

Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy

The DYNAMICS of
EMOTION, LOVE, *and* POWER

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1

INTRODUCTION

Marriage will never be given new life except by that out of which true marriage always arises, the revealing of two people of the Thou to one another.

—Buber (1958, p. 51)

On the basis of developments in research on emotion over the past decades, in this book we expand the original theory of emotion-focused couples therapy (EFT-C) to view affect regulation as a core motive that organizes attachment, identity, and attraction. In this view, affect regulation does not mean control of emotion but the process of having the emotion one wants and not having those emotions one does not want. We argue that adopting an affect regulation lens helps us understand human behavior and couples interaction in more observable and concrete terms. We thus offer that couples conflict results from breakdowns in both other- and self-regulation of affect, and we look at ways to work in couples therapy to help the couple, and each individual, regulate the emotions of anger, sadness, fear, and shame, as well as love and other positive emotions. We thus expand the initial EFT-C framework of promoting other-regulation of affect to include work on increasing self-regulation of affect. This then adds work on the transformation of the pain of unmet childhood needs that often organizes responses in the present to the encouragement of the expression of adult unmet needs for closeness and validation, which has been the hallmark of our approach to couples therapy. We see this addition as an explication of what has always been implicit in this approach but now is spelled out more clearly in this book.

In our efforts over the past decades to develop a comprehensive emotion-focused therapy approach to human functioning (R. N. Goldman & Greenberg, 1995, 1997; Greenberg, 2002a; Greenberg & Johnson, 1986a, 1988; Greenberg & Paivio, 1997a; Greenberg, Rice, & Elliott, 1993; Greenberg & Safran, 1986; Greenberg & Watson, 2006), we found that the ability for depressed, anxious, and traumatized individuals to access core maladaptive emotion schemes and learn how to self-soothe and regulate their own deepest core fears, shame, and anger—plus their ability to transform these, by accessing internal resources—was central to individual change. We have come to see that in couples therapy, dealing with the pain of unmet needs from the past and learning to self-soothe can at times be as important in developing relationship satisfaction as it is in alleviating individual distress. In the quest to alleviate couples distress, we have found that revealing underlying feelings based on adult unmet needs for closeness and recognition to the responsiveness and soothing by an intimate partner is crucial to restructuring the emotional bond (Greenberg, Ford, Alden, & Johnson, 1993; Greenberg & Johnson, 1986a, 1986b, 1988). The ability to deal with past, often childhood, wounds and self-soothe some of the pain from them (Greenberg & Paivio, 1997a, 1997b; Greenberg, 2002a, 2002b), however, also can be important in couples work, especially to ensure enduring change. This is a finding that has been well borne out in research by Gottman (1999), who found self-soothing to be an important element of what makes marriage work. We thus propose combining work on self-soothing with work on other-soothing to form a more comprehensive approach.

AFFECT REGULATION AND THREE MAJOR MOTIVATIONS

In this book, we discuss the affect regulation involved in three major motivational systems central in couples therapy—attachment, identity, and attraction. We suggest that the centrality of these relational needs in marital conflict leads to therapeutic work that emphasizes focusing on the three related sets of emotions of fear–anxiety, shame–powerlessness, and joy–love, plus promoting three associated relational response forms: nurture–comfort, empathy–validation, and warmth–liking.

Attachment and Connection

Johnson (e.g., see Johnson, 2004) has written extensively on the importance of attachment and on its role in EFT-C, and we fully endorse its importance in couples therapy. Although we still view the attachment bond and the security it provides as a central concern in most couples, we see this bond as a key form of affect regulation governing emotional arousal and approach and avoidance rather than as a set of styles of interaction or as love.

We will not further discuss attachment here, as it has been so clearly explicated in prior work on EFT-C (Johnson, 2004), but rather we will focus more on how to work with identity issues and dominance. This in no way implies that these latter issues are more important than attachment. Clearly, an individual needs to be close and involved with a partner before issues of dominance and validation become an issue, but we do feel that we need more than attachment to explain human and couple functioning and will elaborate on this in the next section.

