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

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 relay

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