



International Centre for Excellence in EFT

THERAPIST TOOLBOX



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How is it That S/he Makes You Feel....?

"He makes me so angry every time he goes to that computer!" This is a golden opportunity for the EFT therapist to open the EFT toolbox for unpacking emotion!

Clearly Kyle's going to the computer signals an attachment threat to Jenn – a trigger of attachment panic, which then sets the negative cycle in motion. An EFT therapist can step close to this experience of "being made to feel" with sincere curiosity and an empathic desire to "fully get" how these secondary emotions are being triggered, knowing with full confidence that hidden in this reactive anger are all the elements of the cycle, including the unacknowledged primary attachment fears and needs which, when shared congruently and vulnerably, have the power to transform insecure bonds.

"Help me understand, Jenn. What does it say to you, when Kyle goes to the computer?" She is likely to respond with the attachment meaning, such as, "That he doesn't care or doesn't want to be with me." Or she may respond, anticipating their typical dance and her attachment fear, e.g., "It means he's gone for the night. He won't talk to me and I'll be all alone again!"

The process of unpacking Jenn's emotion has begun! "Ah," responds the therapist – first reflecting ever so slowly to validate her experience and track the emotional process, "You see him go to the computer (trigger) and your heart sinks. And you say to yourself, 'See there he goes. He doesn't care and I'm going to be all alone.'" (cognitive appraisal). Hints of primary attachment fear of loss are also emerging. "You get very angry about being alone without Kyle – makes sense when you miss him so!" (validating secondary emotion in the attachment context). The therapist can repeat this process several times, deepening awareness and validating links between parts of the emotion process.

Once Jenn feels deeply understood at that level, the therapist can evoke and make explicit and vivid the primary loneliness and fears of loss which Jenn previously skipped by so quickly. "You get angry when you say to yourself, 'See there it is – I'll be alone all evening again?'" "Yes," says Jenn, a little more slowly and sadly, "I am so very alone in this relationship!" Primary emotion is emerging.

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