The Transforming Power of Emotion: Emotion Focused Therapy

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www.emotionfocusedclinic.org

www.iseft.org

www.apanta-academy.nl
Emotion and Psychotherapy

- There has been a growing increase on the importance of emotions in psychotherapy.

- Most people seek therapy to address emotional difficulties.

- They present with painful emotions of fear, shame, sadness or difficulties regulating symptomatic emotions like panic and rage or with having bad feelings in relationships.

- Emotion Processing problems are increasingly being seen as the unifying underlying problem in dysfunction and as lying at the core of most mental health disorders (e.g., anxiety, depression, PTSD, BPD, addictions).
Emotional Difficulties

There are four major difficulties with emotions

1. **Non Awareness/Avoidance** of primary emotions.

2. **Maladaptive Emotion** from past trauma/wounds.

3. **Dys-regulated symptomatic** emotion.

4. **Emotion/Narrative** problems: **Faulty** meaning creation.
Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT)

• EFT focuses on emotional processing problems and the creation of narrative meaning as core change processes.

• Emotions are seen as having an innately adaptive potential that if activated can help clients change maladaptive emotional states and painful emotions.

• Emotion dys-regulation is seen as a symptom that may initially need coping skills but is viewed more as the result of an underlying problem that needs to be the focus of treatment.
EFT Outcome Research

EFT has been shown to be equally effective to CBT and more effective than CC in reducing depressive symptoms.

More effective in reducing interpersonal problems than both the CC and CBT treatment and highly effective in preventing relapse (77% non relapse).

Emotion Focused Therapy also shown to be effective:
• Anxiety disorders/Complex trauma/Eating disorders/ Couple distress
Much research on the process of change.

Shown a relationship between outcome and

- *Therapeutic presence,*
- *Therapist empathy,*
- The *working alliance,*
- Client depth of *experiencing,*
- Client emotional *arousal,*
- Client *making narrative sense of aroused emotion,*
- Client *productive processing of emotion* and
- Particular client *emotions sequences*
EFT therapists help clients within an empathic relationship:

Arrive at emotion by

1. approaching and becoming aware of it

2. regulating, tolerating, accepting & symbolizing it and, having experienced it, help them to

Leave emotion by

3. transforming that which is maladaptive by generating opposing adaptive emotional responses

and by

4. constructing new narratives
EFT
Sees emotion as the fundamental datum of human experience

Emotions are seen as providing survival action tendencies that have an innately adaptive potential

Sees adaptive emotions as helping to change dreaded, painful emotions.

Recognizes the importance of the construction of narrative meaning
Emotion

• At its core is connected to our most essential needs that have evolved to help us survive and thrive.

• Rapidly alerts us to situations important to our well-being and prepare and guides us to take action towards meeting our needs.

• Sets a basic mode of processing in action (Le Doux, 1986, Greenberg 2002)
Bring cognition to emotion by symbolizing bodily felt experience in awareness in order to make narrative sense of it.

Spinoza (1667) “A passive emotion ceases to be passive as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it”
Rapid and Automatic Response

• The initial "pre-cognitive", perceptual, emotional processing of the "low" road, is FAST
• It is highly adaptive because it allows people to respond quickly to important events
• Before complex and time-consuming processing has taken place by the slower prefrontal cortex "high" road to emotion (LeDoux 1996)
Development of Emotion Schemes

• With development emotional experience is organised into complex affective/cognitive networks termed *emotion schemes*. (Oatley 1992, Greenberg 2002)

• These provide primary meaning in that they automatically evaluate what is significant for our well being and are carriers of personal meanings.
Emotion Scheme Concept

• Scheme is a pattern of mental organization.

• Provides implicit higher-order organization for experiencing.

• Experience and action producing,
  – A plan of action not for action.

• Self-organizing processes, not things

• Consists of component/elements linked together in a network.
Dialectical Constructivist Theory:

- Two fundamental systems the experiential (automatic) and conceptual (effortful).

1) Affective system: Pre-symbolic/Schematic
   - Affect regulation is a core process

2) Meaning construction: Symbolic/Conceptual
   - Will to meaning is core process

3) Interaction between the two systems determines experience
Emotion Awareness

• Emotion rather than sitting fully formed in the unconscious exists in an undifferentiated form consisting of sensori-motor schemes that are pre-ideational and pre-verbal (Lane 2008).

