

## Principles of Emotional change

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### Introduction

- Psycho-dynamic, systemic and cognitive traditions have focused more heavily on cognition and on intellectual insight and on behaviour and interaction
- Relatively little emphasis on the experience of emotion
- Easier to focus on cognitions and behaviour as they are more easily accessible in consciousness
- An emotion-focused therapy attempts to shift the cognitive/affective balance by emphasizing the crucial role of the experience of adaptive emotion in therapeutic change

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### Working with Emotion

- Theory of emotion and the self
- System for assessing emotion
- Principles of emotional change

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Why Focus on Emotion?

- Affect is information
- Affect is primary motivator of behavior
- Emotion is our primary signaling system
- Emotion is the soil in which attachment and identity grow
- Emotions often feared and avoided
- Emotional reactions learned through experience
- Emotional experience and reactions can be changed

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Nature of Emotion

- Emotions have neurological primacy
- Emotions often outside of awareness
- Emotions precede language based knowing
- With development emotion is fused with cognition
- The brain speaks in two languages symbolic/conceptual and sensory/bodily felt
- The self speaks in a language of emotion

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Emotion in Marriage and Marital Therapy.

- Intimate relationships are at the core of our emotional lives.
- No other context is so infused with, and responsive to, the ebb and flow of human emotion.
- The majority of communication is emotional communication involving minute signals about closeness/ distance and dominance/submission
- Affect is the soil in which attachment grows

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Functions of Emotions

- Emotions tell us when something is wrong or that our ***needs are not being met.***
- Emotions is a primary meaning system and constantly give us ***information*** about the state of our intimate bonds.
- Emotion is a ***primary signaling*** system.
- Emotions provide us with action tendencies
- Emotions thus ***identify problems*** for us to solve and rapidly communicate that there are problems.

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Emotion, Motivation and Affect Regulation

- Affect regulation is a primary human motivation
- We seek emotions because of how they make us feel
- We seek to feel calm, joy, pleasure, pride, excitement and interest and equally we seek to not feel pain and shame and fear.
- Seeking emotion thus is an important motivating force and affect regulation is a major human motive
- We seek relationships because they give us certain feelings.**

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Marriage and Affect Regulation

- A crucial role of intimate relationships and marriage in modern society is thus **affect regulation.**
- Our loving partners help us feel calm, secure valued and excited whereas in troubled relationships we feel anxious, insecure and invalidated and bored.
- Taking care of others also regulates one's own as well as others' feelings, while liking and being liked elevates one's vitality and purpose
- Relationships thus are primary affect regulators.

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Affect Regulation

The most important emotions regulated in relationships are:

- Fear/ Anxiety - regulated by **attachment** closeness and security
- Shame/Pride - regulated by validation of **identity** (agency, assertion, prediction/control, validation)
- Interest/Joy/Love - regulated by **attraction to and liking** of the other (affection, cherish, enjoy).

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Affect Enhances Motivation

- We flee from danger because we feel afraid.
- We bond because we feel comforted or attracted.
- Emotions which provide action tendencies thus are motivation enhancing.
- They amplify our goal oriented behavior.
- Without fear we would not flee danger, without excitement we would not be driven to mate sexually, without compassion we would not take care of others.

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Motivation is Based on Emotion

- Without anxiety and calm there could be no attachment, without fear there would be no harm avoidance, without interest there would be no involvement, without anger no assertion of boundaries, without pride and shame there would be no identity and without joy no pleasure in connection.
- Without emotions we would not seek out the other and we would not bond nor feel validated.
- Needs for attachment, identity and affection thus are most fundamentally based on and constituted by affective processes.

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Emotions are the Building Blocks

- We attach to feel secure, we seek recognition/ validation from others to feel worthy, and we make ourselves attractive to others to be liked.
- Coupling is a primary form of affect regulation.
- Marriage and interpersonal connection is sought after because it makes us feel secure, valued, joyful and excited

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The Core Emotions in Marriage

**We seek to feel :**

- Soothed and calm** as an antidote to fear
- Warm & close** as an antidote to sadness of loss
- Pride and joy** in being recognized and validated as an antidote to shame
- Interest, joy, excitement and love** involved in affection.

