

The Use of Emotion in Experiential Work

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Introduction

1. The idea that accessing and exploring painful emotions and bad feelings in a helping relationship may result in one feeling better in the long term has always been a central position in many psychotherapy traditions, especially humanistic and experiential approaches.
2. Today, we will focus on interventions that address emotion directly in a manner that is sensitive to personal development and idiosyncratic meaning. Further, the emergence of affective neuroscience has stimulated interest in the role of emotion in helping relationships by providing a means to observe and measure affect *in vivo*-meaning as it is occurring in the living human being.
3. There is a long history of work by early pioneers such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Rogers, Fritz Perls, Rollo May, and Gene Gendlin who helped identify the importance of emotional experience in the process of change. In recent years, Leslie Greenberg has been the biggest proponent identifying and formulating ideas about emotional processes into a coherent model of knowledge and procedures about how to produce emotional change.
4. Five distinct types of emotional processes have been delineated as useful in the evolution of psychological change: (1) emotional awareness & engagement, (2) emotional arousal & enactment, (3) emotional regulation & self-soothing, (4) reflection on emotion & meaning-making, and (5) emotional transformation or changing emotion with emotion.

Emotion and Emotional Processing

Humanistic and experiential approaches assume that when emotion is authentically experienced and expressed in an empathic and facilitative interpersonal context it can be adaptive, and research has generally supported the role of emotion in adaptive functioning in a number of ways.

Role of Emotion in Adaptive Functioning

1. First, the emotion system serves as an adaptive orienting system. Discrete, basic emotions contain specific motivational information. For example, fear tells people that they are in danger and need protection or safety. This tacit information involves specific neurological activity, expressive-motor patterns, and readiness for action toward goal-directed behavior that is important for survival.

2. Second, emotions are both motivators and states of readiness for action. They help people to survive by providing an efficient, automatic way of responding rapidly to important situations. Affect is processed faster and requires less processing than cognition. Also, emotion can be activated subliminally and inform one outside of awareness. Emotional processing is essential for exercising good judgment and decision making. In short, cognitive goals are given incentive by the orienting and action functions of affect.
3. Third, the salience of particular emotions provides important information about priorities. Negative emotions, such as anger or sadness, signal the experience of specific unmet needs. The assumption is that there is a basic need for internal coherence that compels maladaptive emotional processes to be resolved; individuals have a predisposition to be internally coherent. Positive, negative, adaptive, and maladaptive emotional experiences all inform people about the degree of this coherence and the need to resolve inconsistencies. Emotion is the impetus for the neural integration in the brain that results in attention to priorities and movement toward coherence
4. Fourth, the ability to work with and express emotional experience is an important part of emotional intelligence and healthy development. Studies have shown the positive effects that writing about emotion has on autonomic nervous system activity, immune functioning, and physical and emotional health. Conversely, the inhibition of emotional expression has been linked to poor health and impaired immune system functioning. Finally, emotions are an interpersonal communication system telling others to draw closer or back off. Experience and appropriate expression of emotion increase the likelihood of getting interpersonal needs met

Emotion as a Densely Packaged Unit of Information

1. The emphasis on spontaneous and emerging experience describes emotion as a chief source of personal information. Rogers said “While insight appears simple enough, the fact that it comes to have *emotional meaning* gives it its newness and vividness.” Gendlin stated that it is through contact with, and exploration of, feelings that new feelings and meanings emerge, resulting in reduced distress. This difference between the felt and the known is an important distinction.
2. Emotion consists of a multimodal associative network of information or meaning system
 - a. Anger organizes one to fight and defend one's boundaries
 - b. Fear organizes one sometimes to freeze and monitor, then run, flee, and escape
 - c. Shame organizes one to hide oneself from the scrutiny of others;
 - d. Sadness organizes one to seek comfort but later to withdraw and conserve resources;
 - e. Disgust organizes one to spit out or reject some noxious experience;

- f. Guilt organizes one to repair some situation
 - g. Love, happiness, curiosity, and other positive emotions organize one in different ways to reach out, build, share, celebrate, and explore
3. Evocative experiences are encoded in this emotion structure (#2 above) based on the particular experience with certain emotions. Current stimuli that resemble the original emotional context (i.e., a trauma) can activate (1) the feelings of fear and helplessness, associated somatic experiences, (2) the desire to escape the danger and avoid harm, and (3) the beliefs about self and the situations formed at the time of the trauma—often negative in nature. Exposure procedures are intended to activate this fear structure so that the maladaptive components are available for modification. Whatever the emotion in question, activation takes place through attention to sensory and somatic aspects of memory.
 4. To overcome emotion avoidance, participants must first approach emotion by attending to their emotional experience. Perls described how to contact and activate emotions, which involved enactment, or expression of feelings toward an imagined other or some part of the self, a precursor to Chair-Work. For change to occur, participants must allow and tolerate being in live contact with aroused emotions. These two steps are consistent with notions of exposure to what is feared, note the importance of activating emotion. There is much evidence on the effectiveness of exposure to previously avoided feelings. For example, in a series of studies on exposure as a treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder after rape, good outcome was predicted by the aroused expression of fear while participants retold trauma memories and by the attenuation of distress during exposures over continued exposures.
 5. Experiential work underscores the importance of emotion in the process of change. Research points to emotion as an adaptive network of meaning, rich with information that allows one to orient oneself toward and prioritize problems while also motivating one to act to resolve the problem. In doing so, participants must engage, instead of avoid, emotion and be willing to accept emotional experience.

Current Research on Emotional Processing: Examining Participant Process

How is emotional processing manifested the change process? Emotional processing is not actually a singular phenomenon. Different processes occur under the label of *emotional processing*. Let's explore how they function in relation to one another. This is important for a deeper understanding of both what emotional change is and what experiential work can do to promote this process. Greenberg proposed the notion of emotional processing subtypes. He identified several major ways to work productively with emotion.

Emotional Awareness and Engagement: “Getting in Touch with What’s There”