• Implicit emotion, or bodily felt sensations, can be turned into conscious experiences of specific emotions by putting the felt sensations into words.
Clip
• EFT emphasizes the importance of both relationship and intervention skills

• Islands of work in an ocean of empathy
Working Alliance, Presence, Empathy

Collaboration

In the Moment

Empathic Attunement to Affect

"I know exactly how you feel."
Tasks

<table>
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<th>Task Marker</th>
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Strong Process Orientation

Keep your fingers on the emotional pulse moment by moment

Moment by moment responsiveness
EFT Compasses

Systematic Work with Emotion uses Four Central Orientation Systems

1. Emotion Assessment
2. Principles of Change
3. Case Formulation
4. Problem Markers & Tasks
Assessment

1. Primary
   - Adaptive
   - Maladaptive

2. Secondary

3. Instrumental
Emotion Assessment

1. *Primary Emotion*  
   Biologically adaptive
Emotion Assessment

2. Secondary Emotion

- Masks
- Armour
Emotion Assessment

3. *Instrumental Emotion*

• To achieve an aim:

Crying Crocodile tears
Emotion Assessment

1. *Primary Emotion* → Maladaptive
Six Principles of Emotional Change

• **Accessing**

  Awareness

• **Expressing**

• **Modulating**

  Regulating

• **Reflecting**

• **Transforming**

  Changing emotion with emotion

  Corrective experience
SIX MAJOR PRINCIPLES OF EMOTIONAL CHANGE

Accessing Emotion

1. Increase Emotional Awareness & Symbolization in the Context of Salient Personal Stories.
   Symbolizing emotional experience in awareness in order to make sense of one’s experience. What am I feeling?

2. Express Emotion.
   Expressing changes the self and changes interactions both by mobilizing and revealing self. Overcome control and inhibition. Completion of expression. Neuro-chemical changes.
B) Modulating & Understanding

3. Enhance Emotion Regulation
Explicit regulation.  
a) Coping Self Soothing. Use deliberate cerebral capacities to contain and regulate Dys-regulated amygdala reactions (especially fear, rage). 
b) Transformational Self Soothing. Allowing, tolerating, accepting and soothing (sadness, shame, insecurity).

4. Reflect on Emotion.
c) **Transforming Emotion**

5) **Change Emotion with Emotion.** An alternate self-organization, set of emotion schematic memories, based on primary emotions are accessed by (a) attentional re-allocation or (b) focus on a need/goal/value.

6) **Corrective Emotional Experience.**

New lived experience with another provides a corrective emotional experience. Disconfirms pathogenic beliefs. Provides interpersonal soothing. New success experience changes emotion.
1. Catharsis/Completion/Detachment/Habituation/Extinction

- Transforming Emotion

- 1. Catharsis/Completion/Detachment/Habituation/Extinction
  - Blocked
    - Needs to be unblocked. Let it run it’s course
  - Arising & passing away
  - Letting go
  - Desensitizing/Exposure

2. Changing Emotion with Emotion

- 2. Changing Emotion with Emotion
  - Undoing
  - Generates Novelty

- Synthesis
Changing Emotion with Emotion

- Frederickson: Negative Emotions with Positive emotion memories
- Nader: Reconsolidation memory – update memory with new information
- 10 minute window
Memory Stability

EVENT → ENCODE → CONSOLIDATE → FIXED MEMORY

FIXED MEMORY ↔ REACTIVATION

FIXED MEMORY ↔ RECONSOLIDATION

UNFIXED MEMORY

UNFIXED MEMORY → TRANSFORMED MEMORY

TRANSFORMED MEMORY ↔ NEW/ALTERED EXPERIENCE
Major Premises Guiding Intervention

1) Acceptance of Emotion

“You have to feel it to heal it”

“You cannot leave a place until you have arrived at it”
Global EFT Task: Approaching Feelings

- “I’m afraid if I start crying I’ll never stop.”

- “I’m afraid if I let my anger out I will lose control.”

- “I’m afraid my feelings will be so painful I won’t survive them”
They are afraid they will drown
We want to help clients to be comfortable with feelings so they can go in and explore...
To find valuable life and what is important to them.....
2) Leaving The Place you Have Arrived At

• Change is not only about accepting emotions
• Change to be who you are not who you are not is a first step
• You cant change yourself till you have accepted who you are, but then more is needed – change
• We want to help people leave the painful places they have arrived at
• HOW?
Change Emotion with Emotion

• The best way to change an emotion is with another emotion.

• Spinoza “An emotion cannot be restrained nor removed unless by an opposed and stronger emotion” (Ethics IV, p.195).

