

## CHAPTER 2

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# Attunement, Disruption, and Repair

## *The Dance of Self and Other in Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy*

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Steve was handsome, with blond hair across his forehead in a boyish cut. Once a high school athlete, now a dad in a comfortable flannel shirt, he was strongly built and moved with grace. Lisa had a softly freckled face, big beautiful brown eyes, and wild curly red hair, pulled up away from her face in a loose bun. In the waiting room, Steve shook my hand firmly, but didn't quite meet my eyes. Lisa's handshake was tentative, gentle, but she looked straight at me, a mixture of exhaustion and pleading in her dark eyes.

We sat down in my office. I adjusted the height of my chair so that I was at eye level with them as they each took one end of the worn blue sofa, looking around my office, taking it in. I rolled my chair around to sit equidistant from each of them and asked what brought them in to see me. They had moved to Durham, North Carolina, from Massachusetts for a new job that Steve had been offered in computer engineering at a local software company. They had been here 6 months, settling in to a new home with their daughters, aged 2 and 4. Lisa was home with the children, which was "OK for now." Steve's job was "OK" as well, but wasn't as interesting as he had hoped, and they were far away from their friends and family in Massachusetts. They liked their neighborhood, but Lisa said all the mothers seemed to be working, and the children were off in daycare or school. She had been an elementary school teacher and wanted to go back to

school for a master's in education. That plan was on hold while their children were small. She said she wanted to be home with them until they started school. Steve smiled at her. "She was a good teacher and she's great with the kids. I knew she'd be a good mother." Lisa did not smile back.

"So, how are things going between you in the middle of all this change and the isolation you're both feeling?" They looked at each other and Steve nodded slightly, some kind of agreement passing between them. Lisa started, "We have a problem with communication. We get into huge arguments that escalate. It's never gotten physical, but it can go on for hours, and it's exhausting." Steve said, "I don't have trouble communicating with people at work or with friends, but with Lisa, I don't know. It's not so much what she says, it's the way she says it. It's like she's blaming me for something I didn't even know I did, and I get mad and try to defend myself."

Lisa said, "It's like, out of the blue, he starts to lose it. He's suddenly yelling at me, he's lost his temper, and he's accusing me of accusing him. When I try to tell him that's not what I said, he gets angrier and says I'm trying to make it all his fault." She looked exasperated. "I'm not blaming him! I'm just trying to calm things down. But lately I can't. It's gotten so I'm walking on eggshells all the time, just trying not to set him off."

Steve turned toward Lisa angrily, "How can you say you're not blaming me? You're blaming me now. The problem is always my temper, my behavior, my accusations. You don't take any responsibility for your part in it. It's like you're the angel or something, and I'm the one who's wrong. And I get sick of it!" He looked at her angrily, leaning toward her slightly, his arm stretched along the back of the couch. She looked away from him and turned toward me, waiting, saying nothing.

"So, a mini version of this is happening right now?" I asked. "You're feeling angry and blamed, Steve, and you've turned away and gone quiet, Lisa?" "Oh, this is nothing," Lisa said. "Yeah," Steve smiled tightly. "We haven't even gotten going." "Is this what it feels like as a fight starts?" I asked. They nodded hesitantly. "What is it you're wanting, Steve? Here at the start of the kind of fight you're describing?" "I don't want her to blame me! I want her to listen and to see how she contributes. I want her to listen to me." Lisa was shaking her head. "You want me to do what you say," she said. She turned toward me, "If I don't say the words he wants, he won't let go of it. It gets so he's telling me, 'Admit that you feel this, admit that you mean that,' and that is just meaningless. Either I say it and he tells me I don't mean it anyway. Or I don't say it and he keeps pushing and pushing." "What are you wanting, Lisa, when this gets going like this." "I don't want him to yell at me and badger me and accuse me! He just can't let go. He starts asking questions and interrogating me and demanding that I admit I'm blaming him and I feel intimidated. I just want it to stop!" She took a breath, pointedly not looking at him. "And I hate it when it happens in front of

the girls. The last time we argued, they started crying. Rebecca asked me later if we were going to get a divorce.” She shot a look at Steve. “I don’t want her growing up with this! I don’t want either of them growing up with this.”

Steve sat back, the anger leaving his face, a shadow crossing his expression. I asked, “What happens right there for you, Steve? When she says she doesn’t want the kids growing up with this?” “I don’t want them to grow up with it either. I grew up with yelling, and I hated it. Everybody yelled in my family. That was the only way you got heard at all. Lisa’s family was different; they really avoided conflict, and I don’t think that’s healthy either.”

“Yelling on the one hand and avoiding conflict on the other—neither is working for you two,” I said. “I’d like to understand better what your experience was like growing up at some point, but right now I’m noticing how you, Steve, are fighting to be understood and listened to, and you, Lisa, are trying to keep the peace and calm things down. And the way it goes now, neither of you gets what you want. Instead, you both get caught in a pattern that goes round and round. The more you try to be heard, Steve, the louder you speak. And the more you demand she listen, the more you, Lisa, back away and try to smooth things over. The more you back up, Lisa, the more frustrated and angry you get, Steve, and the louder you get. You both get caught in a trap and it sounds hard on both of you.”

They said that they had had similar fights early in their marriage, but that things had settled down for a while until after the birth of their first child. The last 4 years had been hard, and in the last 2, Lisa had felt that their closeness was “deteriorating.” Steve looked stunned when she said that word, and tears came to his eyes. “I don’t want that,” he said. He looked at me. “I love Lisa, I don’t want her to walk on eggshells. I want her to be able to trust me.” “But,” his voice hardened, “I won’t take all the blame.”

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Emotionally focused couple therapy (EFT), developed by Susan Johnson and Leslie Greenberg (e.g., Greenberg & Johnson 1988; Johnson & Denton, 2002; Johnson, 2004; Greenberg & Goldman, 2008; Johnson, 2008), is an empirically validated, in-depth, attachment-based approach.<sup>1</sup> Like a sturdy three-legged stool, it has three foundations. First, it is firmly anchored in attachment theory and John Bowlby’s seminal recognition that attachment processes are crucial “from cradle to grave.” Second, it utilizes systems theory, working closely with how each partner contributes, often unintentionally, to the cycle of interaction between them.

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<sup>1</sup>Since Greenberg and Johnson first published *Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples* in 1988, each has worked to further develop and expand the model, Johnson often focusing on adult attachment, and Greenberg on the processing of emotion (see Chapter 12, this volume).