Identity Influence

Although the original theoretical presentations of EFT-C (Greenberg & Johnson, 1986a, 1986b, 1988, 1990) focused on both pursue–distance and dominance–submission cycles, the vulnerable feelings underlying dominance cycles and how to work with them were never clearly delineated. In our view, understanding the emotional processes in the formation and maintenance of identity and the dominance–submission cycle, as well as working with issues of influence, power, and control, although not nearly as heartwarming as working with comfort and security in the attachment domain, are crucial pieces of the puzzle of how to resolve couples' conflicts. We propose that self-soothing, as well as other-soothing, is important in resolving dominance cycles. Although self-soothing in the attachment domain—when one feels lonely or abandoned—is important, the ability to self-soothe is more important in the identity domain. A partner truly can provide a corrective emotional experience in the attachment domain by responding to the other's feelings of loneliness or abandonment and need for closeness with the partner. In the identity domain however, although the partner's responses can soothe the vulnerable fear and shame underlying dominance, they often are less able to convince the partner of his or her self-worth. In addition, in a struggle of identity-related differences, having the submissive partner respond to the dominant partner's needs for influence perpetuates the cycle, and change requires the dominant partner to let go of some of the need for control requires the submissive partner to assert. We thus elaborate an emotion-focused perspective on how to work with dominance and control in couples therapy.

Hierarchy and issues of influence, dominance, and control are significant issues in couples' functioning. Couples struggle over the definition of reality, and issues of power and control are often the most difficult interactions to deal with in therapy. When identity is threatened, people act and interact to protect their identities. People exert influence and control to regulate their affect (i.e., to not feel shame of diminishment and fear of loss of control and to feel the pride of recognition and the joy of efficacy). We thus propose a model that explicates the specific emotions involved in conflicts centered on influence, power, and control and how to work with them.

A primary aim of this book is to add to the EFT-C framework a clearer description of how to work with the emotions that underlie issues of identity and dominance in influence cycles and to provide an explication of how to promote self-soothing. We elaborate on the original EFT-C theory of disclosing underlying vulnerability by discussing how couples conflict occurs in the identity–dominance domain, as well as in the attachment domain, and we show how dominance struggles exert a strong influence on the attachment bond. We argue that in dominance conflicts it is each partner’s concern with how they are being viewed (their *identity*) by the other and whether their needs for agency and recognition are being met, rather than concerns with closeness and connection, that become primary. In these conflicts partners argue not about being close or needing distance but about being seen and validated or being diminished—they argue to maintain their identities. It is important to note we are not suggesting dominance is more central than attachment. Far from it! If the connection were not important, validation would not be as much of a concern, and feeling invalidated in a relationship directly impacts the affiliation domain showing the interdependence of these forces and how affiliation is always of concern in couples.

In identity struggles, the central concern is whose definition of “self” and “reality” is right, who has the right to define what’s right, and whose agentic needs are more important. Partners then fight to defend the view of reality important to their identity, and they defend themselves against the humiliation of being found wrong or lacking because it makes them feel unworthy, inferior, deficient, or incompetent. Partners also control, in efforts to stave off possible imagined catastrophes and feelings of loss of control. They also fight to influence decisions and courses of action in order to feel recognized, maintain status, confirm their identities, and operate by choice under their own volition rather than feeling coerced. When partners’ identities are threatened, they are most concerned about whether they are being valued and respected and whether their influence and right to choose is recognized, and they argue passionately to try to change their partners’ view of them or what they did in order to regulate their self-esteem, maintain their identities and their sense of agency. Alternatively, couples give up their identity needs and become fused to avoid conflict, but excitement and positive feelings are the victims.

Attraction and Liking

We also argue that a third motivational system, attraction and liking, is an important additional factor that needs to be considered in promoting bonding in couples therapy. The positive feelings that are generated when partners are interested in, like, and feel attracted to each other are important maintainers of intimate bonds. Feeling excited by, and enjoying, each other helps couples stay together. Feeling warmth and appreciation and cherishing

and valuing the other, as other, leads, in our view, to both pleasure in and compassion toward the partner. Without these positive feelings, the relationship may be functional but it will not flourish and therefore may not last. We thus emphasize this third motivation and the related set of feelings of attraction to, caring for, and liking of the other as a very important ingredient in what makes a relationship work.