**We react to need/goal frustration with:**

- Sadness** that we have lost or miss emotions we feel with the other
- Anger** because our partners won't/don't give us the above emotions

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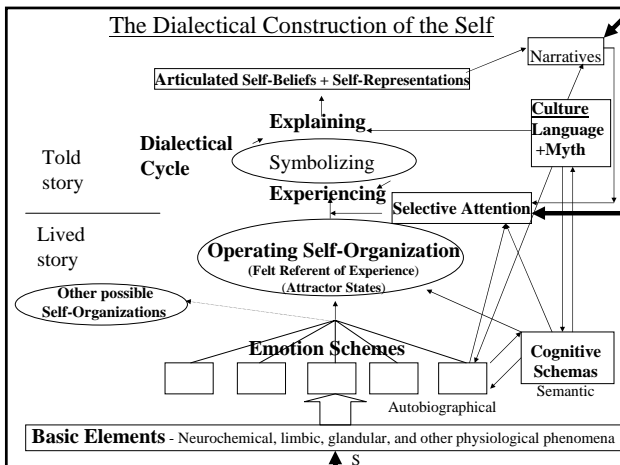
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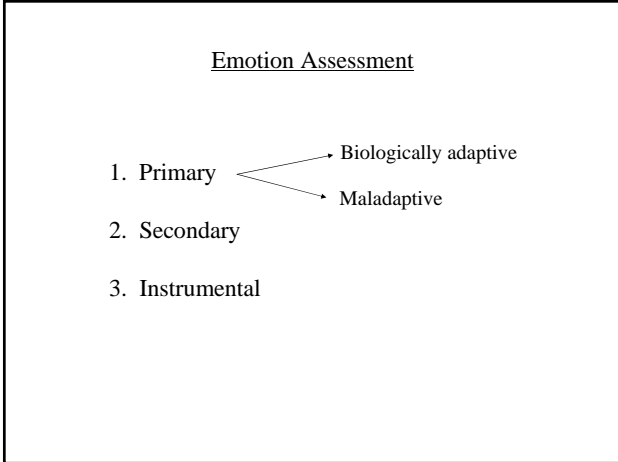
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**SIX MAJOR EMOTIONAL CHANGE PROCESSES**

**A) Accessing Emotion**

**1. Increase Emotional Awareness & Symbolization in the Context of Salient Personal Stories.**  
Symbolizing emotional experience in awareness in order to make sense of one's experience. What am I feeling?

**2. Express Emotion.**  
Expressing changes the self and changes interactions both by revealing and mobilizing self

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Facial Expression of Emotion

- Facial expression of emotion influences interpersonal *communication*.
- We are impacted by the ways *others face us*
- Seeing the face of each other *evokes* experience.
- The face is an *ambiguous* text open to interpretation

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### Global distress



- Aversive & Suffering state  
– pain, suffering, despair.

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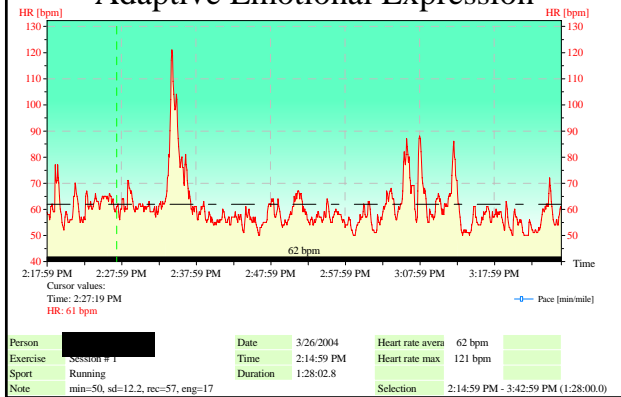
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### Adaptive Emotional Expression