Third, it is deeply rooted in humanistic/experiential therapy and change techniques, including Greenberg's decades of research on the process of change in therapy. These change techniques and the elaboration of attachment theory have each been profoundly shaped in recent years by our burgeoning understanding of emotions and how they influence and are influenced by our neurology, our individual development, and our current interpersonal context. From the beginning of the first session, my understanding of these theoretical underpinnings inform my work in complex, overlapping ways, from how I position my chair, to how I understand their conflict, to how I respond each step of the way.

In a nutshell, here are the central therapeutic tasks of EFT<sup>2</sup>:

- Define and explore the couple's interactional pattern in the context of a strong therapeutic alliance.
- Promote naming and acceptance of the underlying emotions, attachment needs/fears, and disowned parts of self that are fueling the cycle of disconnection.
- Facilitate the expression of each person's experience, attachment needs, and fears directly to their partner, and facilitate the acceptance of each partner's experience by the other to create a new interactional cycle of secure connection.

Throughout therapy, I am working to form and maintain a strong alliance with each partner. This is not unique to EFT, but the depth and complexity of its importance is informed by attachment theory. In the field of child development, extensive research in attachment has demonstrated that secure attachment between a child and his/her caregiver creates effective dependency, increased autonomy, and a more developed self-reflective capacity (e.g., Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Moran, & Higgitt, 1991; Main, 1995). Secure attachment is characterized by accessibility and responsiveness. That is, the child has access to the caregiver and can expect a response that is attuned to the child's experience. In the context of a responsive relationship, the child develops the capacity to reflect on herself, to observe, think about, and respond to her self and to others in a thoughtful, realistic, and compassionate way. Security of attachment creates a *secure base* from which to explore the world and a *safe haven* to retreat to if we are wounded or in need. As applied to therapy, when we are in a secure relationship that offers accessibility and responsiveness, especially when enriched by humanistic therapy's values of empathy and acceptance, we are more free to explore, to be open and take risks both intrapersonally and interpersonally, and to increase our self-awareness and compassion.

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<sup>2</sup>Johnson's (2004) basic text, *The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: Creating Connection*, details the interventions, steps, and processes in EFT.

I therefore want to offer a secure attachment with me to each member of the couple to facilitate a healing process and to create an emotionally safe space in the therapy room. In order to do this, I must convey in a fundamental way that I am accessible as a therapist and as a human being, I am listening and responsive, I am willing and able to see them clearly and with compassion, and I am *for* the well-being and health and growth of each of them. I must be able to reflect and frame their primary concerns about the relationship in a way that takes into account each of them and their separate experiences while holding in mind the other. This can bring an implicit but sturdy hope—that these two people, their positions, their needs and feelings, are not necessarily incompatible; they are mutually understandable, valid, and worthy of compassionate response. This kind of alliance with me is both the context in which the therapy interventions take place and one of the core interventions in EFT. In and of itself, it's powerful to be heard and accepted, understood and responded to, to have one's words and feelings matter in an atmosphere of genuine concern and empathy, and, at the same time, to be asked to take responsibility for one's behaviors and to name one's needs.

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In the first session, I want a clear sense of the physical safety of each partner and the relationship. So I asked Steve and Lisa, "How dangerous do your fights get? Does it ever get violent? Do either of you ever get to feeling bad enough that suicide is an option? Do either of you ever worry that the other might hurt themselves or someone else?" With each question, they shook their heads and said, "No." Steve added, somewhat defensively, "I've never hit or physically hurt anyone in my life." When I inquired further, Lisa said she was afraid of Steve's anger, but not that he would physically hurt her. I asked what scared her. She said it was his tone of voice. "He just sounds so harsh and rageful." I asked Steve what it was like to hear this. He shrugged dismissively. "Like I said, they never got angry in Lisa's family. She's way oversensitive to anger." She looked away. I decided to leave this for now, but follow up in the individual sessions.

I glanced at the form I use that asks about medications, medical or psychiatric issues, chronic pain, previous treatment. Both in good health, neither on medication. No previous therapy. I ask these questions both for medical/legal reasons, and because if there are issues of health or safety, the security of attachment with me is enhanced by attending to them. And if it is not safe to explore underlying vulnerable, often powerful feelings, then we don't do it until it is safe. That might mean referring an acutely suicidal partner for individual therapy (or hospitalization if necessary), referral to a domestic violence program, or referral for drug and alcohol treatment for substance-abuse related violence. The core issue here is that each person is responsible for his own behavior and

maintaining his own safety. If either partner is unable or unwilling to do this, then establishing safety is where we start. In some situations (e.g., if a suicidal person is working in individual therapy and is committed to maintaining a safety plan) I might proceed with gentle and carefully modulated EFT. Couple EFT is not done if it will increase danger of violence or self-harm.

*EFT is an empirically supported method of couple therapy for which there are well-written treatment manuals. Unfortunately, some clinicians see such manuals as clinical straitjackets rather than as systematic guides to a particular style of practice. Hazlett's comments should remind us of the flexibility any skilled therapist must have, even when working within a carefully delineated treatment approach.*

**Question:** What have you learned about psychotherapy treatment manuals? Which ones have you read? In what ways might such manuals constrain your way of working with couples? In what ways could they free you up?

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Offering secure attachment between the therapist and each partner is crucial in EFT, but attachment theory is even more powerful for understanding what is essential in the couple's relationship. The couple's movements around closeness and distance, their ability to be emotionally and physically accessible to each other, their responsiveness to each other's needs and fears, their ability to know, understand, and comfort each other are all important components of their interaction. Secure attachment is based on accessibility and responsiveness, but people are not always responsive or available. Attachment relationships inevitably have rhythms of attunement, disruption, and repair.<sup>3</sup> From an attachment perspective, couples come into therapy when patterns of disruption have taken over and the couple can no longer effectively repair breaches in their connection to regain a sense of reliable attunement with each other. They can't reliably create the sense of engaged connection and responsiveness that lets them know they are understood by and important to each other. It was clear from the beginning of our work together that Lisa and Steve were very attached to each other, but that the dance of their interaction had become a painful one of discord, confrontation, withdrawal, and distance.