A CONCEPTUAL HISTORY OF EMOTION-FOCUSED COUPLES THERAPY

EFT-C was developed initially on the major premise that disclosing underlying vulnerable, adaptive feelings related to unmet adult needs leads to strengthening the emotional bond in couples. EFT-C was an integration of experiential–humanistic and systemic approaches. Work with emotion was combined with work with interaction (Greenberg & Johnson, 1986a, 1986b, 1988). The treatment approach was an attempt to integrate a growing understanding of the role of emotion in therapy (Greenberg & Safran, 1984, 1986) with an understanding of the role of interaction and communication (Fisch, Weakland, & Segal, 1984; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). EFT-C took from systems theory the importance of a focus in therapy on interactional cycles that occur between members of a relational system. In addition, Minuchin’s methods of enactment to produce change in interaction (Minuchin & Fishman, 1981) plus Gestalt therapy techniques (Perls, 1969) of heightening experience in enactments were also incorporated in this integration.

Structural and strategic approaches emphasized changing hierarchies, boundaries, and interactional positions by working with people’s ways of viewing and doing. Systemic therapies mainly used reframing, prescriptions, and *restructuring to change both how people viewed things and how they interacted with each other*. There was not a strong focus on affect. Communication was of central concern, and the focus was on how messages and metamessages defined interactional positions. EFT-C, however, added that it is through affect and affective tone that intimate partners primarily convey their interactional positions and communicate their views of each other. It is therefore affective tone and what partners feel in response to it that primarily influences their viewing and doing.

The original unique contribution of EFT-C to a systemic view thus involved putting the self back in the system by highlighting the role emotion plays in maintaining negative cycles and the use of emotion to break negative interactional cycles to create new patterns of interaction (Greenberg & Johnson, 1986a, 1986b). This assimilation of systemic perspectives into an experiential approach resulted in an approach that emphasized the importance of focusing on present experience and present interaction. It added

both reframing and the promotion of enactments to the humanistic therapy tradition of using empathy and an emotion focus as a basic therapeutic style, and it adopted a growth-oriented and nonpathologizing view of human functioning. Conflict also was seen as being a function of unmet adult needs rather than infantile neurotic needs.

Notions of adult attachment had also just begun to be presented at this time (Weiss, 1982), and they offered a highly compatible framework for understanding marriage and marital conflict (Greenberg & Johnson, 1986a, 1988). Johnson (1986), in her seminal theoretical contribution, began to stress the importance of attachment in the emotional bond and contrasted this with a view of marriage as a social reinforcement bargain. The importance of accessibility and responsiveness of caretakers, so central in an attachment perspective, was readily integrated with humanistic views of the importance of acknowledging and revealing underlying vulnerable emotions in promoting intimacy. This integrated well with the early humanistic underpinning of EFT-C captured by L'Abate (1977) in the title of his article "Intimacy Is Sharing Hurt Feelings" and with Buber's (1958) existential view of the importance of revealing authentic feelings, which is captured in the quote at the beginning of this chapter.

Greenberg's initial motivation in developing EFT-C came from an interest in studying couples to see whether their conflict resolution paralleled the process of intrapsychic conflict resolution that he had found in his individual therapy research (Greenberg, 1979). In this research, using a task-analytic approach to the study of change processes (Greenberg, 1980, 1984, 1986, 2007; Greenberg, Heatherington, & Friedlander, 1996; Heatherington, Friedlander, & Greenberg, 2005), he found that clients resolved self-critical conflict by deepening the experience of the self and by softening the internal critic (Greenberg, 1979, 1984). He thus developed a research program at the University of British Columbia to see whether couples resolved conflict in a similar fashion. EFT as an overall approach had been guided by the fundamental idea that therapy could best be understood by being seen as a set of marker-guided, task-focused interventions embedded in an empathic relationship (Greenberg, 1983; Greenberg & Safran, 1986; L. Rice & Greenberg, 1984). This approach to therapy led to empirically based specification of different tasks, each focused on dealing with particular in-session problem states and the specification of interventions and processes of change most effective for those problem states. EFT-C, drawing on this basic approach, thus identified blamer softening and withdrawer reengagement as basic tasks in couples therapy (Greenberg, Ford, et al., 1993; Johnson & Greenberg, 1988; Plysiuk, 1985). This task-analytic approach to the study of how therapy works also has been recently applied to describe the intervention processes in EFT-C that help promote these couples processes (Bradley & Furrow, 2004).