1. Insight is founded on the assumption that increasing awareness of emotional experience—usually the origins, meaning, and consequences of maladaptive emotion—is an important change process. Increasing awareness then requires a certain degree of arousal and immersion into bad feelings and emotional pain while accepting this experience. This is fundamental to the effectiveness of exposure-based procedures. Emotional insight requires exposure to what you are afraid of while at the same time as challenging one’s “hot cognitions,” meaning your thinking that is influenced by emotions. However, remember though the importance of emotional awareness is acknowledged, emotions associated with psychological distress are frequently suppressed or avoided, such that one may feel flat or numb. In these instances, deliberately increasing arousal is productive not for cathartic purposes, but rather to activate the emotion structure and thereby increase awareness of the information associated with emotional experience. The deliberate immersion into feeling bad is difficult, and when arousal increases if you are not comfortable with emotional intensity or trained in how to engage affective arousal, you may become anxious and not engage or abandon the task. This can be perceived by participants as invalidating and reinforce their avoidance.
2. Experiential work facilitate increased participant awareness. The more comfortable a coach is with emotional arousal, the more s/he will facilitate arousal from the very beginning. However, when participants become emotionally aroused and elaborate on their experience, there are various facets of that experience (assertion, hurt, disgust, hopelessness, etc.) on which a coach might choose to focus. Moreover, not all facets of that experience have equal potential for participant progress. Coaches need to be selective about which experience to emphasize to promote further processing.
3. Emotion awareness and engagement are not simply talking about emotion, but also feeling it. How participants engage in emotion is critical. A key study showed that dosage (i.e., quality of process multiplied by frequency of engagement) was found to be the most predictive in terms of outcome, rather than either quality or frequency of engagement alone. Participants only minimally engaged in emotionally evocative tasks may need to be encouraged to participate more frequently to fully to receive the maximum benefit.
4. Some participants have marked difficulties in accessing and elaborating their emotional experience. In alexithymia, which means “no words for feelings,” it describes a person with limited capacity to symbolize and elaborate emotional experience. It suggests that a participant’s level of alexithymia is associated with poorer treatment outcomes. One outcome study using EFT found a 68% decrease in alexithymia. One interpretation of this finding is that, because the aim of an experiential work is to deepen experiencing (participants’ affective awareness and symbolization), the observed reductions in alexithymia may have occurred through improvements in participants’ capacities for experiencing.

5. The concept of depth of experiencing describes a process dimension reflecting individual differences opposite to alexithymia but is amenable to development through effortful practice. The 7-point Experiencing Scale is a measure of good process in experiential work. Shallow levels on the scale represent unengaged levels of experiencing. Deeper levels of experiencing, which are indicative of good process, participants begin to puzzle over their emerging experience or use currently accessible feelings to solve problems or create new meanings. This work helped elaborate the conceptualization of experiential awareness.

6. *The Experiencing Scale* (shortened):

Stage One: The content is not about the participant. The participant tells a story, describes other people or events in which he or she is not involved or presents a generalized or detached account of ideas. The participant simply talks about events, ideas or others.

Stage Two: Either the participant is the central character in the narrative or his or her interest is clear. Comments and reactions serve to get the story across but do not refer to the participant's feelings. Refers to self but without expressing emotions.

Stage Three: The content is a narrative about the participant in external or behavioral terms with added comments on feelings or private experiences These remarks are limited to the situations described, giving the narrative a personal touch without describing the participant more generally. Expresses emotions but only as they relate to external circumstances.

Stage Four: Feelings or the experience of events, rather than the events themselves, are the subject of the discourse. The participant tries to attend to and hold onto the direct inner reference of experiencing and make it the basic datum of communications. The participant focuses directly on emotions and thoughts about self.

Stage Five: The content is a purposeful exploration of the participant's feelings and experiencing. The participant must pose or define a problem or proposition about self explicitly in terms of feelings. And must explore or work with the problem in a personal way. The participant now can focus on the vague, implicitly meaningful aspects of experiencing and struggle to elaborate it. Engages in an exploration of his or her inner experience.

Stage Six: The subject matter concerns the participant's present, emergent experience. A sense of active, immediate involvement in an experientially anchored issue is conveyed with evidence of its resolution or acceptance. The feelings themselves change or shift. Gains awareness of previously implicit feelings & meanings.

Stage Seven: Experiencing at stage seven is expansive, unfolding. The participant readily uses a fresh way of knowing the self to expand experiencing further. The experiential perspective is now a trusted and reliable source of self-awareness and is steadily carried

forward and employed as the primary referent for thought and action. On-going process of in-depth self-understanding, which provides new perspectives to solve significant problems.

7. Studies using the experiencing scale to study emotional content found that a participant's individual capacity for emotional processing early in therapy predicted outcome, but also that the increase in degree of emotional processing from early to mid-, or early to late, phases of treatment was found to be an even better predictor of outcome than early levels of processing or the early alliance. In short, a capacity for emotional processing does not guarantee a good outcome; however, entering without this capacity does not guarantee a poor therapeutic outcome, either. Although it is likely an advantage, early emotional processing skill appears not to be as critical as the ability to acquire and increase the depth of emotional processing over the course of work.
8. Other studies also considered the relationship between participant experiencing and outcomes. Findings demonstrated that, when peak (maximum) participant experiencing was measured during the middle portion of therapy, it predicted symptom improvements in depression, general psychopathology, interpersonal difficulties, and self-esteem by the end of treatment. It seems possible that participant experiencing is a common factor, one that is of a similar magnitude and importance as the therapeutic alliance.
9. It has been demonstrated that, during the middle phase of work, the relationship between therapeutic alliance and outcome was partially mediated by participant experiencing. The degree to which a participant could regulate affect fully mediated the relationship between participant experiencing and final outcomes.
10. When participants approach the meaning-laden emotions of assertive anger, grief, or non-blaming expressions of hurt, these feelings should be deeply explored and experienced. This process is exemplified by an excerpt from a participant who had become estranged from his family and recently had a falling out with his sister.

Participant: Well, I'm really angry. I'm angry enough that I don't want to see her. And I would, ah, be very happy not to see her ever again. [He frowns.]

Coach: What happens inside you when you say that?

Participant: [Sighs] Oh, I don't know, just a feeling of sadness. [He shakes his head, sighs deeply.]

Coach: Sadness.

Participant: Yeah, because we have been, since 2006 . . .

Coach: Speak from there . . . something about the sadness.

Participant: Well, it just is, uh. . . [long pause] It means we won't ever get together again, to have a swim, to have a BBQ to . . . talk. . .

Coach: So it's like, "I'm sad about losing her."

Participant: [Tears well up in his eyes.] Yes. I'm very sad about losing her.
[Nodding slowly; he is deeply moved. He closes his eyes.] I, I, ahh . . . Oh! [He sighs deeply, opens his eyes, looks at the coach.] She more than anybody

11. Such a new emotional awareness as above derives from the exploration of a single situation rather than across situations and is formulated at a relatively low level of abstraction. Even so, participants often experience the newness felt in such an emerging experience as a tangible moment of insight. In another example, after a participant has become aware of some previously unexplored aspect of her experience, she elaborates on what it is like to have a moment of emotional awareness

Participant: I'm not sure how I get to that sad feeling. [She wipes tears from her face.]

Coach: Uh-huh . . . and right now. . . . Where do you feel that in your body? . . . Can you describe it?

Participant: It's there. But I think that's the first time I've ever felt it. I mean, I knew it was there. Such a big empty space. . . . [She points to the center of her chest.] The only way I've been able to explain it to people is as a "lack of direction," an emotional void. . . .

Coach: Longing for something more tangible, more solid. . . .

Participant: Yeah, more meaningful.