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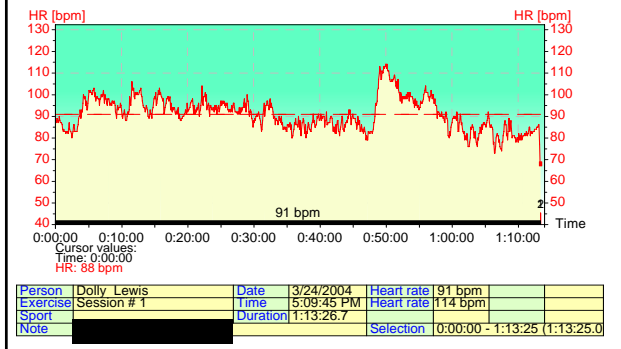
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### Emotional Interruption




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**B) Modulating & Understanding**

**3. Enhance Emotion Regulation**

Explicit regulation. Use deliberate cerebral capacities to contain and regulate maladaptive amygdala reactions (especially fear, rage and shame). Implicit self soothing. Allowing, tolerating, accepting and soothing.

**4. Reflect on Emotion.**

**Making sense of experience.** Dis-embedding. Creation of new meaning. Insight. Seeing patterns, understanding in a new way. New narrative construction

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**C) Transforming Emotion**

**5) Change Emotion with Emotion.** An alternate self-organization, set of emotion schematic memories, or “voices” in the personality based on primary emotions are accessed by (a) attentional re-allocation or (b) focus on a new need/goal.(c) changing interactions The maladaptive emotional response is synthesized with, or transformed by, more adaptive emotional response.

**6. Change Emotion with New Experience.**

New lived experience with another provides a corrective emotional experience. Disconfirms pathogenic beliefs. Provides interpersonal soothing. New success experience changes emotion.

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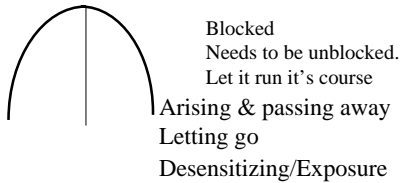
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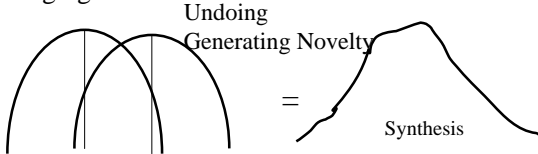
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**Changing Emotion with Emotion**

**1. Completion/Detachment/Habituation/ Extinction**



**2. Changing Emotion with Emotion**



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Accessing Alternate Emotions

0. The empathic relationship
1. Shift attention to present subdominant emotion
2. Access adaptive need/goal and associated emotion
3. Expressive enactment of alternate emotion
4. Imagery to evoke emotion
5. Evoke emotion memory of alternate emotion
6. Mood induction via music
7. Humour
8. Cognitive creation of new meaning
9. Therapist expresses emotion for client
10. Relationship evokes new emotion

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The Core Motivations in Marriage

- Attachment - connection/ security
- Identity Validation - self – esteem and agency
- Affection – warmth, liking

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**Changing Emotion with Interactional Experience**

Cycles

- Affiliation
- Dominance

Needs

- Attachment security
- Identity validation

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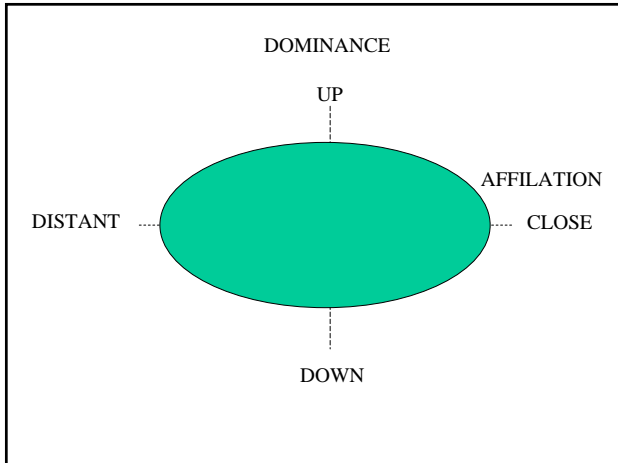
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**Cycles**

