

Personal Journaling with the EFT Tango in Stage 1 Stabilization

- 1) **Move 1 - Reflect Present Process:** Begin with journaling about a negative cycle in your life with someone important to you.
 - a. Can you identify a vulnerable, core emotion that you tend to automatically bypass and instead become reactive in order to protect yourself? The most vulnerable emotions are likely to be some form of attachment danger such as fear of abandonment, rejection or annihilation.
 - b. If you are unaware of bypassing a vulnerable emotion, (because we do not like to dwell on them) simply choose to describe a familiar negative pattern – and jot down your reactive self-protective moves. For example, you may be inclined to ignore self and other, or to complain loudly about others, or to berate yourself.
- 2) **Move 2 - Assemble and Deepen Emotion:** Now describe the cascade of reactive responses that rapidly replace this moment of vulnerability (bodily arousal, meanings, reactive affect, and action impulses). Here are some evocative questions to guide your journaling:
 - a. “Can you identify a danger cue or interpersonal trigger that you perceive as threatening (what you see or hear that begins this rapid cascade of unfolding elements of emotion)?
 - b. What bodily sensations do you experience? What meaning do you make of this trigger and what is your automatic impulse to action?”
 - c. Write out an empathic reflection to your answers to each evocative question above. Responding with empathy to yourself can deepen your emotional experience and enhance your self-reflective capacity to linger in emotional depth.
 - d. Identify one emotion that comes up when you say, “When I see/hear (the interpersonal trigger) _____, I immediately (do / feeling like doing) (your action impulse)_____.” Jot down how you feel about having formulated this. Linger for a few moments with the experience of that core, vulnerable emotion. You are not trying to create change. You are simply disclosing *what is* and how you are participating in your reality.
- 3) **Move 3 - Shape an Encounter:** Close your eyes and imagine a relevant other with whom to share this distilled message. This other could be an attachment-figure or it could be a part of you (a younger or vulnerable image of self). See the other in your imagination - where they are, what they look like - and write out the most important part of this coherent message, as if you were disclosing it to this relevant other.
- 4) **Move 4 - Process the Impact of the Encounter:** Write down your experience of this imagined encounter. Describe how it was for you and how you imagine the other to be responding to this encounter. In your journaling, you may choose to write several exchanges back and forth between.
- 5) **Move 5 - Celebrate and Integrate:** Complete your journal entry by summarizing and celebrating the courage it took to have these imagined dialogues and how it is impacting you in this moment.

Personal Journaling with the EFT Tango in Stage 2 Restructuring

Move 1: Reflect Present Process

Recall a pattern you accessed in the previous self-reflection exercise. If you were unable to access a core fear, or cannot access it in this moment, scan your present moment experience for something of importance to explore. Scan your body, your thoughts, and your impulses to action. Choose a difficult internal or interpersonal interaction, a bodily felt sense, a troubling perception, a pressing action impulse, or your core fear if it is within your awareness. Pay attention and prepare to linger with this and to explore it. Jot down the key elements in your awareness, being sure to include the cue and your action tendency. What is it about that trigger (cue) that suggests, danger, “Be on the alert!”?

Move 2: Assemble and Deepen Emotion

Reread what you have just written about this common cascade of personal emotion and describe your physiological experience as you review it. Linger in that bodily felt sense. Attune to the links between the cue, your action impulse, and the meanings you make of it. The process of linking these elements of emotion may be like opening doorways into experiencing your core attachment fear, underlying this process.

Write out a validation for the links of your own emotional experience (trigger/perception of danger, bodily response, meaning made, action tendency) and do your best to name the core, underlying fear. Linger with this core emotion, even if it is best described as *numbness* or *nothingness*. Honor the feeling – welcome it with kindness and curiosity.

Describe in your journaling, an *emotional handle* — a poignant image, phrase or bodily sensation that emerges. Linger with the emotional handle. Notice, if you can, what it is like to linger in core emotion without pushing it down or ramping it up. What is happening for you as you stay with that experience? How do you give yourself permission to linger there? Pay attention to any message, or meanings, or shifts you experience from within that emotion as you write more about your experience.