Arousal, Expressiveness, and Enactment

1. The development of awareness is essential to working with emotion. Experiences also need to be activated in the moment to increase participant awareness of associated information. That emotion can be targeted and evoked through physical movement has been a long-standing technique of contemporary acting. If a scene requires an actor to weep, he might initiate this affective process by performing congruent physical actions, such as taking a deep sigh or holding his head in his hands. When research participants were encouraged to tightly clench their fist while recounting an angering event, they reported stronger emotional experiences of anger. In contrast, when participants used the same fist clenching while reporting a sad event, they felt less sadness. Motor expression can be used to intensify congruent emotional experiences or to dampen incongruent emotional

experiences. These findings are important for facilitating emotion as well as for observing how participants (often outside their own awareness) may suppress emotional experience.

2. Arousal plays a critical role in ushering in and vivifying awareness. Arousal might be thought of as an extension of awareness, but the distinction is critical when discussing the arousal of anger. Studies demonstrated that the arousal and expression of anger were related to positive change. There are mixed findings regarding the relationship of aroused anger (among other feelings) to outcome, with some evidence that venting of anger is not helpful and becomes unproductive unless related to problem solving in the service of well-articulated essential needs.
3. The experience of emotional arousal in general is helpful and congruent with how participants see their own change process. Participants asked what they found most helpful reported events in which they experienced high emotional arousal while exploring traumatic events. That aroused emotion was good for outcome was further refined when the relationship was examined between the amount of time participants spent in aroused emotion and the outcome of their work. It was found that when 25% of a session contained moderate to highly aroused emotional expression, this provided an optimal prediction of good outcome, one that was over and above the working alliance. When high arousal contained either more or less arousal duration, the result was a poorer outcome. This shows that a moderate amount of arousal would seem to be the most helpful.
4. In one study, observations of increased arousal in the middle phase of treatment was a positive predictor of increased self-esteem at outcome. The expression of aroused emotion helps to affirm one's sense of self. What happens or is productive during moments of high arousal is a key issue. During the middle phase of work, the combination of emotional arousal and meaning-making predicted improvements variable alone. This suggests that how affect is being processed and the meaning that participants construct from their aroused emotion determine their ultimate experience and directly address why aroused emotional experience is helpful.
5. Observations of increased arousal in the middle phase of work were a positive predictor of outcome. Expressions of aroused emotion helps to affirm one's sense of self. What happens or is productive during moments of high arousal. During the middle phase, the combination of emotional arousal and meaning-making predicted improvements better than either variable alone. This suggests that how affect is being processed and the meaning that participants construct from their aroused emotion determine the ultimate experience and address why aroused emotional experience is helpful.
6. What the arousal means to the participant is an issue of importance that cannot be separated out from the question of whether arousal is productive. Although arousal of

emotion is important, several studies indicated that purging or venting emotion alone is not a productive process. Rather, emotional processing is achieved through aroused expressions mainly in the context of deeply and meaningfully articulating one's emotional experience.

7. In an example of complex trauma, a participant was disclosed her experience of being raped by her father when she was a child. These memories were always highly distressing, so she would shut them out of her mind, which curtailed her process. So, the coach validated this and asked for more.

Participant: When I go back there, all it brings up is this rushing sense of fear and pain.

Coach: Yes, it must have been so painful. Can you get past that? Was there anything else going on in your little mind as a child?

Participant: [With a focused voice] I remember him saying, "Daddies do this to their little girls."

Coach: Stay with that. What did you think when he said that?

Participant: At the time, I was so confused. I remember thinking I must have done something wrong, that my mother would be angry at me. But I couldn't figure out what I had done.

Coach: So somehow you were at fault, a bad girl?

Participant: Hmm, I never really saw it like that before, but yeah, that's exactly how it played out.

By increasing arousal and activating the trauma memories, the participant accesses information not previously available—that is, core maladaptive shame and associated maladaptive beliefs about herself formed at the time. These became available for exploration and change. How shame can be transformed is another change process discussed below.

Emotional Regulation and Self-Soothing

1. The previous example exploring trauma memories illustrates that there is a delicate balance between facilitating emotional arousal in the service of awareness and managing those very intense emotions. In evoking memories, there is a range for optimum arousal; both the coach and the participant must collaborate to develop a sense of what the most productive level is. Generally, it is most productive when participants can take a reflective stance regarding their emotions, allowing the feelings to be active yet sufficiently regulated to be useful in the exploration, and creation of new meaning. The level of affective intensity is an

important issue to address with participants (i.e., when the coach says, “Put the feeling far enough away so that you can still tolerate it”).

2. Emotion regulation and self-soothing are essential processes in dealing with distressing events such as trauma. Emotion regulation strategies need to be taught in the early phase, before trauma exploration. Emotion regulation is part of the overall fabric of work and is accomplished largely through provision of a safe and empathic therapeutic relationship, which provides the foundation for exploring and processing painful traumatic experiences.
3. Be mindful of participants’ capacity for emotion regulation in the early phase of work, when painful emotions are explored for the first time. Later, in the working phase, participants will often need to be coached through self-soothing and regulation strategies (i.e., breathing, positive self-talk, making use of physical comforts, and appropriate self-distractions) both to tolerate and to work through painful emotions. Facilitating regulation is important when participants are overwhelmed by undifferentiated feelings such as global distress, secondary emotions such as rage, or primary maladaptive emotions such shame or fear, as in panic attacks. The goal of emotion regulation is to gain psychological distance from these experiences, to help participants turn down the intensity. Until this happens, painful emotion not only remains unarticulated in the moment but also is not experienced in detail and therefore cannot be a useful source of information or guide adaptive action.
4. Interventions that facilitate emotion regulation vary depending on a participant’s level of dysregulation. Explicit use of skills training exercises is helpful. The goal of facilitating emotion regulation in these instances is to help the participant develop a repertoire of strategies for coping with intense feelings. Participants may be experiencing intense and painful emotion, but it remains bearable, at least for the time being. This was the case with the participant described above, who was remembering the rape by her father. Distress that is intense yet bearable is a marker for empathic affirmation of participant vulnerability, followed by coaches helping participants to articulate the meaning of their emotional pain.
5. Symbolizing bodily felt emotional experience can decrease emotional arousal. The simple practice of disclosing and tracking emotion can reduce anxiety symptoms. Research from affective neuroscience has corroborated these clinical and experimental observations. Findings from a study using functional MRI demonstrated that, when healthy participants were presented with distressing images and then given the opportunity to label their feelings with words, it reduced the activity in their amygdala (a brain structure that is central part of the limbic which controls emotional reactions).
6. Furthermore, using symbolization as soothing operates individually as well as interpersonally. The process of soothing through meaning happens interpersonally when a coach who is empathically attuned tentatively captures a participant’s affect in just the right words, expressing it in a way that conveys acceptance and validation. Internal security develops by feeling that one exists in the mind and heart of the other; thus, the security of

being able to soothe the self develops by internalizing the soothing functions of a protective other. The goal of such empathic and dyadic regulations of affect is to help participants develop their capacity to calm and comfort themselves by internalizing the soothing responses of the coach, as well as by constructing meaning that makes distressing experiences more comprehensible and manageable

7. As an example, a participant who suffers from social anxiety and depression and is in the middle phase of work describes his feelings of shame in social settings. Although the participant becomes highly distressed, his coach joins him in empathically exploring the meaning entailed in this very painful emotion.