To facilitate the study of the process of change in resolving couples conflict, Greenberg and Johnson (1986a, 1988) developed an EFT-C manual that assimilated the systemic perspectives into an experiential approach. The first evaluation of the effectiveness of an emotion-focused approach to couples treatment found it to be superior to a problem-solving approach (Johnson & Greenberg, 1985a, 1985b). A later study compared EFT-C with a systemic interactional therapy for which a manual was also devised (A. Goldman & Greenberg, 1992). In this second trial, EFT-C was compared with a systemic-interactional approach with more severely distressed couples, whom it was believed might be less accessible to emotion-focused intervention, because of their high emotional reactivity (A. Goldman & Greenberg, 1992). The EFT-C and the systemic treatments, however, were not found to be significantly different, but, it is important to note, EFT-C was found to have less relapse at 1-year follow-up. In a third evaluation, another dissertation (P. James, 1991) of one of Greenberg's students developed a communication-based psychoeducation training component, based on EFT-C principles, that emphasized disclosure and expression of underlying feelings, as well as empathic responding by the partners. The effects of a treatment that combined 4 sessions of psychoeducation with 8 sessions of therapy were compared with the effects of 12 sessions of EFT-C; no significant differences were found between the two treatments, but the psychoeducation training appeared to be promising (P. James, 1991).

As part of the overall initial research program to study conflict resolution in couples, an intensive task analysis of couples conflict resolution was completed in a master's thesis (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Plysiuk, 1985). From this intensive analysis, it emerged that accessing underlying self-experience and softening the critic, so important in intrapsychic conflict resolution, were also important in interactional conflict resolution. However, with two people in a live interaction, it was clear that there was more to couples conflict resolution than to intrapsychic conflict resolution. Research was therefore undertaken to try to study the unique elements of conflict resolution in couples, and it was found that good sessions were characterized by deeper experience and more affiliative responses and that these in-session processes predicted outcome (Greenberg, Ford, et al., 1993; Johnson & Greenberg, 1988). Posttherapy interviews done as part of another master's thesis (James, 1985) also revealed that the expression of new feelings by one partner led the other to change his or her perception of the partner (Greenberg, James, & Conry, 1988). These findings, in different ways, confirmed the importance of revealing underlying feelings in couples conflict resolution.

Further studies by Johnson and colleagues (Johnson, 2002; Johnson, Hunsley, Greenberg, & Schindler, 1999) subsequently found that EFT-C was an effective treatment for a variety of types of marital distress, including

trauma. Johnson further articulated the importance of revealing underlying attachment-oriented feelings to restructure bonds and developed and promoted this aspect of EFT-C as she applied it to different populations, and this has become a central, identifying feature of her approach to EFT-C (Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Whiffen, 2003). Working with sadness, loneliness, and the need for security in the attachment cycle thus has become a central organizing principle of treatment. Over the ensuing years, a tremendous amount of work has been done at the Ottawa Couple and Family Institute in refining the approach and applying it to different populations. Johnson went on to compassionately illuminate and develop an adult attachment theory of love as a base for EFT-C (Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Whiffen, 2003).

DEVELOPMENTS IN EMOTION-FOCUSED COUPLES THERAPY AT YORK UNIVERSITY

On Greenberg's return to York University, he began to focus his research and theoretical efforts on articulating the basic principles of an overarching emotion-focused approach to functioning. The importance in determining psychological distress of an individual's core maladaptive emotion schemes, based often on fear of abandonment and/or on shame at diminishment, and the associated unmet childhood needs, was established, and the central role of affect regulation in human functioning (Greenberg, Rice, & Elliott, 1993) was clarified. A dialectical-constructivist perspective on functioning, based on the interaction of emotion schemes and narrative, was developed (Greenberg & Pascual-Leone, 1995, 1997, 2001). As well, a dynamic-systems theory of self-functioning, in which people were seen as living in a constant process of making sense of their emotional experience, was developed (Greenberg & Watson, 2006; Whelton & Greenberg, 2004). This constructivist perspective on the self bridged realist and constructionist perspectives by recognizing that experience results from a synthesis of biology and culture and an integration of bodily felt emotion and more culturally derived language-based symbolization and narrative (Greenberg & Angus, 2004).

