

Box 4.5 Areas of Assessment and Sample Questions

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Assessment is more of a dialogue than a series of questions and answers. The questions below are sample questions to open a conversation. This is not an exhaustive list and are not intended to be used as a Q & A series. They are openers to expand upon with specificity and stories. EFT therapists intersperse questions with empathic attunement and curiosity, making empathic reflections, validations and evocative responses to invite expansion. EFT therapists attempt to be mindful of attuning to the 4 P's of EFT (**P**resent moment; **P**rocess within the content; **P**rimarily, core emotion; and **P**atterns of interacting) while listening and responding to clients, in an *accessible, responsive, emotionally engaged* manner.

The manner of clients' responses to the therapist's questions is considered as important as the answers themselves. Do they become extremely uncomfortable or nonchalant? Do they seem shocked or disorientated when the therapist asks, for example, "Who was there to comfort you as a child when you were afraid?" An EFT therapist takes time to track and elicit clients' present moment experience. For example, "How are you doing as we discuss this just now? I noticed your voice got very quiet when... Your face brightened up when.... You flicked your hand as you said, 'Not such a big deal'." Reflecting emotional handles – images, bodily responses, voice tone, and so on – is also helpful to deepen clients' exploration.

With all clients, a therapist watches and listens intently for signs of engagement and depth of emotional experiencing (see Brubacher & Wiebe, 2019; Klein et al., 1969). In EFCT, the therapist attunes for signs of connection and disconnection in response to partners' comments. A therapist might use Move 1 to track and heighten a partner's warm or supportive response or pause to explicitly check how one partner is being impacted by their partner's response. Therapists segue between partners with evocative responses as in Move 4, processing:

- "I'm wondering what is coming up for you as you hear your partner say _____."
- "You looked surprised as your partner said _____. What is happening for you?"
- There could be bullets to catch as well: "I see you rolled your eyes as your partner described _____. Perhaps it is difficult for you to hear this?"
- At times of a particularly poignant response or a response that appears striking to a partner, a therapist may pause to shape an encounter for the client to share directly with their partner.
- Most of the following assessment inquiries are relevant for both EFCT and EFCT. Those specific to EFCT are identified.

i. Expectations for Therapy

In both EFCT and EFIT, hopes and goals for therapy, can be elicited by asking:

- Can you please tell me what prompted you to seek therapy at this time?"
- Can describe the changes you are hoping to create through our time together."
- In EFCT, the therapist will frequently acknowledge that partners' answers may be very different from each other and validate this as part of the exploration they are going to do together.

ii. Identities

- “I am interested in hearing about the identities and things that make you uniquely you, that you want me to know” (racially, ethnically, socially, culturally etc.).
- “Have you had experiences of being excluded, dismissed, ignored, or stigmatized?”
- “Have you had /do you continue to have experiences that make you feel unsafe because of socio-cultural factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, religion or other?” See Guillory (2022) for more assessment questions on the interplay between attachment and race/culture.

iii. Sources of Comfort

- “Do you currently have someone with whom you can share personal problems or go to for comfort? If yes, who is it? Can you describe how you reach for comfort or support and how they respond?”
- “Have you lost key persons to whom you would go to for comfort or support?”
- “For comfort, do you/did you ever turn to alcohol, drugs, sex, pornography, gambling, food, shopping or other material things _____?” (describe).

iv. Chemical Use:

- “Do you use recreational drugs?”
- “How frequently do you use alcohol?”
- “Have you ever been criticized for your drinking or drug use?”
- “Have you ever felt guilty about your alcohol or drug use?”
- “Have you ever tried to cut down on your use of alcohol or drugs?”
- “How do drugs and/or alcohol affect you?”

v. Current Emotional Distress Patterns

- “Is there anything about your sleeping, eating or exercise patterns that concern you or you want me to know about?”

vi. Leisure:

- “Can you describe how you spend your leisure time or things you do for fun?”

vii. Childhood Family:

- “Can you choose three adjectives to describe your caregiver or mother or mother figure, from your earliest memories? What sort of relationship did you have? How is it to talk about this?”
- “Can you choose three adjectives to describe your father or father figure or second careiver, from your earliest memories? What sort of relationship did you have with them?”
- “Can you recall whom you went to as a child when you were afraid or in need of comfort? Tell me about a specific time.”
- “Were your parents openly affectionate? Did they fight? Did they resolve arguments and get close again? How did or still does that impact you to-day?”

- “Tell me about other significant relationships that have been influential in your experience growing up.” (See also Furrow et al., 2022, Appendix B on attachment history.)

viii. Religion/Spirituality:

- “Do you have a religious or spiritual preference?”
- “Are there any specific aspects about your ethnic or religious values and/or experience that you feel would be helpful for me to know?”

ix. Sexuality:

- “Are you wanting to discuss your sexual relationship(s)?”
- “How satisfied are you with your sexual relationship? Are there ways this has changed over time?”
- If client is in a relationship:
 - “How satisfied do you perceive your partner to be regarding your sexual relationship? What tells you that?”
 - “Are you comfortable discussing your sexual preferences with your partner?”
- “What would you like me to know about your sexual orientation?”
- “If you identify as LGBTQIA+, can you tell me about where you experience support, and acceptance and/or where you experience threats?”
- “Would you like to tell me about your coming-out experience?”

See Johnson & Moran’s EFT Sexuality Assessment Questionnaires (Furrow et al., 2022).

x. Abuse / Violence

- Inquire whether there are times an argument escalates to physical pushing, shoving, slapping, hitting or throwing things. If so, inquire when this last this occurred.
- Inquire whether (and how) arguments may be different if substances are involved.
- Invite clients to share if they have had experiences of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and/or sexual abuse.
- Invite clients to share any other information they want you to know at this time that may help you to understand them.

xi. Current Relationship

- There are many questions an EFT therapist can use in early EFCT sessions to evoke clients’ experiences of their current relationship.
- Some of these questions may also be useful in EFIT if client has a significant relationship(s).
- In EFCT, a therapist will invite each partner to describe how they experience their relationship at the present time and their hopes for change. They will invite disclosure on the level of commitment to the relationship and the level of distress in the relationship. This can be discussed on a scale of 1 - 5 and checked again in individual sessions.
- Questions to evoke each partner’s description of the pattern between them:

- “How do you see things play out between you when things go well?”
- “How do things go between you when you have a disagreement or when you are experiencing stress?”
- The classic EFT questions, to help a couple step back to share their view of their relationship moves are, “If I were a fly on the wall – what would I see? If we watched a video, what would we see?”
- “Who is likely to begin a conversation? Who is likely to leave a conversation first? Who is the one to invite repair after you have a falling out?”
- “Who makes the decisions in the relationship?”
- “How does it go between you if you need support or comfort from the other?”
- In EFCT, there will be various moments after reflecting and validating, that an EFT therapist will segue to the partner to explore their perspective. For example, “How does this resonate for you? Your perspective may be very different – What comes up for you as you hear your partner share?”

xii. Relationship History

- Clients will be invited to reflect on their key relationships over time.
- In EFCT, partners are asked how their relationship may have morphed over time.
- Also in EFCT, it is important to invite partners to reflect on their specific relationship history and to identify potential experiences of attachment injuries. For example, “Are there any pivotal events that changed everything between you?”

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