A systems theory focus enables an EFT therapist to begin working with the couple's pattern of interaction. Since most couples come in convinced that their partner is the problem, they often begin with complaints about their partner's

<sup>3</sup>This pattern in attachment relationships is described by clinical developmentalists and a variety of therapists (e.g., Emde, 1988; Fosha, 2003; Real, 2002; Trevarthen & Aitken, 1994; Tronick, 1989).

behavior. It is essential to establish from the beginning that my goal is not to be the judge or to take sides but to hear from each of them and to understand the experience of each in the context of the relationship. For couples in EFT, describing the pattern of their arguments is one of the first tasks of therapy. A clear, emotionally valid description of the cycle helps the couple begin to see the cycle as the problem, rather than each seeing his/her partner as the problem. I work to help them understand and empathize with the way each of them is caught in a pattern that leaves both feeling helpless and frustrated, unable to get what each wants and needs from the other, and reacting in ways that each feels are completely justified. The pattern is usually a positive feedback loop, in that the more one partner does one thing, the more the other partner does the other thing in an escalating spiral of frustration and dysfunction.

From the first session, Steve and Lisa and I began delineating the cycle of disconnection that was dominating their relationship, exploring what each of them was doing to maintain that cycle. Given the behavior of the other, each felt his/her response was natural and necessary. Each wanted the other to change. But each had little sense of choice in his/her own actions and reactions. Delineating the fight cycle between them gives them a tool to de-escalate their conflicts, instills hope in the therapy process, and makes some space to explore and understand what attachment needs and fears drive the conflict.

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In the second session, I asked for feedback about the first session, then launched into an exploration of the fight cycle. I wondered aloud if the fights they got into were so painful precisely because they mattered so much to each other, because the stakes were so high. They nodded slowly and thoughtfully, not looking at each other. I waited. Then Steve glanced at Lisa and said, "Yes, it is really painful when we argue; I feel shut out, like I can't reach her." Lisa nodded and was quiet. I asked Steve to say more about that shut-out feeling. He said, "It's like there's a brick wall between us, and the harder I pound on it and the louder I yell, the thicker it gets. And the madder I get. Like there is nothing I can do to get through to her." A shadow crossed his eyes. "And what's that like for you?" I asked. "Lonely," he said. "I hate it." "Lonely. I can see that." I take this slowly, my voice gentle. He looked up at my face. "And hurt. It does hurt me. It feels so unfair to be blamed and not trusted. I'm hurt and I get angry and stand up for myself, but she won't listen." I nodded. He looked sad. I said, "And sad? Is that part of it for you?" "Well, I used to try to win the arguments. But I can't win them, because then she's just mad and gets distant. Then I've lost the argument and I've kind of lost her."

He looked at Lisa. I looked at her face. She seemed to be listening thoughtfully, so I took a risk and asked, "Can you tell her that directly, Steve? That

sounds so central to what happens, so important.” “She heard me,” he said, a little defensively. “Yes,” I said, “She heard you tell me. I wonder what it would be like to tell her directly. I want to help you two be able to talk about these more tender things with each other. What do you think it might be like to turn to her and say, ‘I feel lonely and hurt when I can’t get through to you. I end up feeling like I lose you.’” “Well, I do. I do feel lonely and hurt and lost when I can’t reach her—you. And I do feel sad.” She looked at me. I asked Steve, “What’s it like to tell her that?” “I don’t know yet,” he said. “She hasn’t said anything.” “So you’re wondering how she’s taking this?” “Yeah. I can’t read her sometimes. It’s like she’s behind that wall.” “Yes,” I said nodding. “I can see. That must be hard.” He met my eyes for a moment of recognition.

I looked over at Lisa, “So, what’s happening for you as you hear this from Steve?” My nonverbal read of her was right; she was listening. “I feel sad for him,” she said. “I don’t want him to feel like that. But when he’s angry, he gets mean. He says hurtful things. And I just try to calm things down.” “What’s that like for you, when he’s angry and you’re trying to calm things down?” I asked her. “I hate it.” she said. “I’m scared. It’s like I never know when he’s just going to turn and attack me. I’m scared all the time. And it hurts my feelings—it’s like he doesn’t know me. After all this time, after all we’ve been through, he thinks I’m trying to hurt him, that I’m going to abandon him. It’s like he doesn’t know me at all.” She looked sad and hurt as she said this, but I wondered whether she was also angry. “How does that affect you?” I asked her. “I don’t feel like myself. I can never relax. It’s like I’m taking care of my children and I’m taking care of him and there is nothing and no one for me. I don’t ask for help, I don’t ask for anything because I never know what will start another fight. So I just work and function and do.” Tears filled her eyes. “It sounds so hard,” I said. “It sounds so lonely.” “Yes, I feel so alone, like it’s all up to me.” “And you need?” “Not to be alone! To feel like this is something we’re doing together! To relax and be myself. To have fun again, it’s like it’s all drudgery.”

As they talked about their fights, I asked them about the pattern that was common across all their serious arguments. They found that they could name the commonalities in feelings and reactions across fights. We could map it out together, noting how each reaction evoked the next. Steve often felt put down and disrespected by Lisa’s quiet, firm way with him. He felt like a tantruming child who was misunderstood and unappreciated, like an unruly kid in her well-ordered classroom. At the same time, he was not going to tolerate being condescended to or abandoned. Lisa was a peacemaker and would not engage with Steve when he was angry. She kept her feelings to herself and just kept functioning. She would appease, dodge, and try to soothe him, all of which he felt as invalidating and condescending. He grew increasingly furious while she felt increasingly desperate to escape. And her efforts to escape their interactions left him feeling abandoned and alone. Their fights could go on for hours with

no resolution. The intensity of Steve's anger was intimidating to Lisa. He would harshly accuse her of not loving him, and sometimes in the midst of one of their fights, she would wonder herself whether her love for him could withstand these attacks. The fight cycle was exhausting both of them and eroding their considerable love for each other.

