

hi I'm sue Johnson and I'm going to talk to you for a few minutes about emotionally focused couples therapy or EFT EFT is a leading edge couples therapy that is taught all over the world and is based on the last 50 years of research into bonding both bonding between mother and child and romantic bonds between partners the fact that it's based on this bonding research and science means that the EFT therapist has a map a map to what matters in intimate relationships how they work a map to how they go wrong and a map to what is needed to put them right at the moment EFT has substantial empirical validation we have 16 outcome studies and nine studies of the process of change and how it occurs we've also done studies with many different kinds of couples with depressed couples with couples facing trauma with couples who have chronically ill children we also use EFT with

families of course but most of our research and work has been on couples so what does the FT look like EFT is really like a conversation between Carl Rogers the father of experiential therapy salvador minuchin who's the father of systemic therapies and including John Bowlby who really founded the whole science of attachment and bonding so if you can imagine these three men coming together and teaching us how to do couples therapy you've kind of got an image of EFT its experiential it focuses on how people experience their relationship how they put together their emotional experience express those emotions the emotions are the music of the dance between lovers and it's systemic in that it looks at the whole relationship and the patterns in the relationship and how couples get stuck in very negative patterns and how we can help them shift their emotional

signals change the music and create more positive bonding patterns the goal of EFT is not just to change the way people fight make them more able to negotiate about issues like chores or even feel a little more satisfy with each other the goal of EFT is to create a more secure emotional bond and our research says that we can do that we can also create satisfaction intimacy Trust all these good things that come from feeling more secure with your partner our latest research has focused on exactly how you create that increased security in your bond with your partner and we if you're very interested in the research you can go to +1 which is a neuroscience journal it is online and if you look in November 2013 you will see a brain scan study that we just did that showed that after EFT holding your partner's hand once you've had these bonding conversations changes the way your brain perceives

threat and how your brain deals with it
this is very fascinating and it links
EFT and clinical practice into all the
theory and science about the nature of
attachment and adult bonding EFT focuses
on the present change happens in the
present in the relationship we sometimes
give homework but mostly it's all about
what happens in the session change
happens in the process of interaction
between the couple and in the process
where the Thera
test guides the client to go deeper into
their emotional experience make sense of
that experience find aspects of the
experience that they don't usually pay
attention to and put that experience
together in a new way so that they can
send new signals to their partner that
help their partner move with them in the
dance in a different way the EFT
therapist constantly tries to create
safety in the session for both partners

and the contraindication for EFT the main contraindication is that you cannot create that safety you cannot create the safety because one partner is literally threatening or is putting out so many danger cues by always announcing they're going to leave by commenting on the fact that they are having an affair with someone else or literally by being threatening and threatening violence or harm to their partner you cannot then in these circumstances create the emotional safety to work on creating more secure bond and you cannot help the other person to become vulnerable this is not ethical in fact so this is the main contraindication but an EFT therapist is constantly validating and supporting and creating safety in the session and helping people make sense of what's going on right here and now right in the session if you watch an experienced EFT therapist you kind of see them doing

five moves all the time in any of the sessions EFT usually takes between 8 and 20 sessions but you will see the EFT therapist constantly doing these five new moves the therapist goes into what is happening right now in the session present process either inside the partner's or between the partners the therapist will say what is happening right now could you help me I'd like to stop here for a minute you turn to him and you said in an angry voice you didn't do what you said you were going to do you didn't fix the cabinets and you turned to her and you started to cry and you said I can never get it right with you it doesn't matter what I do and you turn back to him and said yes but you didn't fix the cabinet's so the EFT therapist will stay here and will say is this what happens at home you're angry at your partner you point

out the ways he's disappointed you and you hear how angry she is and right here right now you actually tried to reach for her although at home you say that you do distance but right here right now you try to reach for her but somehow it didn't work

you stayed back and said to him yes but I don't believe that you really care I think you're going to disappoint me again and you guys kind of get stuck here all the time is this what happens you're focusing on the process between the couple and you also focus on the person's emotional process so you might talk to her and say even when your partner now shows you his tears you remember that for a long long time he was very distant and very cold and some part of you doesn't respond to those tears it's like you go back to your anger and to your list of demands that's what you do and she says yes that's

right I can't get past my anger so you focus on the present process the process of putting the emotions together and the process of interaction then the EFT therapist in the second step deepens the emotion the EFT therapist will say so could you help me what happens to you when you see his tears she says I see them I see them I see them but I don't trust and the EFT therapist might use simple questions by saying how are you feeling right now she says I feel tense I feel tense I can see the tears but I just feel this tension in my throat and the therapist might say could you help me if that tension had a voice what would it say she says it would say don't believe him don't believe him you're only going to get disappointed again so then we stay with that and we help her talk about the fact that she's been so hurt in the