It is important to keep at a *working distance* from this emotion, so that you do not lose your capacity to reflect and engage with the emotion. If you become flooded or overwhelmed, step back, name what is happening, and connect with a safe other or *imagined safe other* for support. Seek the support you need in order to return to the core emotion from a place of safety and emotional balance.

Describe any messages or shifts that are emerging. Listen for embedded needs, messages/new views of self or other, and longings or impulses to action that may emerge. Be simple: Anger calls for limits or to be heard; fear calls for protection; sadness calls for comfort; shame calls for disappearing.

Move 3: Shape an Engaged Encounter

a) *Choose the relevant other:* Linger again in your bodily felt sense of your core attachment fear or vulnerability, fully tasting, sensing, and experiencing it. Write the key distilled message that captures the core of this underlying emotion or attachment fear that you identified in your earlier journaling. Sharpen and heighten the message.

If you are not already imagining a relevant other with whom to share this message, pause to consider who comes to mind as a relevant other with whom you need to disclose that vulnerability or fear? Is the core emotion an attachment fear? Perhaps it is an as-yet-unexpressed core anger and your message is an assertive core anger message. Take time to linger and find the words.

Ask yourself, with whom is this emotion most alive? or most blocked? or which attachment figure may be the best resource in this moment?

You might ask yourself, “Whom do I need to hear this message – to truly hear me and be impacted by my truth?” Or, “Who is a trustworthy attachment figure I can call on to support me in this difficult moment?”

You may discover it is a part of yourself you wish to address – a younger, more vulnerable part, or a compassionate adult part, or an estranged, unresponsive or critical part.

- b) *Anticipate making contact with this relevant other or part of self.* Begin describing in your journal, this relevant other, or this distinct part of self. Describe their physical features and describe what happens inside of you as you picture them about to receive this message from you.
- c) *Express a clear message.* Take the risk of stepping forward, in your imagination to express your key message to the other. Write in your journal, as you imagine yourself expressing it out loud to the relevant other or to a part of yourself.

Move 4: Process the Experience.

Pause and absorb how it feels to have put your clear request out to the other person (e.g. intense relief, deep comfort, dissipation of fear or increased intensity of fear). Take in the enormity of the risk you have taken to make this disclosure.

Now begin to write again and this time write down how you imagine the other is responding to you. Write your imagined response as if you were writing from the other person/from the other part of yourself.

Pay attention to your inner experience as imagine receiving this response. Feel free to choose to write several exchanges back and forth between *the two of you*, responding and receiving. (Several Moves 3 and 4, in dialogue).

Option: *Make a reach from engaged emotion to make a request of the other.* (Another Move 3). Check inside whether there is a yet-unexpressed need, embedded in that bodily felt vulnerable emotion – something you can risk requesting of the other. If the exchange was between a vulnerable part of self and a stronger, more stable part of self, the request may be from the vulnerable part to the stronger part. Write until your vulnerable need can be stated as a clear request. This is to be an actual request for something your core fear tells you that you need from the other to meet your attachment longing or need. Write out a specific “ask.” Take the risk to write this request as if you were actually writing to this person or part of self that you are picturing as an actual person, and whose presence you can imagine. Ask for the core longing and need embedded in your fear. For example, “Can you reassure me I am valuable in your eyes? Can you assure me there is something specific about me that you like, that you treasure?” Write your imagined response from the other, as well, as if you were writing back from that imagined other or part of self. Describe how it is to receive this response to your request.

Move 5: Summarize, Integrate, and Celebrate the Experience

Give yourself time to write freely now to summarize what you have just done and to integrate and celebrate the corrective emotional experience you have created.

Note of assurance: If you have difficulty sending clear messages to an *imagined other* or could not imagine *the other* responding favorably, simply observe and make a gentle note about what got in the way. As in therapy, the goal in personal reflection exercises, is to stay with the process, validate it, *knowing that in an attachment frame everything makes sense*, and blocked emotions always need to be respected, acknowledged, and further expanded and processed.

Common blocks that people identify include, having difficulty keeping focused, getting flooded because the risk seems too great, flipping into reactive anger and blaming and turning away from the one they were approaching, wanting to run from an experience that feels too risky or too hard to trust.