Participant: Umm. Everything I say is just a bit off, you know . . . off of how other people see or . . . talk about things. [His voice cracks, and he breaks down, sobbing heavily.]

Coach: It's just really. . . . It hurts to say that. . . . Can you say what hurts so much?

Participant: [He sniffs. There is a long pause; he seems lost for a moment in his pain.]

Coach: It's just a feeling of inadequacy that gets pulled . . . or . . . ?

Participant: Well, yeah, I have to monitor everything I say, even while I'm saying it, because I'm . . . I know, or feel, that everything I say is just a little bit off, just doesn't. . . . You know, people will just do a double take or disregard me as a nutcase.

In this example, instead of deflecting his emotion or breaking down into despair, the participant begins to follow the coach's attentive and empathic initiative and starts to articulate the meaning of his feelings. The dyadic process serves to regulate his arousal from sobbing back into a manageable range in which meanings can be explored.

Reflection on Emotion and Active Meaning-Making

1. The process of reflecting on emotion results in increased self-awareness; however, participants also use narratives to explain their experiences and to understand why emotion is aroused (and comes into awareness). Research has shown being able to contextualize and explain painful emotional memories promotes their assimilation into a coherent personal narrative, which in turn promotes healing. Narrative accounts, or the stories one tells about emotion experiences, play several roles in contextualizing, integrating, and assimilating these experiences. Reflection on emotional experiences provides an evolving interpretive verbal and cultural framework, which entails self-narratives and personalized themes that begin to interact with, and color, the nature of emerging experience.

2. Creating narratives about oneself requires internal coherence. In the context of traumatic or depressogenic events, individuals make appraisals about themselves, others, or the nature of events that are untenable. An example: a woman recalled how her parents “helped” her with homework during grade school. She described her emotionally volatile mother leaning over, screaming at her as she struggled with homework late at night. She also recalled periodic beatings by her father that followed any wrong answer during these late homework sessions. As an adult, she remembered weeping as a child, feeling exhausted, and thinking how she was obviously unintelligent and inadequate. However, after reflecting on the terror she felt, she eventually concluded that any child, or even any adult, would have had difficulty performing under those conditions and that perhaps she was not given a fair chance. Reflecting on emotion can be a way of changing a participant’s assumptive framework.
3. Reflecting on emotion can result in the insight that one is not only the reader but also the author of one’s life story. The prototypical existential insights are essential reflections that re-contextualize distressing emotion, offering a new interpretive framework, as in (a) “Only I can change the world I have created,” (b) “There is no danger in change,” (c) “To get what I want I must change,” and (d) “I have the power to change.” Reflexive states such as these are simple, yet profound. Although they can always be entertained from an experience-distant position as possibilities, their full and real impact is only appreciated when they are lived moments of awareness rather than items of intellectual learning. The experiential emphasis is on experience and process (what the participant feels and how it is experienced or done) over content and cause (what is being talked about and why the participant experiences or does things).
4. The fundamental position that the participant is the agent in the development of his or her new insight, one common intervention for facilitating reflection on emotion is to explore collaboratively any troubling reactions participants may have to situations they have encountered. When participants express confusion or describe having felt puzzled by their own emotional reactions in a situation, it is a marker to facilitate reflection on that experience. Reflection on emotion and its circumstances can help participants with “re-storying” the painful experiences they have lived.
5. Insight often involves reflection on emotion. A traditional interpretation is usually based on the appraisal of core themes (“This seems a lot like the kind of powerlessness and depression you used to experience with your father. Rather than experiencing your rage, you collapse”). Some coaches may choose to guide the participant process, but they do not presume to be experts on the participant’s experience or dynamics. Coaches encourage their participants to articulate insights about emotional experience as those insights emerge from the participant’s perspective. Finally, reflection on emotion is also facilitated by modeling a discovery-oriented approach in which coach and participant alike are trying to understand the participant’s story of emotion (*Coach*: “Somehow you collapse into feeling

like that powerless little boy. How does that happen? What goes on for you on the inside?”).

6. The following excerpt is with a participant suffering from depression. She has begun by discussing her marital difficulties, which leads to her speaking about her relationship with her children. She notes a theme and goes on to elaborate reflection on her emotional style:

Coach: Oh, so you can't accept love just for being who you are?

Participant: [Talking rapidly] No. I owe them. Somebody . . . I owe my children when they do something nice for me. I owe them so big I could never buy them enough gifts. I am so touched that somebody bothers to love me. It's so big for me. I think . . . I'm starting to formulate something here in my mind. [*Her speech slows and becomes focused.*] Give me a second. . . . I think I turn people off, so I don't have to owe. I'm just realizing that at this moment in time . . . because I turn a lot of people off. And it seems to me—Why would I do that? I mean, that's like shooting yourself in the foot. . . . But I think I do that simply for the purpose of not having to owe them. I just discovered that.

Notice that this example of a reflection on emotion involves a more top-down process, in which the participant makes connections and identifies a pattern that applies across situations. Taking a bird's eye view has powerful advantages at certain moments; participants may develop a more contextualized self-understanding and self-interpretative framework. A link that is self-discovered, as above, or, better yet, “self-created,” will always fit one's own experience best. Moreover, emotional knowledge that is attained through one's own efforts is more likely to be retained than if it has simply been conveyed.

Emotional Transformation or Changing Emotion with Emotion

1. After relationship conditions have been established, and after the initial contact in emotional awareness, deepening of experience, and clear expression, experiential work moves toward transforming emotion. Such approaches use a process-guiding style to create change by evoking affect to promote emotional processing and access to additional material. After previously unacknowledged experience has been accessed, the focus shifts to transforming certain emotional experiences by using emergent and alternative emotions to expand a person's repertoire.
2. The term *emotion scheme* (see #3 below) is often used to capture the dynamic nature of emotion as a multimodal network of feelings and meanings (a self-organization). Attending to a current (maladaptive) emotion scheme that needs transformation, such as feeling

worthless, makes it accessible to new inputs that might change it. Identification of and attention to unfulfilled needs embedded in a maladaptive state stimulate alternative self-organizations, which are tacit, emotionally based schemes; they begin to organize the individual toward meeting an identified need. It is the synthesis of this new possibility with the old ones that leads to lasting change. Thus, experiential approaches of this kind make use of the power of affect to catalyze change, producing a restructuring of core emotion-based schemes.