relationship we go deeper into her more primary core emotions her soft emotions and we help her start to talk about how she's been so hurt that she's got a wall around her and all she really does is stand behind that wall and kind of yell directions for change over the wall but deep inside she's so scared of being hurt and let down again it's so hard for her to trust then the EFT therapist will clarify that message for her and create an enactment create a new interaction based on the new signals that they've put together in the session so the therapist might say could you turn to him please and say you're right I am caught in my anger all the time it's so hard for me to let down my guard and begin to trust and believe that you want to be there for me I'm so scared of being hurt again could you tell him that so you set up an interaction so what have we done so far we focused on

process slowed it down focused on what's happening in the session we've gone deeper into the emotion we've distilled the emotion and deepened it and now we've created a new message based on that new experience so she's now going to turn to him and tell him that she does that the fourth step is that the EFT therapist processes that new step in the darts what was it like for you to tell him that that was amazing that you had the courage to do that what was it like for you to tell him that and she says it was scary but it felt good and that is true underneath all this anger I'm afraid and I say to him and what was it like for you to hear your partner talk about this and he says it makes me feel better at least now I know I'm not the only person who's afraid in this relationship and I can hear her I can hear her there's been years of her and distance in this

relationship so now we have a new step in the dance a new interaction the kind of interaction that's going to really create corrective emotional experiences of connection with the couple this is a real antidote to the negative pattern of demand and withdraw that the couple walked in the door with then the EFT therapist step five of the regular EFT pattern of therapist intervention then the EFT therapist ties a bow on the whole thing and goes matter and says look at what you guys just did and we do this in a way that builds their sense of competence that they can shape their relationship look at what you guys just did that's amazing you've been so angry for so long and here you are actually talking to him about the hurt underneath and it's amazing that you can stay and listen to your partner and recognize that she has good reasons for being so angry at you and look at what you guys

just did you shared something new and you you both stayed here and worked on this that's incredible that you can do that the EFT therapist does these steps again and again and again but with different levels of intensity there are three basic stages of change and EFT of course we create safety all the time but the first stage is de-escalating the negative cycle the couple come in with which is usually some form of critical demanding followed by withdrawal or sometimes mutual withdrawal when a relationship is really starting to unravel so first of all we help the couples see the pattern they're caught in we help them understand what's happening from an attachment and bonding point of view how they are both really scaring the hell out of each other and trying to protect themselves as well as they can and still dance together and we frame the negative pattern and the

insecurity and distance between them as the problem at the end of de-escalation the couple can come together and see the dance they're caught in and help each other step out of it they can say things like yes we got caught in that dreadful pattern this weekend but I said to him I said we're caught in that pattern is this one of these times when you get to feel scared once they've de-escalated they have a secure base to really go deeper into their relationship and create a corrective experience of bonding and emotional connection safe emotional connection so the second stage of EFT is restructuring the bond here we create very powerful conversations that we call withdraw re-engagement and blame a softening if you want an easier way to think about it we also call them hold me tight conversations in hold me tight conversations the

therapist helps both partners in the couple talk about their fears we all have built-in fears in our love relationships fears of rejection fears of being deserted and abandoned and turned away from so the EFT therapist in these hold me tight conversations helps people talk about their fears in a way that pulls their partner towards them and helps their partner learn to offer reassurance and arming and safety for those fears then we help people talk about their needs in a way that their partner can hear and respond we're really trying to create deeper levels of emotional responsiveness between the couple when both partners can turn and share their vulnerabilities and ask what they need on an emotional level I need you I need to be able to tell you when I get scared I need you to come close and hold me and reassure me that I'm your special one

when they can do that the bond between them really shifts and they start to have a whole new ability to be open and responsive to each other in the third stage of EFT consolidation we help the couple look at all the changes they've made and create their own love story about how they got stuck and how they fix their relationship and put it right we also help them dream about the future and where they're going to go if you watch an EFT therapist they're constantly reflecting people's reality as it comes up in the session as they create it slowing the process down so that people can move into deeper places within themselves and look at what's happening between them and their partner they're constantly asking simple questions what's that like for you how are you feeling right now what happens to you inside as you say this what is the trigger for this where does this

anger start how do you feel it in your
body
what do you say to yourself when you see
this expression on her face
they're asking simple questions they're
validating and normalizing people of
course you feel sad when this happens
they're doing little interpretations
like yes I understand I think you do
feel scared it's not just uncomfortable
I think this is scary they're also
showing people the patterns they're
quoting and reframing them reframing the
problem in the rela-
ship as the pattern of interactions the
dance that the couple get caught in and
of course they're constantly setting up
new enactments new interactions
interactions that lead to these powerful
bonding conversations that can make a
relationship into a more secure bond
couple therapy is in the middle of a
revolution we have never ever before had

a science of relationships to base
couple therapy on EFT is part of this
new revolutionary science of
relationships if you are interested in
EFT I suggest that you go to the website
ww-why see EFT calm on there you will
find many resources training tapes lists
of chapters and articles on EFT list of
all the research on EFT and
notifications about where we're doing
for day externships which is the basic
training on EFT so I invite you to go to
that website the basic text what EFT for
couples is the practice of emotionally
focused couples therapy creating
connection that came out in 2004 and
there's a workbook and a case book that
go along with that
thank you for listening it was fun to
talk to you