Research on individual therapy for depression at the York Psychotherapy Research Center also emphasized the importance of intrapsychic affect regulation (self-soothing), affect transformation (changing emotion with emotion), and the resolution of unfinished business (Greenberg, 2002a, 2002b). The significance of shame in the protection of personal identity, as well as fear in maintaining relational attachment (R. N. Goldman & Greenberg, 1997; Greenberg & Goldman, 2007), was observed to be of crucial importance in human distress. These elements began to be added more explicitly

to our couples work so that more recently, in addition to focusing on revealing underlying vulnerable feelings to promote relational soothing, we also have focused on transformation and regulation of the core emotion schemes of fear and shame, on which these vulnerabilities are based. Thus an approach emerged that not only prioritized the expression of underlying vulnerable feelings and healthy adult met needs, to promote bonding, but also focused on promoting each individual's capacity to self-soothe and to transform his or her core maladaptive emotion schemes based on childhood unmet needs. This resulted in an approach in which partners first are encouraged to identify and express their unexpressed adult attachment- and identity-related feelings and ask for what they need. The change process here is seen as one of turning vicious cycles into virtuous ones by way of partners' ability to be empathic and compassionately responsive when they see their partners as truly vulnerable and more in need than deserving blame. When partners can reveal and be responsive, the focus expands to include working with partners on self-regulation of their own affects and dealing with their own unfinished business from past wounds that makes them vulnerable to their partners' nonresponsiveness. Self-regulation and self-soothing is especially useful for the times when partners are unable to respond compassionately to each other. The importance of healing emotional injuries and unfinished business from people's past, so central in individual therapy, thus has begun to play a more clearly conceptualized and prominent role in our couples work, especially with longer term couples therapy.

Self-Regulation of Affect

When Greenberg and Johnson (1988) developed EFT-C, in the aftermath of the 1960s, a view of health as independence, autonomous functioning, and self-actualizing prevailed. EFT-C was offered as an antidote to an independence view. From this perspective, the acknowledgement and sharing of human weakness and vulnerability and support seeking were at the center of health and healthy relationships; an adult attachment perspective, which was just beginning to develop, provided an excellent framework for this view. Since then, however, it has become clearer that self-regulation of affect is a key process involved in motivation and that a therapy with a dual focus on self and other is important. We thus focus on both other-soothing and self-soothing of affect and on both the expression of adult unmet needs and the transformation of childhood unmet needs. We have a dual purpose in our couples work: (a) to have partners both reveal and become responsive to each other's underlying vulnerabilities based on healthy adult needs for closeness and recognition and (b) to enhance partners' expression and self-regulation of underlying painful affect, based on unmet childhood needs and unfinished business.

Agency and Communion

David Bakan, one of our mentors at York University, early on argued persuasively in *The Duality of Human Existence* (Bakan, 1966) for the fundamental role of both agency and communion in human experience. He stated,

I have adopted the terms “agency” and “communion” to characterize two fundamental modalities in the existence of living forms, agency for the existence of an organism as an individual, and communion for the participation of the individual in some larger organism of which the individual is a part. Agency manifests itself in self-protection, self-assertion, and self-expansion; communion manifests itself in the sense of being at one with other organisms. (p. 14)

We believe that a comprehensive view of human functioning needs to address both a fundamental tendency to connect to others and a fundamental tendency to agentially self-organize to maintain self-coherence and grow. We see the development of the self as a coherent, agentic, affective, and continuous system (Stern, 1985) that is independent of, but dialectically interactive with, the development of secure attachment. This is the crucial point. The self has a self-organizing tendency (Tronick, 2006). A crucial aspect of this tendency is to relate to others because this regulates affect and promotes survival. The two drives, to self-regulate and to relate to others, are highly intertwined but separate. This view leads us to see *empathic attunement* to the other's self-feelings and needs as well as *nurturing responsiveness* to others' needs for closeness (often viewed as synonymous) as two different forms of relational responses that both serve important, but different, functions in couples interaction. Empathic attunement, we argue, is important in validation of the other's identity, and nurturing and caregiving are important in promoting attachment security.

Therapist as Coach

In our approach, therapists are viewed as facilitative emotion coaches (Greenberg, 2002a) who work directly with emotions to help people improve relationships. They guide partners to become more aware of primary anger and sadness, fear and shame, and the attendant needs and to regulate, make sense of, and communicate these in nondemanding ways to promote security, validation, and warmth. In addition, coaches help partners reveal their most vulnerable feelings to each other to promote bonding and validation and help couples learn to soothe and transform emotions that are maladaptive. To do this, they need a good understanding of how to work differentially with the different emotions.