3. The Emotion Scheme:

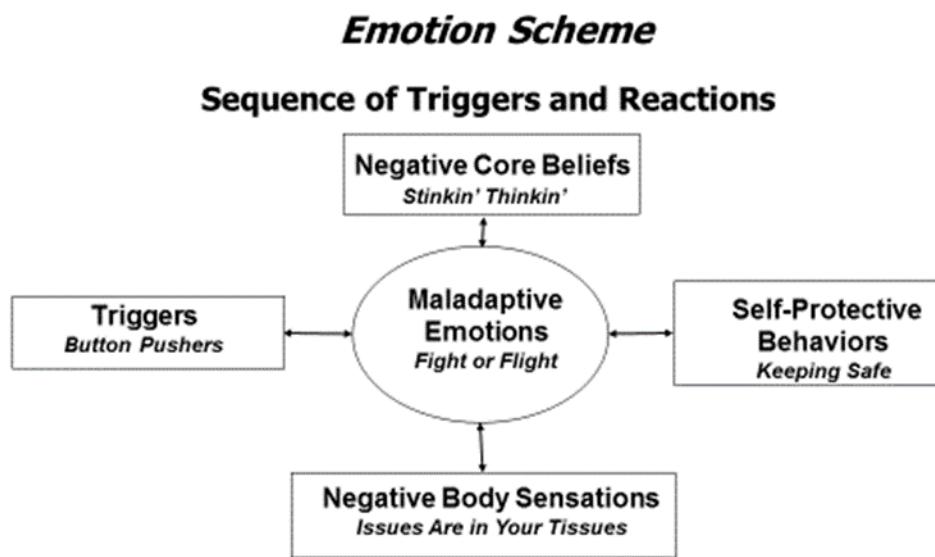
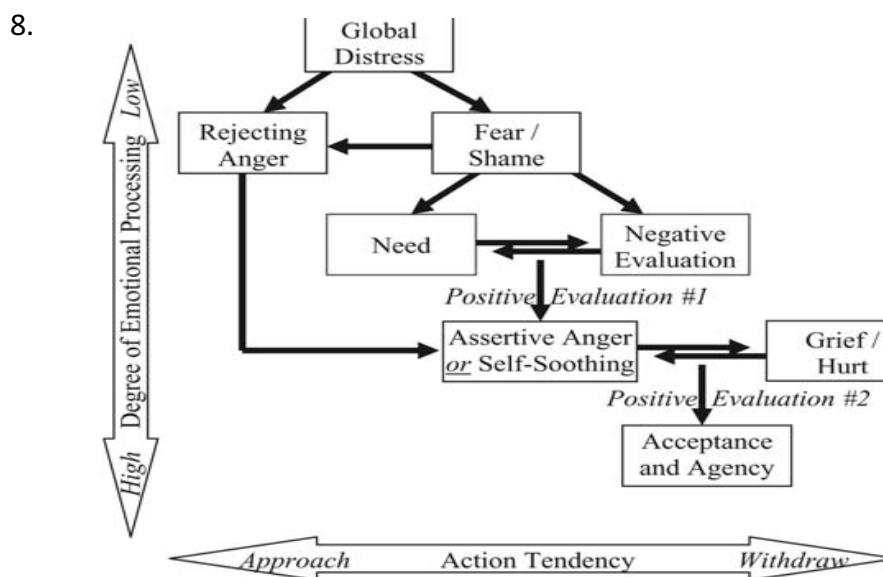


Figure 1. A hypothesized internal emotional memory structure that synthesizes psychological elements into a coherent self-organization and is the primary generator of experience.

4. This access to alternative responses, along with the synthesis of old with new schemes, is viewed as central to change. On a neuronal level, withdrawal emotions from the right hemisphere of the brain can be transformed by the activation of approach emotions from the left prefrontal cortex or vice versa. Changing one emotion by way of another occurs as a participant gains new meaning from a freshly emerging emotion, resulting in newly formed neural connections and increased efficiency of neural information transfer.
5. Emotional transformation is not simply the process of generating new experiences, because it does this by using facets of another, already present maladaptive emotion. This is possible because there can be coactivation of adaptive emotion along with, and in response to, maladaptive emotion. An explicit principle in EFT is to respond empathically to distressing, even maladaptive, emotion while continually supporting the tentative emergence of adaptive emotional responses. In this way, bad feeling is not purged or vented as such, nor does it attenuate; rather, another feeling is evoked in parallel and in contrast to the maladaptive feeling (consider the reconsolidation hypothesis).

6. Key components of positive emotions are simply incompatible with negative emotions. Although adaptive emotions (e.g., grief, assertion) are not necessarily positive (enjoyable), the transformation of emotion as described above hinges on a similar principle: Activating a new emotion changes the preceding emotion. Research showed that cardiovascular effects of a negative emotion (i.e., anxiety) were not simply replaced but rather undone by positive emotions (i.e., contentment and amusement). Positive emotions accelerated cardiovascular recovery. Similarly, people who were more vulnerable to depression showed more self-contempt but were also less resilient in response to their own self-criticism than people who were less vulnerable to depression. Meanwhile, less vulnerable individuals could recruit assertive emotional resources such as pride and anger to combat (transform) depressogenic self-contempt and negative cognitions. These studies indicated that emotion can be used to change emotion.
 7. An empirically derived model has been proposed that identified a multistep sequential pattern of emotional change which predicted outcomes (see #8 below). They showed that distressed participants first worked through emotions that are global, undifferentiated, and insufficiently processed. Fear, shame, or rage then represented a second step, characterized by a deep, enduring, yet familiar painful state, which was highly idiosyncratic and often anchored in generic autobiographical narratives. Further on, at the third step of processing, articulation of a core negative self-evaluation was contrasted with an existential need, serving as a pivotal step in change and occasionally producing a sense of relief. A fourth step described a set of adaptive emotions. On one hand, participants entered a state of grief, in which they acknowledged personal losses without complaint or self-pity. On the other hand, participants mobilized through assertive anger or self-compassion, in which they proactively affirmed a healthy entitlement to experiences of personal competence, worth, and connection with others. Eventually, a synthesis of these adaptive emotions (i.e., assertive anger, grief, self-compassion) led to the resolution of distress and facilitated resolution of personal difficulties.



