to occur the partners must consider their individual needs for connection. Any changes they make during this stage must support those needs. Couples often find these initial changes to

be a bit uncomfortable and naturally feel some resistance to them. However, as their understanding increases, their ability to keep the old patterns at bay improves as well.

Steps –

5 – Help both partners get in touch with any needs (e.g. the need for control), emotions (e.g. fear or shame) and self-perceptions that they've been pushing aside or refusing to acknowledge.

6 – Encourage each partner to genuinely accept what the other partner has experienced.

7 – Assist each partner in clearly expressing his or her wants and needs. This part of the process helps the couple create positive new interactions with each other and connect on a deeper level emotionally.

Stage 3 – Consolidation

In this final stage, the partners start to merge and reinforce or consolidate the new ways they've learned to handle the challenges that arise within the relationship, as well as those they may each experience internally.

Steps –

8 – Help both partners create new narratives or stories about their relationship, as well as new and more constructive solutions to the problems they've encountered.

9 – Reinforce these new patterns of behaving and interacting.