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As the interactive aspects of the fight cycle are laid out, it's essential to explore the emotions fueling it. Emotions are incredibly information dense, particularly in regard to our interpersonal worlds. They contain bodily based information about our interpersonal connections, our interpretations and understandings, our past experiences, our tendencies toward action, and our needs and longings (Greenberg & Watson, 2006). Interpersonal and intrapersonal behavior only becomes comprehensible in the context of emotion (Fosha, 2000). EFT delineates four types of emotion (Greenberg & Safran, 1987; Greenberg & Watson, 2006). Primary emotions are our adaptive, informative, visceral reactions to interpersonal reality. They give us necessary information about our core affective experience in the here and now, our individual reactions, needs, meanings, and action tendencies. Secondary emotions are the feelings about the feelings, a reactive layer atop the more vulnerable primary emotions; they are likely to be defensive and can cover or lead away from the primary adaptive emotions. Maladaptive primary emotions are indeed adaptive, informative, visceral responses, but in response to an interpersonal reality from the past. The emotion was adaptive in a previous, powerfully influential time and place, but is no longer accurately attuned to current interpersonal reality. These feelings come from unresolved core affective experience (Fosha, 2000) or raw spots (Johnson, 2008) that are touched by something in the current interaction. These strong, unresolved, historically-valid emotions flood the person's current emotional experience in a way that is confusing, overwhelming, and out of place. Instrumental emotions are those shown or enacted to produce an interpersonal effect, such as anger shown to drive away the other or tears shown to deflect anger. On an emotional level, fight cycles are sustained by secondary emotions and maladaptive primary emotions, both of which serve to avoid or flood the adaptive primary emotions that are the entry into healing and reparative interactions between the partners.

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As we talked about their cycle, I asked Steve and Lisa about the more vulnerable feelings driving the anger and withdrawal, looking for the primary emotions underlying the secondary emotional responses. Steve talked about his fear of losing Lisa and his inability to reach her in those moments, and Lisa softened a bit.

He hated to disappoint her, he hated to have her think less of him, he hated most of all to feel accused of something he didn't do, because then she would leave and it would be his fault, he would be to blame. For her part, Lisa could see his pain and empathize with it, but she was wary. She was not going to trust him with her pain or vulnerability as long as he treated her as an enemy. She could talk about her fear, but her assertive anger was much less accessible.

Lisa and Steve's pattern is a variation of the general pursue-withdraw pattern that characterizes about 85% of couples (Gottman, 1994). From an attachment framework, the pursuer position often has to do with disrupted attachment in the couple. John Bowlby noted a common sequence in his observations of children's responses to disruptions in core attachment relationships. When initial repair attempts fail, the child first responds with assertive, angry protest. If, after repeated and increasingly intense protest, the attachment figure doesn't reengage, the child's behavior begins to look depressed, featuring sadness and increasing helplessness. If the attachment figure still cannot be brought close, the child despairs and exhibits grief, finally resulting in detachment, a cold disregard for the attachment figure even if he or she does become available again. Marital therapists see a similar sequence in couples with disrupted attachment. The anger of the pursuing partner is often a deep protest of the withdrawal of the other partner and an attempt to reengage, albeit through conflict. However, the protest is often expressed in critical ways that convey to the withdrawn partner, "What is wrong with you?!" rather than, "I miss you and I don't know how to bring you close to me," or "I'm angry and feel mistreated, and I want to repair our relationship so we can be close again." The pursuer is often unaware of the impact of his/her angry criticism and sometimes is avoiding his/her own sense of vulnerability and need by blaming the other.

The withdrawing partner is often acting from an intention to protect the relationship from destructive conflict. He/she feels criticized or attacked by the other and responds with appeasement, defensiveness, or withdrawal to protect the relationship and/or to protect the self. At times, the withdrawn partner may be quiet and surly or stonewall the pursuing partner before blowing up, backing away the other with anger rather than assertively and clearly grappling with the issues and speaking up for his/her experience and position. At times, the withdrawer is struggling with a sense of inadequacy or shame: "If my partner has a complaint, it must mean that I am not a good spouse, I'm letting my partner down, I'm a failure." Because withdrawal can bring on an angry protest, the more the withdrawer tries to protect the relationship from anger or the self from a sense of failure, the more angry and blaming the pursuer can get. One of the first steps in stopping this pattern in EFT is for the withdrawer to start to stand up for himself more assertively, to describe the effect of the pursuer's attack, and to claim his/her right to be treated with respect. "In a typical blame-withdraw

cycle, the two necessary shifts in position are the following: The withdrawn partner becomes more accessible, more emotionally engaged with himself and his spouse; the blaming partner moves from anger and coercion, asking for attachment needs to be met from a position of vulnerability” (Johnson, 2004, p. 101).

Most couple conflict involves not only issues of attachment, but also issues of identity or voice.<sup>4</sup> Anything that interferes with the person’s entitlement to his/her own voice, own needs and wants, own vulnerability and assertiveness—whether caused by gender training, trauma history, or attachment experience in childhood—must be addressed. In order to listen and really connect with each other, each member of the couple must be able to put into words and speak up for his/her own experience, feelings, and needs.

*EFT certainly “pulls for” both therapists and clients to express themselves in affectively nuanced ways, typically calling for and helping to facilitate a deep immediacy of couple self-disclosure and risk taking.*

**Question:** What obstacles might you anticipate in applying EFT to working with couples whose relational style is quite different from Hazlett’s couple, for example, they are not especially skilled in terms of verbal expressiveness or come from an ethnic or cultural or generational background in which speaking openly about feelings about oneself or one’s mate is not prized? How might you try to overcome such obstacles?

Each person’s stance in the marriage is influenced by what he/she learned growing up about relationships, attachment, and his/her own value and worth as a person. The sense of self and self-worth that allows one to deserve care and responsiveness is often created in relation to the care and responsiveness of core attachment figures. It is my observation that, in established couples, how people treat their partners is directly related to how they treat themselves on the inside. So if Steve is relentlessly self-critical and demanding with himself, he will eventually treat Lisa that way. And if Lisa uses denial and avoidance to shut down her own feelings, she will also use them to shut out her partner. Couples become part of each others’ self systems. If I want to have immediate insight on how a person treats him- or herself deep down, I can look at how they treat their partner. And changes in one system lead to changes in the other. Changes in identity or sense of self creates change in attachment and vice versa.

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<sup>4</sup>My understanding of identity issues is informed by the work of Carol Gilligan and the Stone Center on women’s loss of voice and the experience of self-in-representation (Gilligan, 1982; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991) and by Greenberg’s more recent formulation of identity issues in couple therapy (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008).

*Somewhat related to the preceding comments and to Hazlett's comment here about the reverberating effects of change in a part of a relational system, there could be many potential ways to produce change in attachment systems.*

**Question:** Can you think of specific therapeutic interventions or strategies that are used often in other methods of couple therapy that could aid the process of improving attachment security within EFT?