9. The most common targets of emotional transformation and intervention are primary maladaptive fear, shame, or loneliness, which are complex and dysfunctional affective meaning states that tacitly embody a sense of being incompetent or bad and unlovable. They are embodied preverbal experiences (schemes) that are not easily amenable to logical or rational change. In the example of the participant described above who had been raped, she stated, “I know that he was the adult and I was just a child, but I still *feel* like I was responsible.” Another participant said, “I know in my mind that I’m successful—I have a PhD, for God’s sake! But I still always have this sense that there’s been some misunderstanding or clerical error.” The fact that these feelings defy rational thinking makes it difficult to change maladaptive emotion through reason and seems to highlight the need for experiential over cognitive approaches to emotional change.
10. Primary maladaptive emotion is transformed by accessing and evoking primary adaptive emotion. This process often occurs later in the working phase of change. Although the transformation process cannot be applied formulaically because it is contingent on each individual’s personal experience and idiosyncratic meaning. Research has supported the idea that a series of prototypic pathways exists. Maladaptive fear, for example, about being preyed on by potentially abusive others, can be transformed by supporting the simultaneous emergence of assertive anger, in which participants actively defend their boundaries and dignity. Similarly, shame and maladaptive self-blame can be transformed by accessing feelings of anger about injustice. Working through anger, moreover, can be facilitated by subsequently moving to deeper experiences of sadness.
11. Some interventions that facilitate emotional transformations have been studied in detail. Gendlin’s Focusing often results not only in awareness of a particular emotion, but also in emotional transformation. Enactment tasks and imaginary dialogues are effective ways of activating contrasting emotions while, at the same time, keeping emotions symbolically and experientially delineated. Thus, in the context of unresolved feelings toward others, imaginal confrontation (empty-chair) is a principal way of facilitating emotional transformations. In the context of self-related difficulties, two-chair enactments between different and incompatible parts of the self are useful.
12. Enactments are built on the experiential bedrock of evocative elaboration. To move through an emotion, participants are encouraged to “stay with the feeling.” Coaches who are empathically attuned gently guide the participants’ attention to facets of their experience that may only be in the periphery of awareness. This role of the coach’s empathic attunement is highlighted in that a key target of emotional transformation is a participant’s feelings of aloneness in dealing with overwhelming emotions.
13. In the following excerpt, a woman diagnosed with dysthymia and a major depressive episode describes her relationship with her father, who became emotionally withdrawn after her mother died. The participant begins in a state of maladaptive shame, feeling as though there were something about her that deserved to be rejected. As she explores this feeling, there is a sense of anger; the coach then guides the participant’s attention toward those aspects of the unfolding experience, thereby transforming her sense of worthlessness into self-assertion.

Participant: He was never there for me. All the suffering I put myself through—I guess I have only myself to blame.

Coach: So, there's this sense of somehow not deserving love. . . .

Participant: [Tears fill her eyes.] I feel I've had too many losses in my life. It seems so unfair. I had to deal with so much on my own. I hate him for what he did.

Coach: Tell him what he did. [Points to empty chair.]

Participant: I don't think you realize . . . all my relationships, everything, has been so much harder . . . because of the way you treated me. Every single day I've had to fight through that. . . .

Coach: What do you resent? Tell him.

Participant: I resent that you didn't love me. I hate you for being so selfish, inconsiderate, and dismissive of me and [pause] . . . for just never putting me first. [shrugs] Not that I needed that always. . . .

Coach: What just happened there. . . . Something changed?

Participant: I'm feeling sorry for myself.

Coach: OK. Try not to go there, stay with your resentment for now. . . . I know it's difficult, but tell him more about your resentment.

Participant: [She turns back to squarely face the chair.] It's hard for me to confront you, but this I must say: You were not a decent father to me. You abandoned and neglected me . . . for most of my childhood . . . and I'm angry at you for that.

In this example, maladaptive shame undergoes a micro-transformation as subdominant feelings of anger and healthy entitlement are brought to the foreground. Through this process, the participant eventually expresses adaptive assertive anger, which is supported by the coach over the course of therapy until it becomes a new, healthy, and more stable part of the participant's repertoire.

From Research to Practice: Helpful Applications of Experiential Principles for Working with Emotion

1. The emphasis on moment-by-moment participant process is a fundamental tenet of all experiential work. This attentiveness to emerging experience is a special advantage of this approach when working with emotion. The tradition has developed several implicit and

explicit principles of intervention. We discuss emotion in practice and how coaches work with emotion.

The Relationship as the Crucible of Emotion Change

1. Although today most approaches acknowledge the importance of working with emotion, the fact remains that some qualities of the helping environment are more conducive than others to the exploration of affective experience and meaning. Cultivating these qualities can be particularly important when working with participants who have learned to minimize or fear their feelings. We offer guidelines for cultivating an environment that facilitates deeper emotional experiencing, a process that begins in the first meeting and continues thereafter.

Maintain a Consistent Focus on Feelings

1. Promoting experiencing is an essential part of emotion coaching that begins in the first meeting and (implicitly or explicitly) will be an important task that contributes to alliance development. As such, coach responses that frame problems in feeling terms and communicate that valuing of emotional experience and expression are the foundation for deepening participant experiencing (e.g., “This must be so painful—it’s like you are your own worst enemy” or “So lonely to keep that secret all these years”). Responses that focus on affective experience implicitly and sometimes explicitly give the participant permission to experience and express what are often confusing, frightening, and intensely negative or painful feelings. Experiential work is filled with subtle cues that indicate to participants what type of behavior and what tone is acceptable, desirable, or appropriate. Valuing and validating emerging feelings communicates to participants that the usual restrictive social norms concerning intense emotion do not apply in this context (e.g., *Coach*: “I understand part of you must really hate him for what he did”; *Participant*: “I do. I hate him. I used to wish he was dead, and then I’d feel guilty”) and that emotions are not inherently dangerous. This is especially important with participants who fear others will minimize, misunderstand, or judge their feelings.
2. This focus on feelings is not only central to exploring affective meaning but is considered essential to the task of processing painful memories in general. Research has indicated that a cognitive emphasis is counterproductive to the emotional processing of trauma memories. A recent review concluded that when exposure therapy is augmented with other cognitive interventions, the combination can decrease the effectiveness of treatment with respect to emotional processing. This suggests that a cognitive emphasis can impede working through difficult emotions, perhaps because it serves as a distraction from affect.

3. Research has also argued that the rumination characteristic of worry is distinct from and antithetical to the working through that is necessary for emotional. Worry is understood as a cognitive response that allows one to avoid deeper pain and more primary emotional experience. The cognitive, verbal-linguistic behavior of worry suppresses potentially evocative imagery, underlying meanings, and even somatic activity. In this way, rumination can block the natural course of experiential processing. Thus, effective interventions direct participants' attention to exploring core emotions that underlie chronic worry (e.g., a core sense of self as inadequate, fragile, or flawed).

Ensure Optimal Arousal

1. Very high levels of arousal interfere with the capacity to explore meaning. Participants who are processing a profound loss, for example, may need to have a good cry, but arousal must diminish before they can really explore the meaning of the loss in their lives. Even so, arousal must be sufficiently high to activate relevant emotional meanings. Thus, to promote experiencing, interventions need to help participants modulate levels of arousal.

Cultivate a Participant's Attitude of Curiosity and Exploration

1. Interventions that encourage participants to pay careful attention to their feelings, needs, concerns, and perspectives promote an attitude of interest in, respect for, and valuing of their emotional life. This can be made explicit as part of collaborating on the task of exploring affective meaning (e.g., "I hear how much this distresses you, and I guess it seems important to get a sense of how this unfolds for you, how you always end up feeling like the bad guy" or "So, somehow it's hard to believe you deserve better?"). In addition, participants need to be aware that experiencing may result in both discovering and creating meaning and that answers to their problems do not exist a priori. This helps to promote tolerance for ambiguity as well as participant agency in solving emotional problems.

Create an Environment Conducive to an Internal Focus

1. Initially, many participants are often focused on describing external situations and the behavior of negative or abusive others, or they may talk continuously, making it difficult for the coach to intervene at all. Interventions need to help the participant relax and slow down the process (e.g., "Wait, wait, so all this was going on and I'm wondering—what's it like for you to tell this story? This is worth slowing down for. Take a minute. . . What's going on inside as you tell me this?"). The aim is to help participants become introspective and self-reflective and learn to be comfortable with a pensive silence so they can "hear" their internal processes. This applies to recognizing and attending to positive as well as negative experiences. Successful help also includes recognizing, attending to, and exploring participants' positive emotions.