- Pursue/Distance  
 Attack- defend  
 Demand - withdraw  
 Blame- excuse  
 Cling - push away
- Dominant/ Submissive  
 Lead - follow  
 Up - Down  
**Define - Defer**  
 Overfunction- Underfunction

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The Emotions in Attachment Cycles

Type of Emotion	Primary	Secondary
Pursuer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of abandonment</li> <li>• Sadness at loss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Contempt</li> </ul>
Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closeness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulate</li> </ul>
Withdrawer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety at intrusion</li> <li>• Inadequacy/Fear of rejection</li> <li>• Resentment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coldness</li> <li>• Depression</li> </ul>
Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close/Safe/</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulate</li> </ul>

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Emotion Sequence 1

- Threats to attachment- security, produce fear and sadness at aloneness and loss followed by anger and protest.
- The primary emotion in response to threats to security is fear but the expressed emotion is anger.
- This hurt - anger sequence is universal.

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Conflict Resolution for Attachment problems

- Help partners contact their underlying vulnerable **attachment-related** anxiety and sadness.
- These more vulnerable feelings then replace the anger and contempt and this leads to **revealing** rather than blaming.
- This will produce a change in how the other experiences and **views** them.
- This in turn leads to more **caring** responses, rather than withdrawal or counter-attacking.

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The Emotions in Identity Cycles

Type	Primary	Secondary
Dominant Controller	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Shame</li> <li>• Fear of loss of control</li> <li>•Anger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Contempt</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>•Rational</li> </ul>
Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Valid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Regulate</li> </ul>
Submitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Shame</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>•Anger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Agreeing</li> <li>• Caring</li> <li>•Placating</li> </ul>
Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assert/Valid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Regulate</li> </ul>

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Emotion Sequence 2

- Threats to identity- self-esteem, produce shame at diminishment and fear at loss of control, followed by contempt anger& control.
- The primary emotion in response to threats to identity and position is shame and feeling powerless, but the expressed emotion is contempt/anger, rage or becoming super-rational/logical
- This shame/powerlessness- anger/rage sequence is universal. Can lead to violence in couples.

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Definition of Reality

- The dominant person comes to define reality, controls, overfunctions, make all the decision as away of trying to regulate his/her affect.
- The submissive partner defers feels insecure, doesn't do much, underfunctions, and follows.
- If challenged or even questioned, the dominant one becomes highly protective of his or her position.  
**Being right** is what matters
- The submissive partner, after years of following,is scared to make decisions and mistakes or produce conflict. Ends up feeling or being seen as invisible.

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Coercion: Trying to Change a Partner.

- Conflict is **not** a problem of **communication or connection** but often one of **coercion**
- After a time partners begin to realize they have communicated and their partner **does understand.**
- They realize partner is simply **unable** or unwilling to respond in the right way at the right time.
- People then begin to try to **change** their partners.
- Partners begin to **coerce/resist** in service of these efforts.

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Conflict Resolution in Dominance Struggles

- The dominant partner needs to find way of feeling *adequate* without having to be right or in control.
- The submissive partner needs to be able to *assert* and have confidence in her or his own abilities.
- Expressing underlying fear, shame or hurt or need to be liked will have a very *different impact* on partner than will expressing destructive rage.
- Goal is to be *effective*/competent.
- Buber “Real communion --- is the opposite of compulsion (power).”

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Dealing with the Dominant Partner

- Access underlying vulnerability in dominant  
Shame at loss of position  
Fear of loss of control
- Confront in terms of the effect “you’ll lose her/him”  
Is this having the effect you want?  
Do you want to be right or happy?  
Demonstrate confrontation & boundary setting
- Restructure- support submissive partner to stand up for self
- Reveal the submissive partner’s fear to dominant partner

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