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In our third session, I pulled out a big pad of paper on an easel and did a genogram with Steve and Lisa. I described the genogram as “a family tree with stories.” Although gathering genogram material in this way is not a standard part of EFT, I find it helpful for generating empathy and understanding for the secondary emotions and unresolved core affective experiences that underlie the fight cycle. The questions I ask focus on what they learned or dealt with growing up that influences who and how they are today in their marriage. The genogram helps me be more accurate and sensitive in exploring their emotional realities and in understanding where seemingly maladaptive responses are coming from. I use genograms to increase empathy and support empathic conjecture—not to make interpretations.

Lisa and Steve's genograms were compelling. Lisa was the older of two children in a Lutheran working-class family. She had taken charge of her sister and been the chief aid and comforter to her parents during her mother's long debilitating illness with the metastasized breast cancer that killed her mother when Lisa was 19. Her father had often been at work, leaving Lisa in charge. She reported that her father had been irritable and demanding and that she learned to smooth things over, not make a fuss, and keep the emotional life of the family on an even keel. She had learned to bottle up her reactions and her feelings and to deal with them alone. She had also been bossy with her younger sister and combined a take-charge practical attitude with a silencing of her emotional self.

Steve had experienced a chaotic childhood. He was third of six children in an Irish Catholic family, the oldest boy of an ineffectual, alcoholic mother and a friendly but disengaged father. His father was in the military and divorced his mother when Steve was 10, moving to California and then on to Germany. As Steve grew up, he was more and more often in conflict with his mother. In middle school, he also endured 2 years of bullying in which he was taunted and ostracized. He learned to yell loudly to create a “nuclear blast” to back down the bullies—and his mother. He recalled constant and chaotic battles with his mother. At one point, he called his father and demanded to live with his dad. His father refused, saying that Steve's mother needed his help with the younger children.

Lisa and Steve had met in college, in the first week of their freshman year. They were both bright students, but Steve was the wild one, often in conflict and with frequent girl trouble. Lisa, quiet, calm, studious, was attracted to Steve's liveliness and fiery, emotional temperament. She became his confidante and best friend and he came to rely on her and care for her. As their friendship deepened, it gradually became a love affair. Steve was supportive of Lisa through the death of her mother in her sophomore year and had attended the funeral with her, an event Lisa remembered with deep appreciation for his presence and comfort. They got married the summer after graduating. Their marriage had been rocky at the start, with Steve feeling constrained by marriage and responsibility, wondering whether he had done the right thing to marry so early, and Lisa gradually getting discouraged that she "wasn't enough for him," wondering whether she should have married him at all. But they had weathered the prechild years well and had fond memories of time together traveling and learning how to live together. When I asked what held them together, Steve said, "Well, she's my best friend." "Yes," said Lisa softly, "I've always loved him." He reached out, squeezed her hand, and smiled warmly at her.

Within the first few sessions, I always see each partner for an individual session to better explore and understand what is behind each person's position in the marital dance and to strengthen my relationship with each partner. Lisa came alone for the fourth session. She said they had been getting along better and that Steve seemed less angry. I revisited the question of violence. I always ask again about domestic violence in individual sessions, especially when one partner has expressed fear of the other. She confirmed that the fights never became physical. They did not have guns or weapons in their house. "It's not that I think he would hurt me or the kids, it's just this scary out-of-control feeling—I feel like I have to give in to calm him down." I asked about what that was like for her. She said, "I can never be wrong or make a mistake." This was a familiar feeling from her childhood, of walking on eggshells, of trying to smooth things over by never making waves. She reported that she had gotten angry at Steve for the first time ever that week. She had been terrified—not so much that he would get angry but that he would reject her. If she showed her "real feelings," she was terrified that he would leave. When I asked what she usually did with her anger, she shook her head. "I don't know. I just keep functioning. I just do what has to be done." Getting angry opened a door to being rejected, so she buried her anger and frustration so deeply she could barely feel it herself. Since assertive anger is connected with a clear sense of identity and self, I asked, "How much of your real self do you feel you can show to Steve?" She smiled sadly, almost wistfully. "I don't know what my 'self' is," she said. "I'm afraid if I am myself, I'll lose him entirely." She did not let herself be seen as the imperfect, vulnerable person that she was and so she felt alone.

In Steve's individual session, we also focused on his experience of the marriage. At its worst, he felt trapped and powerless, like he had as a kid. He resented Lisa's perfection and control. "I'm stuck being the bad one," he said. He felt she had impossible standards, that "to be less than perfect is intolerable." But at the same time, he described loving her deeply. They had been through so much together, she had always been his best friend, a good listener, an ally. When she got cold and distant, he felt bereft and harshly judged at the same time. He felt some of the same overwhelming anger he felt as a teen with his mother. He was able to describe how his sense of helplessness and unfairness fueled his anger, which then covered his sense of vulnerability. "When we're in those fights, no matter what I do, whether I yell or whisper or plead, I can't get through to her. When it's most important, when it's about us, she disappears." He said he didn't like it that his anger scared Lisa, but he said, "I get so frustrated, I don't know what else to do. I try to talk with her about it. It never gets anywhere, and then I blow up."

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We then began bringing this information back into their interaction as a couple. Here's where delineating and unpacking the emotions that are driving the fight cycle, focusing on attachment issues and needs, and attending to the processes involved in emotional transformation are all happening at once.

*This comment could probably have been offered in many chapters of this casebook, but Hazlett's observation about the complexity of what is happening in many couple therapy sessions is stated with such elegant simplicity that it deserves highlighting.*

**Question:** All couple therapists, not just novices, find themselves massively confused at times, trying to process, organize, make sense of, and therapeutically use all the varied (levels of) data coming at them. How do you deal with such understandable confusion?

In therapy, I'm always looking and listening closely for feeling, especially for feeling that is incongruent, unexpected, or disallowed. So the wife who is angrily blaming her husband while tears streak down her face, the husband who "doesn't do emotions," but whose face softens when he talks about his daughters, the partner who suddenly stops midsentence with a shift of expression—with each of these I stop to ask, "What just happened right there? When you said that, something shifted." Or, "you sound so angry, and yet tears are streaming down your face. What are you feeling?" Bringing the background to the foreground, allowing for the disallowed, looking for the edges of experience can all bring

transformative information into the awareness of the individual and the couple. EFT emphasizes the “leading edge” of experience, the never before put into words, the images or feelings or assumptions that are not really integrated or named, but are powerful in determining how each person feels and behaves in the interactional dance of marriage.