In this book we thus discuss how to regulate and transform the different *emotions related to attachment, identity, and liking in couples and, by extension, family systems*. We discuss the role of both negative emotions such as anger, sadness, fear, and shame and positive emotions such as joy, excitement, and love in coupling. We also demonstrate how work with these emotions forms the foundation of facilitating change in couples and by extension in all types of interacting emotional systems where people may be in conflict. This work is thus seen as informative for work with families, organizations, and groups.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Part I of this volume lays out the theoretical background for our approach to EFT-C. In the first chapter of Part I, chapter 2, we explore the role of emotion in the interactional life of couples. The evolution of emotion and how emotions are generated are explored. We distinguish the biological, social, and cultural elements of emotion and also identify the different types of dominance- versus attachment-related emotions that lead to negative interaction cycles. In chapter 3, a case is made that affect regulation is a primary motive in marriage and conversely that marital breakdown is a breakdown in affect regulation. We then call for a balance between self- and other-soothing as equally important pieces in the healing process with couples.

In chapter 4, we identify and discuss the three proposed relational motives, or core drives: the need for attachment, identity recognition, and attraction. We explore how these systems function. In particular, we trace the evolution of the identity system and the importance of the mutual regulation of identity in relationships. We also discuss the development of the attachment system as well as the limitations of the attachment system alone in explaining relational motivation. In chapter 5, we explore how interaction combines with emotional, motivational, and cognitive processes to produce couples conflict. Interactions, particularly negative escalatory ones, are conceptualized as mutual threats to attachment and identity. Relationships are seen as regular, repeating cycles of interaction produced and maintained by affect regulation and dysregulation.

In chapter 6, we explore the role that culture plays in determining emotional awareness and expression in couples. We review research that points to cross-cultural examples of identity being an important relational motive in many cultures. We point to research that suggests that gender may to some extent determine emotional expression in relationships and discuss whether the same principles from heterosexual relationships may be applied to same-sex relationships.

Part II lays out our intervention framework. In chapter 7, we present an expanded 5-stage, 14-step framework that builds on the original 9-step model laid out by Greenberg and Johnson (1988). More steps have been added that focus on self-process, and guidelines are provided for how to work with the self at various stages in the model. This chapter serves as a manual for treatment. In chapter 8, we identify therapeutic tasks related to negative interactional cycles that emerge from the basic dimensions of interaction—affiliation and influence. We discuss differences between pursue–distance cycles and dominance–submission cycles. We discuss the structure and dimensions of the cycles and how to work with them. We provide guidelines for how to both work with negative interactional cycles and engender positive cycles. In chapter 9, on intrapsychic therapeutic tasks, we delineate some of the specific tasks that can be transported from individual therapy to work with couples process. We point out how to recognize markers for tasks and delineate the steps involved in seeing tasks through to resolution.

In Part III, we change our focus again to explore work with specific emotions in EFT-C. Chapters 10 through 14 focus on, respectively, working with anger, sadness, fear, shame, and positive emotions that emerge regularly in EFT-C. In each chapter, we discuss how the particular emotion functions in the context of interactional positions within affiliation and influence cycles. Many examples are given that explicate how EFT-C approaches the particular emotion in the different negative interaction cycles. Illustrations are provided that guide the reader in how to identify, increase awareness of, regulate, transform, and express more emotions in relationships.

CONCLUSION

In this book, we thus discuss how to work with affect in couples, with both the regulation and the communication of emotions. We differentiate among three central groups of emotions: those primarily related to connection and attachment, those primarily related to identity and self-esteem, and those related to liking and warmth. It is problems with emotions related to these sets of needs that are most important in marital difficulty. Emotions, we suggest, are more fundamental, more concrete, and more differentiated than motivation, and they allow us as therapists to work with them in a more direct manner. Emotions present themselves more experientially than motives and are thus more accessible and provide us with a map of how to work with couples. We thus focus on how to work with the different sets of felt emotions, especially fear, shame, contempt, anger, and sadness, related to perceived threats to attachment and identity, as well as on the role of positive emotions, such as joy and excitement, related to attraction.

In our view, the emotional bond between partners is constituted by a host of emotions such as sadness at loss, loneliness, fear of abandonment, fear

of rejection, fear of annihilation, shame at diminishment, and anger at violation, as well as joy and pleasure in contact and interest and excitement in one's partner's unique qualities. We argue here that it is helpful to understand and work differentially with different emotions. Finally, in line with developments in affective neuroscience, we view intimate relating as a primary means of affect regulation in couples and view other-soothing and self-soothing as important processes in couples therapy.