• Change fear with anger or sadness, shame with self-compassion, anger, hate with love or compassion, etc.
Change Maladaptive Emotions

Sadness

Fear

Shame
Best Transformed By
Adaptive Emotions

Empowered Anger

Sadness/Grief

Compassion

“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.”  
– Siddhartha Gautama
Basic Change Process

Secondary Distress

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PRIMARY MALADAPTIVE EMOTION

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NEED

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Primary Adaptive Emotion

Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
Accessing Alternate Emotion

0. Empathic relationship
1. Shift attention to present subdominant emotion
2. Access adaptive need/goal and associated emotion
3. Expressive enactment of alternate emotion
4. Imagery to evoke emotion
5. Evoke emotion memory of alternate emotion

Mood induction via music
Humour
Cognitive creation of new meaning
Therapist expresses emotion for client
10. Relationship evokes new emotion
Model of Emotional Processing

Start

Global Distress

Fear/Sad Shame

Need

Negative Evaluation

Positive Evaluation

Grief / Hurt

Acceptance, letting go

Assertive Anger / Self-Soothing

Degree of Emotional Processing

Low

High

Pascual-Leone & Greenberg 2007
EFT and Exposure

• Transformation not mere reduction of negative affect.
• Classic CBT processing theories are focused on reducing secondary, symptomatic emotions.
• EFT distinguishes between different types of emotional phenomena – primary/secondary/ adaptive/maladaptive and has different principles
• EFT promotes 1) acceptance, 2) making sense of and 3) transformation of emotion (by activation of adaptive emotion to change maladaptive emotion).
• EFT focuses on enhancing the experience and expression of primary emotion rather than extinction or habituation of secondary emotion.
• EFT also promotes the creation of new meaning as a means of consolidating change
Emotions are not stimulus driven not $S - R$ or even $S-O-R$
But are automatic goal directed processes that produce action tendencies $R - O^{NGV1}$
Reducing discrepancy between present and desired state rather than associative learning

Human Beings are agents
Responses are determined by implicit goals and by the anticipated effect response will have: Forward modeling
Case Formulation

Follow the pain: It is a compass that will point towards the Core Painful Emotion (CPE).

Identify underlying core emotion schemes either adaptive or maladaptive. (E)
## Markers and Tasks

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<tr>
<td>Problematic Reaction Point (puzzling over-reaction to specific situation)</td>
<td>Systematic Evocative Unfolding</td>
<td>New View of Self</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unclear Feeling (vague, external or abstract)</td>
<td>Experiential Focusing</td>
<td>Symbolization of felt sense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluative Split</td>
<td>Two-Chair Dialogue</td>
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<td>Self acceptance Integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-evaluative criticism,</td>
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<td>tornness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Interruption Split</td>
<td>Two-Chair Enactment</td>
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<td>Self-expression Empowerment</td>
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<td>Blocked feelings, resignation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unfinished</td>
<td>Empty Chair Work</td>
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<td>Let go of resentments, unmet needs affirm self; Forgive understand or hold other accountable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business</td>
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<td>(Lingering bad feeling re:</td>
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<td>significant other)</td>
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Self Critical Splits and Two Chair Dialogues
Model of Resolution of Self Criticism

Self Critical Marker

Role Play Critic ➔ Harsh Criticism ➔ Specific criticisms ➔ Values standards ➔ Softening

Role play Experiencer ➔ Affective reaction ➔ Differentiated feelings ➔ Emerging experiences ➔ Wants and needs

Secondary Maladaptive Adaptive

Negotiation Integration
Clips 2
Unfinished Business
Resolution of Unfinished Business

Client experiences lingering unresolved feelings

Client expresses blame, complaint or hurt

Negative other

Specific Negative aspects

Change in view of other

Resolution
- Self-affirmation
- Self-assertion
- Holds other accountable
- New view of others
- Understands other
- Forgive other

Dysfunctional Belief

Differentiation of feelings (anger & sadness)

Episodic memory

Intense expression of specific emotion

Self interruption or conflict split

Mobilization expression of unmet need

Optional letting go of unmet need
Self-Interruption
Resolution of Self-Interruption

Role play agent

Role play object

Enact interruptions

Specify interrupters

Recognition of agency

Affective reactions

Differentiate feeling

Emerging experience

Expression of need

Contact with environment
Self Soothing
I can’t take it!!

I don’t like this!

I’m so lonely

I used to be like this!

☆ All events were observed in the context of CHAIR WORK
The End
Apanta-Academy offers training & masterclasses in:

- Emotion-Focused Therapy
- Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapy

www.apanta-academy.nl

EFT Training Institute Veldhoven, The Netherlands