When we get to moments of revelation, tenderness, or assertion, the statement of a vulnerable feeling or a previously disowned attachment need, the response of the partner can vary widely, from contemptuous denial (“That’s ridiculous. He’s just saying that because you’re here”) to a warm welcome (“I see. I had no idea you felt like that”). EFT invites new interaction patterns, the creation of cycles of security and connection by supporting each partner to speak up from their deepest experience and to make room to really hear from their partner. The rhythm of intrapersonal exploration and interpersonal communication is complex. I attend to what the partner discovers, how he/she communicates it, and how it is received by the other in a back-and-forth of expression and reception. When the therapy room is an emotionally safe place, there is a responsive feel and variable pace, with time to grope for words, for silence, for the clarion sound of speaking one’s truth, for recognition, reaction, and response. If the listening partner’s response is rejecting, it is essential to attend to the negative response, understand where it is coming from and support the listener in accepting his/her partner’s experience as valid. The therapist supports each person to “speak their truth” to the other, making spoken and active their unspoken or passive responses.

\* \* \*

In the next session, Steve and Lisa reported having a fight in which Steve said, “If I’m so bad and difficult, maybe I should just leave.” This had terrified Lisa, confirming her fear that it was dangerous to show her angry side to him. In the session, she used my support to tell him about her fear, letting him see how much he meant to her. She was tearful and shaken as she told him directly that she was terrified of losing him. He responded differently to her openness and vulnerability than to withdrawal. He teared up too and talked about his fear of raising their daughters in an angry, disconnected household. He seriously asked her what she thought about divorce; would she and the kids be better off if he lived elsewhere? “No,” she said. “I don’t want that. I don’t think that would be good for me or the kids.”

“What about for you?” I asked Steve. “What about what you want? Do you want to leave?” “Sometimes,” he said softly. “Sometimes it’s just so hard, I think it would be easier on my own.” There was a pause, Lisa looking at Steve with big eyes, Steve looking at the floor. “What do you imagine,” I asked. “Oh, moving to some beautiful tropical island somewhere. No responsibilities. Just being single, you know.” He smiled ruefully. “But then I realize, in my imagination, that I

can't wait to tell Lisa all about the island. And after a while, I kind of want her to be there, too." He looked at her and shook his head. She smiled a tiny smile. "I guess I'm just stuck," he said. "I even want you along on my escape fantasies." "You guess you're stuck?" I asked. "I want to be stuck, well, mostly I want to be stuck." "And what do you want from Lisa?" I ask. "What's so important to you that you think about leaving when you don't get it?" "I need Lisa not to withdraw," he said. "That's the part I can't stand." He turned toward her. "It's really not your anger, it's your absence. I can deal with you being angry at me. Just not shutting me out. It feels like you don't need me or want me, like I'm just a burden and a pain. I need to feel included, not like an outsider. I need you to let me in. I feel like I'm pounding on that brick wall, trying to get through to you. But the harder I pound, the more I yell, the thicker the wall gets. And then I figure I might as well head on out, go to Fiji or something, rather than yell at that brick wall."

"But the more you pound and shout and threaten to leave, the *less* likely I am to come out from behind that wall," Lisa said. "I'm not going to come out to get left or screamed at." She leaned forward intently, "It's not a wall you're pounding on," she said. "It's me. It's my back, my shoulder, it hurts me, and I turn away to protect myself. I need you to know that. I need to feel safe with you." "If I hurt you like that, don't you want me to leave?" he asked. She spoke up strongly. "No, I don't," she said. "I want to feel safe with you. I don't want to be scared you'll leave or reject me. But I don't want you to leave. I want us both to stay more, not less." She reached out and gently thumped her fist on his knee. "That's what I want," she said. "Well, OK," he said softly. They smiled at each other. I felt tears in my eyes. They had looked directly over the edge of the abyss at divorce and had decided to change their marriage.

The next several sessions developed and expanded this process and these themes. Our understanding of the fight cycle was clarified. Steve's anger was his secondary emotional response to his tremendous fear of abandonment by Lisa, and the fear, shame and grief he carried from his experiences in his family growing up. Lisa's withdrawal was a coping strategy, her calm reasonableness masking both her own anger at being treated this way by Steve and her long-standing, disallowed anger and grief about the way the role of peacemaker in her family had left her lonely and unrecognized for herself, with her own needs and fears and strengths invalidated and ignored. I often intervened to slow down the process and to explore each person's feelings and experiences. I invited in the feelings at the edges, the regretful sound in an angry tone, the sadness around the eyes, wisps of assertive anger from Lisa, the fear that was almost always underneath Steve's anger and resentment. And I asked them each to speak directly to the other, and to listen and respond.

Lisa was already pretty good at listening to Steve, and as he talked about the pain and sense of helplessness underlying his demands, she responded with

caring and appreciation. She let herself be touched by his descriptions of his experience and often teared up when he described painful events. I asked him to look at her face, and I asked him what he saw there. I helped him to receive her caring and empathy rather than block it with angry dismissal. It was very different for her, to hear him ask directly and describe his needs; she said she felt calm and close to him when he talked about his vulnerability and could relate it to her own. Her positive reception made it much easier for Steve to name his vulnerability without debilitating shame. Empathy is the antidote to shame, and her empathic responses began to detoxify his sense of shame.

It was harder for Lisa to talk about herself and how trapped she felt when Steve got demanding. She started talking about how angry she felt that he didn't hear her at times, that his agenda seemed to trump hers, that they both had the job of attending to him. I supported her clarity and assertiveness, working to make sure that she had equal time in the sessions, leaning against the status quo of deferring to his intensity. He had a harder time hearing her, at times dismissing her fears or defending himself. I supported his listening and taking in what she said, helping him to process his reactions, to hear what she said both in terms of what it meant to him and in seeing what it meant to her. When he was attuned to her more empathically, I asked her to look at him. What did she see? He was touched by her pain and showed her that more consistently, with his increasing openness in listening, with his words, with his reaching out to hold her hand when she expressed her need of him. They used the metaphor of the brick wall to continue to deescalate their fights, using the "brick wall feeling" as a cue to talk more clearly about what was going on for each of them. Lisa started to speak up more at home. Steve took responsibility for his angry behavior. Steve didn't want to scare Lisa; he wanted to comfort and protect her when she was distressed. Lisa didn't want Steve to feel alone and bereft; she wanted to both be able to have herself and to be in touch with him.