Maintain Interpersonal Contact

1. Experiential processing takes time, and participants vary in the amount of time they need to symbolize and fully process a given experience. Productive silence can occur naturally when the participant is searching internal experience. Coaches would do best to attend patiently to these moments and resist filling in the spaces. However, silence should not go on for too long, because participants can easily lose focus or direction. The principle here is to respect the participant's need for silence and at the same time maintain contact. Coaches periodically need to invite participants to share what they are experiencing (e.g., "Can you tell me what you are thinking or feeling right now?"). Constructing meaning is a collaborative rather than a solitary process, and it cannot be prescribed. When processing is productive, participants will typically share their experience (e.g., "I was just thinking how strange it is that I have let this go on for all these years; sad, really"). Coaches will then respond with empathic reflections that work roughly within the participant's horizon of experience (e.g., "Hmm, so there is this sense of feeling both grief and feeling puzzled, as we begin to unpack this together").

Intervention Principles for Promoting Emotional Experience

1. A participant's level of engagement often involves reexperiencing the narrated past (e.g., "I remember sitting alone, thinking there must be something wrong with me"). At the same time, the participant must remain engaged with the present moment, which sometimes contrasts and at other times complements or informs the past narrative (e.g., "Now that I tell the story, I feel angry about the betrayal I suffered"). Productive experiencing is characterized by an internally focused vocal quality that indicates a reflection that is unrehearsed and searching. Often there are pauses as the participant concentrates and gropes toward new meaning. These pauses are indicative of good process and should be encouraged and supported by the coach (e.g., "Stay with that, take your time" or "Keep your attention on that gut feeling, it's important"). Of course, externally oriented participants eventually return to their default of describing situational events and related cognitions, but these repeated forays into idiosyncratic meanings and feelings facilitate experiencing.

Differentiate Hurt, Upset, and Global Distress

1. Emotional experience needs to be sufficiently specific before the underlying facets of experience can be put into words. When a participant's experience is undifferentiated, hurt, upset, or distressed, then the participant cannot hope to articulate any specific meaning, which emerges only from an increasingly specific emotional experience. Thus, differentiating global upset or distress into discrete emotions is a necessary step in promoting exploration of meaning and thereby moving the emotional process forward. Again, this is because discrete emotions are associated with specific information used in the

construction of new meaning. Promoting experiencing thus requires exploring and integrating the context-relevant meaning associated with specific discrete emotions.

Explore All Facets of an Emotional Episode

1. Any important affective event is encoded as a multimodal network of information (i.e., an emotion scheme or structure), and experiencing entails activating the structure to explore its components deliberately. When a participant definitively states that he or she feels a certain way (e.g., “Well, it’s just embarrassing, nothing else”), many coaches who are learning to work with emotion have difficulty knowing how to explore the issue further; if this happens, the therapy process can become stuck or redundant. However, labeling an emotion is only one part of the process; because most of the elements in an emotional experience are tacit, unpacking or elaborating that information, or meaning, facilitates participant experiencing.
2. To describe the components of an emotional experience in response to a given situation, researchers have focused on ways in which participants disclosed past or present emotional experiences. Although this was initially intended as a research strategy, being familiar with the essential components of these kinds of moments can provide direction for coaches intending to explore a participant’s feelings beyond simply labeling them. Accordingly, when a participant refers to a particular feeling (e.g., sad, happy, afraid, embarrassed), the given emotion usually entails the five following elements, or facets, of experience, each of which might be a point for exploration.
 - a. *Situation or interpersonal context.* This is typically the stimulus or circumstances of the emotion (e.g., “I have failed in my marriage” or “My mother left me alone”).
 - b. *Action tendency.* Because one of the purposes of emotion, evolutionarily speaking, is to organize a person to express some response or behavior, emotional experiences are almost always accompanied by action, or an impetus toward action. In fact, sometimes participants first present an action tendency (e.g., “I wanted to crawl into bed and pull the covers over my head”).
 - c. *Somatic component.* Emotions are embodied. Working with the somatic component of emotion is particularly elaborated in focusing, Gestalt, and experiential body-based therapies. Unlike action tendencies, these somatic elements are not usually indicative of particular goal-oriented behavior; rather they represent a preverbal aspect of meaning that can be captured in metaphors or images (e.g., “I have butterflies in my stomach” or “I feel warm inside, imagining her beside me”). Focusing is a technique that can be especially useful for elaborating affective meanings via the somatic component of an experience.
 - d. *Unmet existential or interpersonal need.* When emotions are differentiated enough, they organize people for action toward some implicit goal. Thus, coaches need to be attuned to core existential and often interpersonal needs that drive affective and

- cognitive goal-oriented behavior. The verbal symbolization of existential or interpersonal needs is pivotal in the full elaboration of the meaning of these experiences (e.g., “I needed love, affection, even just some acknowledgment that I was there!” or “What he did was just wrong—we deserve justice!”).
- e. *Concern regarding the self or self-in-relation-to-other.* The articulation of self-related difficulties (e.g., feelings of insecurity, worthlessness, or harsh self-criticism) usually emerges as the participant explores the effects that difficult experiences have had on personal identity, hopefulness, and relatedness to others (e.g., “Maybe I’m just an angry person; I wish I weren’t like that”). Concerns about the self are usually relatively easy to access in participants who are already emotionally aroused; sometimes it is sufficient to guide a participant from the situation and circumstances to focusing more on the personal ramifications it may have (e.g., *Participant*: “She just stood there and watched him beat the crap out of me!” *Coach*: “So, somehow that says something about both of you—the fact that she didn’t intervene?”).

Awareness of these five aspects of an emotion episode can be a useful strategy for deciding where and how to explore further when coaches feel stuck and participants present their feelings as deceptively straightforward. Moreover, because these elements of an emotion structure are linked together in a network, elaborating one such facet of experience can lead to all the others. Addressing each of these facets is a potential avenue for further exploration.

