

SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF TRAINING IN EMOTIONALLY
FOCUSED COUPLE THERAPY: PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL ASPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the immediate and long-term personal and professional effects of a 4-day externship training in Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT). EFT externship training uses lecture, discussion, video vignettes, live demonstrations, and role-plays to convey an attachment-based approach to working with couples. The two samples included clinicians ($N = 76$) who completed surveys immediately before and after training and a subset of these clinicians ($N = 29$) who completed measures an average of 8 months later. Results indicate that following training, participants *increased in their EFT knowledge and competence (using a modified form of the EFT Therapist Fidelity Scale)*, became *more open to their feelings, were more self-compassionate, were less likely to use avoidant attachment behaviors, and improved their own personal relationships*.

Information about the Modified EFT Fidelity Scale

The *EFT Knowledge and Competency Scale*¹ (EFT-KACS; Levenson & Svatovic, 2009) is a 12-item measure constructed for this study based on the EFT-Therapist Fidelity Scale (EFT-TFS; Denton et al., 2009)—a checklist that raters watching therapy sessions can use to assess therapist fidelity (adherence and competency) to the EFT model. Denton and colleagues derived their scale by doing a content analysis of EFT skills and submitting these items to raters ($N = 97$) trained in EFT. Raters felt that all items were “essential, important and necessary” (Denton et al., 2009, p. 229) to doing EFT. Levenson and Svatovic (2009) reformatted this rater version for use as a self-report instrument. Each item on the EFT-KACS represents a major EFT skill (e.g., continually reframing the problem in terms of the cycle) from the EFT-TFS and is accompanied by two 7-point Likert scales—one asking about perceived knowledge of the skill and the other for perceived competence in executing that skill, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (quite a bit). Participants in the EFT trainings responded to the EFT-KACS at all three time periods (baseline, post-test, and follow-up).

Because the EFT-KACS is a new measure, a principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation on the items for the entire baseline sample ($N = 81$) was conducted (Montagno, 2009). Items loading at .40 or above in the rotated factor matrix were considered to have loaded on a factor. It was predicted that two separate factors would emerge. This was confirmed, with 10 of the 12 knowledge items loading on one factor, and 10 of the 12 competence items loading on a second factor. In addition, two knowledge items and the two parallel competency items loaded on a third factor. Specifically these items asked about “creating safety in the session and

maintaining a positive alliance,” and “validating one partner’s emotions without invalidating the other partner’s emotions.” We called this third factor Alliance. Together the three factors accounted for 72% of the variance. A factor analysis of post-test EFT-KACS items yielded similar factors, which accounted for 73% of the variance. Three scales (Knowledge, Competence, and Alliance) were constructed based on the three factors; each scale has high internal consistency (Cronbach’s alphas range from .92 to .96) (Levenson, Svatovic, & Montagno, 2009).

Levenson, H. & Svatovic, M. (2009). *The EFT Knowledge and Competency Scale: Construction and psychometric properties*. Unpublished Manuscript.

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Montagno, M. (2009). The long term effects of emotionally focused couple therapy training on knowledge, competency, self-compassion, and attachment security. *Dissertation Abstract International*, 70 (8). (UMI No. AAT 3373817) Retrieved February 15, 2010, from Dissertations and Theses Databases.

EFT KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCY SCALE (EFT-KACS)©

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Directions: For each item please indicate (1) how **knowledgeable** you are with what is required to execute the skill, and (2) how **competent** you think you are in executing that skill on a scale from:

1 (*not at all*) 2 3 4 5 6 7 (*quite a lot*)

1. Creating safety in the session and maintain a positive alliance.

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Validating partner's emotions without invalidating the other partner's emotions.

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. Continually reframing the problem in terms of the cycle (e.g., track and reflect).

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. Managing the couple's interaction (e.g., conflict) and redirecting the focus when necessary.

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. Using EFT emotion-focused interventions (e.g., heightening, reflection, etc.) to explore and expand emotions and place them in the cycle (Step 3).

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. Working with primary emotion, especially with RISSSC (Steps 5 & 6).

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. Placing emerging emotions into the cycle.

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. Using enactments therapeutically.

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. Managing defensive responses (secondary emotions).

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. Maintaining session focus (especially on emotion, the cycle, and attachment issues).

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. Framing the cycle, problems, and emotions in terms of attachment needs and fears.

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. Following the steps and stages of EFT.

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. Consolidation of change and development of new narratives.

Knowledge (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Competence (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Content of scale items based on work of Denton, W.H., Johnson, S.M., & Burleson, B.R. (2009). Emotion-focused therapy—Therapist Fidelity Scale: Conceptual development and content validity. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*, 8, 226-246.

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