I supported each, at the moment-to-moment opportunities as they arose, to speak up with clarity and assertiveness, with vulnerability and openness, instead of allowing fear and shame to back them into their protective stances in the cycle of disconnection. I blocked defensive exits into blame or distraction, keeping us focused on their relationship, each person's sense of self, and their attachment needs and fears. This is what it means to be a process consultant, the role of an EFT therapist. My goal is, most basically, to help couples really talk and really listen to each other. There are modeling and behavioral aspects to EFT that can be understood as skill building. But at the heart of EFT is an internal exploration and external communication in an emotionally safe context. This safe context supports the partners to shine light into the hidden corners, to allow for the disallowed feelings, to turn over the rocks of defensive exclusion, to take a good look at experiential avoidance, and to see, clearly, what is this all about? What is it about this unwelcome feeling that stays with me or returns over and over?

What is it about this reaction, what is fueling this behavior, how does it take over? And at the same time, taking in and responding to the other to create a lived experience of connection and safety, the creation of a safe haven in which their deeper selves are recognized and welcomed.

In the 10th session Steve and Lisa reported that they had had a good 3 or 4 weeks. They were fighting less and were able to deescalate fights by talking more openly with each other. We continued for several more sessions, unpacking the issues that came up around fights and sometimes revisiting old unresolved conflicts. In the 12th session they talked about being nervous that they might slip back and get stuck in the fight cycle again and planned for how they could help each other out of the fight. They also laughingly told me about an incident in which Lisa snapped at Steve from the bedroom to “WAIT!” when he was hurrying her from the other room. Much to her surprise, he had been happy to see the irritable side of her and felt reassured by the gritty reality of her tone. As I encouraged him to put his experience into words and tell her, he said that he felt better if she was straightforwardly irate rather than trying to manage her affect and presentation. They talked about perfectionism, shame, fear of abandonment, and responded in caring ways to each other’s pain. They had two big arguments, which they were able to resolve themselves, coming in proudly to describe how they had done it. After the 15th session, they decided to wait a month for the next one.

It looked to me like we were coming to a close when Lisa came into the next session furious. They had had a big fight in which Steve had yelled in that same “nuclear blast” way he used to, scaring and intimidating her. But this time she had had enough. She had told him she would not be spoken to in that disrespectful, humiliating way and that he had to deal with his temper. She said she did not deserve to be treated that way and she would not stand for it. He was scared by her clarity and assertiveness and could tell that she meant it. He discussed with me in detail a time-out sequence to remove himself from the situation if he was about to lose his temper and asked to see me individually to work on his anger. He said he never wanted to treat her, or anyone, that way again. I agreed to see him individually, and all of us agreed to resume the couples work fairly soon.

Steve then came in for five sessions alone. He looked in more depth at the raging side of him, still engaged in the brutal battles with his mother. Steve’s anger overpowered him at times, and had to be fully owned and integrated by him before he could protect the precious connection with his wife from the rages of his childhood. As Greenberg (personal communication) says, “You can’t leave a place unless you’ve fully arrived.” He was able, in these individual sessions, to arrive at his rage and put it into words in the therapy relationship with me. As he told me about a particular incident at age 15, he expressed clearly, powerfully, and safely his anger at his mother. He had been spending the night at a friend’s

house down the street when his brother had dashed into the house to fetch him because his mother, drunk, was systematically smashing the windows of their home. He talked about how he grabbed her hands, covered in blood, then held her tightly while she screamed and flailed and cried and finally passed out. The next morning she remembered nothing and treated the incident casually, “like someone had spilled milk at the dinner table.” He had been devastated. Allowing for and describing vividly the anger he felt let him also give words to the pain and grief and loss that fueled it. He wept unabashedly in my office, as he told me about the loneliness and anguish he felt that night, amid the glass and the blood, desperately needing help and having nowhere to turn.

I accompanied him into that unresolved core affective experience and together we attended to his anger and pain, helplessness and grief, the turmoil and overwhelming affect contained in the security of the therapy relationship (Fosha, 2000).<sup>5</sup> Steve put into words what he saw, felt, thought, did, and needed. Because core affective experience is vital and alive, it moves. In tracking it together, inviting it, attending to it, naming it, it changes, and what was previously disallowed becomes available for compassion, understanding, and effective response.

As the wave of intense feeling passed, I said, “What is it like to talk about this?” asking Steve to turn his attention from the painful scene in his memory to his own current emotional experience. “It’s painful, but it’s also a relief, just to say it.” “Tell me more about that relief,” I say. “It’s like I’ve been carrying it for a long time, and the burden of it is lighter.” He paused and sighed. “It’s better,” he said. I found myself sighing too. “Yeah. How do you feel toward that boy, that 15-year-old that you were, holding down his mother, and feeling such anguish and despair?” “I feel sorry for him. He had no idea what to do.” He paused, and then teared up. “What are you noticing there?” I ask. “You know,” he said, “he was doing the best that he could. He could be a jerk sometimes, but he was a good kid; he needed more help. He needed more understanding, more guidance. He was so damn alone. He really did the best he could. And he survived. He made it.” “Yes,” I said warmly, feeling a lot of appreciation for Steve. I continued, “I’m so glad he made it. What’s that feeling there? You almost sound proud of him.” Steve replied, “I *am* proud of him. And I’m sad that he had to go through so much.” “Yeah, so much. So hard for a teenage boy to go through alone.” We sat for a moment in that recognition.

When Steve looked up at me, I asked softly, “What do you think that kid side of you needs now?” Steve responded, “The same things he needed then. Understanding, guidance, not to feel alone.” “Is that something you, the adult

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<sup>5</sup> Diana Fosha (2000, 2003) describes the development of secure attachment in therapy to provide a relational container for the transformation of deeply painful core affective experience. Her work has profoundly enriched and clarified my understanding of this process.

you, is willing to give him?” “Yeah, it’s my job, isn’t it. I don’t think I can really take that in from Lisa unless I’m giving to myself. It’s really my job,” he said in a wondering tone of voice. “Yeah,” his voice stronger now. “He needs more guidance, and more help and support. I need to learn how to do that, to attend to him, so he doesn’t go around blowing up at people. This is mine to take care of.” “Wow,” I said. “What’s it like to say that?” He sighed a big sigh, and leaned back against the back of the sofa. “It’s freeing. It’s like laying a burden down that I didn’t know I was carrying.” Another big breath in and out. “Wow,” he said, “I feel like I can breathe.”