Move from Concrete to More Abstract Aspects of Emotional Experience

- 1. The principle of exploring all facets of an emotion scheme assumes that experience needs to be activated. To make an emotion vivid in a participant’s immediate experience, one could begin activating the network with any of the components described above. However, when participants are not aware of specific emotions, exploration moves best from concrete sensations (i.e., bodily felt sense, action tendencies, concrete images) to more complex and abstract aspects of experience (i.e., thoughts, feelings, desires, and needs), not vice versa.
- 2. In many forms of help, participants are explicitly taught to use bodily experience as a source of information about emotion or arousal states. The higher aim of this experiencing is to symbolize the meaning of affective experience, not just to be attuned with one’s bodily experience. For example, “I’m flushed and angry” is useful, embodied, and concrete information, but the more abstract meaning of “I’m fighting for my dignity” will capture what is most important. Although both are needed, the latter is a higher-level process or skill than just creating an awareness of affective experience.
- 3. In contrast, if participants can already identify their feelings (e.g., anger), directing attention to their associated bodily experience will not typically move the meaning-making process

forward. Similarly, if participants already know what they want or long for (e.g., abstract—the need to be treated with respect) and that need is vividly experienced in the moment, then directing a participant’s attention toward bodily sensations (e.g., concrete—feeling hot and the impulse to lash out) will not usually move the process forward. In these situations, when participants are already aroused and in touch with the more complex and abstract aspects of their experience, it is more useful to move directly to helping them articulate the meanings associated with those feelings in the context of self, others, and interpersonal relatedness (e.g., “I guess, this is you fighting for . . . respect? For what’s decent?”).

Listen for the Implied Message

1. Most helper training distinguish between the explicit and implicit aspects of a participant’s communication, emphasizing the importance of responding to the implicit message. In experiential work, this has been called responding to the leading edge of experience because responses that highlight this aspect of experience move the process beyond what is merely being stated. Thus, empathic reflections, directives, questions, or interpretations that focus on the implied message promote deeper experiencing (e.g., *Participant*: “She’s the adult, she should be looking after that, not me!” *Coach*: I hear how much you resent being saddled with that burden, almost being *her* mother rather than the other way around. I imagine you would love some mothering of your own at times”). The caveat is that the coach is responding to a participant’s intended message, which is on the periphery of awareness, not to material that the participant wants to keep hidden or private. Responding to the intended message stands in stark contrast to making deep and often dynamic interpretations that are not in the periphery of awareness, or confronting a participant’s defenses, which can evoke feelings of shame and defensiveness.
2. Coaches can respond to a participant’s implied message by making small inferences or attending to overt nonverbal cues. As participants explore, the focus of their attention shifts from what was an implicit meaning in one moment to an explicit expression of that meaning, dynamically moving the dialogue forward. Even so, some affective meaning is beyond the reach of the participant’s verbal symbolization. The participant experiences this implicit meaning as a preverbal intuition—a felt-sense. Coach responses that capture this aspect of experience might glean meaning from, say, the participant’s tone of voice, an unanticipated pause or pattern of speech, or incongruence between the implicit and explicit message. When a coach is able tentatively to put words to this felt-sense, participants often immediately recognize it as their own intended meaning. This process of tentatively offering the participant meaning that may be barely be out of reach provides a scaffolding that expands the participant’s horizon of awareness, thereby facilitating experiencing.

Attend to Less Dominant Affective Meanings

1. Emotional experiencing is a highly dynamic process. Whether an existing affective state is an ephemeral one or a stable feature of the participant's personality, the most salient experience is always in dynamic competition with other lesser activated states, as with emotions that are just outside the participant's focus. These potential states can be thought of as subdominant experiences that exist in the background, yet bleed through and color the dominant affective meaning state, sometimes in subtle ways. This is comparable to Gestalt ideas of conflict between the dominant top-dog side of personality and the weaker experiencing self, or under-dog, and to current constructivist views of multiple selves or voices working in harmony or disharmony. Subdominant experiences often characterize those more fragile parts of the self that embody authentic feelings and needs, along with adaptive resources that have been squashed or damaged by trauma or other painful experiences. Coaches looking to facilitate an emotional transformation in their participants by way of experiential exploration need to be attuned and responsive to these less activated and subtler emotional organizations.
2. Consider a participant whose core sense of self is that she is worthless, or bad. This maladaptive state or emotion scheme is a network of feelings and meanings that gets activated across situations. Perhaps the sense of being bad is elicited by imagining a critical ex-spouse. The participant describes the most salient facet of her experience as fear of being berated by the spouse. As she describes this experience, she sometimes lowers her eyes in what might be embarrassment or shame and sometimes grits her teeth in what seems like a flicker of anger. She describes wanting to freeze or hide, and, as she says this, she firmly grasps the armrest of her chair. Unmet needs for security, safety, and protection are at the center of the maladaptive experience of fear. As these thoughts and feelings are activated, they leave her drained of energy and with a sinking feeling in her stomach. Part of the implicit meaning entailed in this state is captured by her thoughts of "I'm bad" (shame), "There's nothing I can do about it" (powerlessness), or even "I'm going to get it!" (fear), but she also says, "I hate him" when referring to her ex-husband.
3. Coaches attuned to the nuances of experiential process implicitly notice signs of shifting affect and meaning in the form of nonverbal cues, fragments of meaning, or emerging incongruous emotion. In the above example, fear is the dominant aspect of experience, and shame and anger are subdominant. Coach interventions could focus on either of these subdominant aspects, depending on the intentions of intervention. In the earlier parts, the coach might want to focus on exploring the underlying shame that prevents the participant from holding the spouse accountable for harm. As things progresses, however, the coach may want to increase the participant's awareness of her adaptive anger at maltreatment and possibly help her express this to the imagined husband, which may or may not be practice for a real-life confrontation. In such a case, the coach would be attuned to ephemeral moments when the participant grits her teeth, clenches her fists, deepens her voice, and expresses anger toward her abuser. By drawing attention to these traces of

anger, interventions orient the participant's attention to a different set of affects and meanings besides fear, such that they gradually move to the foreground. Any verbal or nonverbal sign of the subdominant emotion scheme could be used as a point of elaboration.

For example:

Participant: [Under her breath, clenching her teeth] I hate him.

Coach: Yeah, hate him, like he's a big bully, picking on you and scaring you. I'm sure you'd like to make him go away, leave you alone!

or

Coach: I notice your clenched fists, like you just want to fight back. . . Does that fit?

4. Finally, facets of experiences that are attended to always become increasingly salient; as the newly emerging process is symbolized in words, the once subdominant experiences of assertion and anger shift to the foreground and become dominant, and the experience of maladaptive fear becomes background, at least for the time being. When anger is attended to and accessed, the participant feels she wants to stand up and shout, "Stop it!" She feels mobilized to assert herself and has a sense of "I don't deserve this," "This is wrong," and "I'm OK the way I am." This particular manner of facilitating deeper experiencing is a central part of interventions used in EFT.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

1. Working with emotion has been recognized as an integral component of successful help across therapeutic orientations. The underlying emotional processes that contribute to successful therapy are also not likely to differ greatly across helping approaches. However, since the beginning of experiential therapy, the role of emotion has been explicitly stated and shown to be central to participant change. Given this focus, it follows that practitioners from these approaches have pioneered many interventions for working with emotion.
2. Outside the experiential tradition, relatively little "technology" had been developed to help increase emotional engagement, heighten arousal, or purposefully facilitate the transformation of a maladaptive emotion into another, more adaptive, emotion.
3. A few key research-based strategies include the following: the importance of deepening participant experiencing to facilitate emotional awareness and; the pivotal role of promoting emotional arousal in participant change, especially in combination with meaning-making; and promoting sequences of emotions to bring about emotional transformation.