The next few sessions Steve and Lisa came together. He told her he needed to take good care of the angry, hurting side of himself, but that he also appreciated her care and attention. He told her he realized he had constricted his life in anger and resentment, he had been too dependent on her and needed to relish and enjoy his life more and not to blame her for his pain. He apologized to her for his angry, intimidating, over-the-top behavior in the past and said that he would take care of the more angry, childlike part of himself. That this was his job and he would do it. These sessions had a very different feel to them, warm and connected. Lisa told Steve she was proud of him and could see how much more relaxed and available he was. They talked a lot, both in sessions and at home, about the changes they were making.

Then Lisa called and asked to see me alone. She wanted to address the things that contributed to the ways she still distanced herself. We met for six individual sessions, this time focused on the profound losses she had suffered as a girl, in the illness and death of her mother and in her father’s response to that slow-motion train wreck. This led to another, deeper layer in her recovery of her sense of self. She talked in more depth about what it was like on her side of the brick wall. There were ways that she was comfortable behind that wall and had lived there for a long time, quietly and alone. She said she had shut down her feelings because the grief had been so overwhelming as she had watched her mother die. She had used the brick wall of “not feeling” to protect herself, but now she wanted all of her feelings. She wanted to feel more alive and vital, she wanted her grief and her anger, she wanted to be able to stand up for herself even more, with Steve and throughout her life. She wanted her self, all of herself.

As we talked about recovering her ability to feel, she wept about the gradual loss of her mother. Lisa had taken care of her and had put on a brave and cheerful face. But behind that façade, she was in tremendous pain. I suggested we do an empty-chair exercise (Greenberg & Watson, 2006) so that she could talk directly to an imagined version of her mother, to tell her about her grief and to say goodbye. Lisa said, “No, I don’t want to do that. That feels like too much.” Instead, she told me stories—moments that stayed with her in her relationship with each parent—the family picnic when her mother couldn’t get up from the ground, the last time she saw her mother, the look on her father’s face when he told

her mother was dead, the closed door of her parent's bedroom where her father retreated. Waves of grief washed in with each story and we tracked together both the grief and the relief that followed each wave. I listened and watched for anger or frustration or any disallowed assertion of self. When I saw bits of those feelings, I stopped her to ask about them, "What's happening right there? Your voice changed a bit, got stronger and louder. What is the feeling right there?" She gradually was able to access her anger, her quiet fury at her mother for leaving her alone too much and too soon. She was able to put into words for the first time her crushing disappointment and anger at her father, who withdrew into his own grief, closing her out. I began to see growing clarity and assertiveness as well as more vitality and playfulness in her self-expression.

I also asked Lisa, as I had with Steve, "What is it like to share this with me?" Gradually, she was able to talk about what it was like to let someone see her, the her that was behind the brick wall for so long. "I don't feel so alone," she said. She looked carefully into my face and smiled at me shyly. "It's like I'm all right, I'm OK without being perfect. You see me. It's just me. And it's OK. You don't seem to mind." "No," I said, "I don't mind at all. In fact, I'm touched by your courage in sharing this with me, this side of you that has been tucked away so long. I'm glad that part of you survived and that you kept her safe." "Maybe it's time for that side of me to come out and play," she said and smiled again.

*As much as any approach to couple therapy, and more than many, EFT emphasizes the healing potential of the relationship between couple partners as the central mechanism of change.*

**Question:** Given this, what are your thoughts about this course of EFT having included so many individual sessions with the partners alone? How can individual sessions be used to facilitate the overall aims of a couple therapy that is so grounded in attachment theory and so geared, as the title of this chapter conveys, toward relational "attunement" and "repair"?

When Lisa was ready, we scheduled a couple session. Lisa and Steve described feeling proud of the work each had done and safe with each other emotionally for the first time. Lisa was laughing, talking, vivacious, very much out from behind her wall. Steve was glowing, steady and clear, no longer behaving in demanding, intrusive ways. They talked easily together. They said they felt confident in their ability to work out whatever they needed to work out, together. We spent much of the last session talking about what this journey had been like for each of them. They had done the hard emotional work required for deep change, and I had been privileged to bear witness and to participate in those change processes.

They thanked me, and I tried to put into words what it meant to me to work with them. We said goodbye.

Of course, these changes didn't solve all their problems. They still had arguments and fights, disagreements and life challenges. Steve still tended to get angry and feel blamed; Lisa tended to withdraw and go quiet. But they each were able to moderate these tendencies with a less constricted sense of self, more access to their primary emotions, deep knowledge of how they affected each other, and mutual participation in a process of repair that consistently helped them reconnect.

*Certainly the mutuality of effort and participation this couple put forth in their therapy was exemplary. And EFT here offered a powerful pathway toward change.*

**Question:** From reading other cases in this volume or other writings on couple therapy, or by reflecting on your own clinical experiences, what other methods of couple therapy, or specific techniques in those methods, can also help couples modify their tendency to blame and withdraw, be more fully themselves with each other, and understand more fully how they influence each other?

In his vast research on marriage, Gottman (1999) reports that 69% of marital problems are *unresolvable* or perpetual, in that they involve core differences in personality or needs that are fundamental to the partners' sense of self. It's *how* couples go about *not* resolving their problems that differentiates happy and unhappy couples. Problems are inevitable; when they are experienced as part of a reliable pattern of attunement, disruption, and repair, they can even be intimacy-generating, but only if we put into words our experiences and needs, take responsibility for our behavior, and deeply listen to our partners. The intricate rhythms of self and other, attachment and identity, attunement and repair can be transformed into a dance of connection by each partner speaking from his/her deepest truth while responding with compassion to the other.

I chose this case because I wanted to show the process of not just change, but transformation in couple therapy. Not every couple is willing to make the deep transformative changes that Lisa and Steve did. Not every couple needs to—a thorough understanding of each other's attachment needs and care in addressing them goes a long way. My experience has echoed the EFT outcome research, that couples continue to improve after therapy ends. Indeed, when I briefly saw Lisa and Steve 3 years later, they told me that they had continued to be close and deeply connected, able to confront substantial challenges together. EFT can set in motion processes of understanding, connection, repair, and security of attachment that keep healing the relationship after therapy ends.

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