

Beyond Betrayal

Repairing Attachment Injuries in Close Relationships

using Emotionally Focused Therapy & the Attachment Injury Resolution Model

An EFCT Masterclass presented by

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Director of the Brisbane Centre for EFT



AIMS OF THIS WORKSHOP

- Overview of the EFT Model for working with couples/relationships to build attachment security
- What are attachment injuries?
- Process of the Attachment Injury Resolution Model (AIRM)
- Video footage of client work to illustrate the repair process



EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY

EXPERIENTIAL
HUMANISTIC
SYSTEMIC
ATTACHMENT-BASED

EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY

- Grounded in science evidence-based (e.g. Spengler, 2024)
- Special therapeutic alliance
- Growth orientated
- Non-pathologising
- Sees self as an ongoing construction
- Change is through corrective emotional experience
- EFT roadmap with three stages
- Systematic interventions for therapists to follow



3 modalities of EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY (EFT)

1

EFCT Couples

Building attachment security in loving relationships 2

EFIT Individuals

Creating emotional fitness & balance in individuals

3

EFFT Families

Fostering strong, resilient families



In all modalities of EFT, we are helping people to:

- 1. Draw on their inner resources
- 2. Derive support from their attachment figures

Overarching aim of EFT



EFT ROADMAP - THE 3 STAGES



Stage 2 Restructuring

Connecting in new ways with self & reaching vulnerably to important others- ways that restructure bonds



Practical problem-solving, consolidating new ways of being with self & others

Stage 1 Stabilisation

Assessment, alliance, tracking patterns within & between, attachment frame



EFT FOR COUPLES & RELATIONSHIPS

Evidence-based model for building strong and secure connections between people by going to the heart of their attachment bond.

Track cycles of interaction where each person's attachment strategy signals alarm for the other, resulting in insecurity in the bond and emotional disconnection.

We work "bottom-up" by following emotion, not getting lost in content, and by working slowly and deeply to uncover primary fears and longings.

In stage 1, we help partners to identify and exit negative patterns of interaction and with the use of therapeutic encounters of softer, clearer signals to each other, we build safety.

In Stage 2, we help partners to restructure their attachment bond by building a new interactional pattern where vulnerabilities can be shared, and needs can be clearly signaled and responded to.

In Stage 3, we consolidate this progress and look at how to maintain the strength in their bond.

"Intimate relationships are not transactions, they are emotional bonds"

Sue Johnson



SUMMARY OF THE KEY POINTS OF

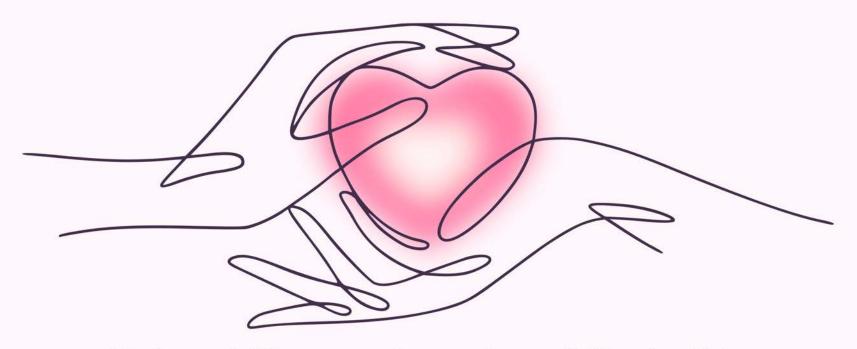
ATTACHMENT THEORY



- Attachment is a primary need for "felt security"
- Isolation is inherently traumatizing (primes helplessness)
- Secure attachment:
 - A safe-haven to go to for comfort and emotional balance. Makes vulnerability/distress manageable and calms the nervous system.
 - A secure base to to go out from to explore and grow. It makes the uncertain world manageable and primes a sense of competence and autonomy - effective dependency or functional interdependence.
- ARE you there for me? (Sue Johnson, 2008)
 - Are you Accessible Do I matter?
 - Are you Responsive to my needs?
 - Are you Engaged with me?
- Secure attachment leads to:
 - Emotional regulation skills, social adjustment and overall mental health
 - Positive internal working models of self (MOS) and other (MOO)

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Vulnerability meeting vulnerability builds bonds & creates attachment security







DEFINITION OF AN ATTACHMENT INJURY

A betrayal of trust AND/OR an abandonment where one partner is inaccessible or unresponsive at a time when the other is particularly vulnerable or in a crucial time of need

"SNAP" in the trusting bond

DEFINITION OF AN ATTACHMENT INJURY

- Form of relationship trauma
- In attachment terms, the relationship bond becomes insecure
- Not all hurts become attachment injuries:
 - Ask how they define the importance of the event
 - Look out for clues about the attachment significance
 - Mutual misunderstanding or accumulated hurts erode trust over time but are not typically attachment injuries



DEFINITION OF AN ATTACHMENT INJURY

- The hurtful event redefines the other as unsafe, unreliable and even dangerous
- Breaks the relationship's fabric of trust
- Secure attachment figure = A-R-E
 - Are you there for me? Will you respond to me? Will you engage with me?
 - At the time of the injury "NO" = INSECURE



4 TYPES OF ATTACHMENT INJURIES

Sexual & emotional betrayal

(relationships with others that break agreements) Violated boundaries

(hiding, lying by omission, secrecy, deceptive decisionmaking) Abandonment at a time of need

(where were you when I really needed you?)

Threats to relational safety or livelihood

(violence, threats, risky behaviour)



On betrayal in relationships...

"A single moment can change us forever. After you learn that you've been betrayed, you think in terms of the time before & the time after.

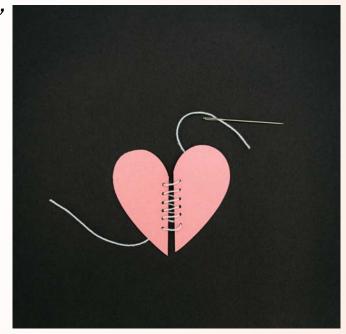
The private calamity of discovering that your partner has become someone you don't recognize & has lied to you as if you were an enemy blows your secure world apart.

You no longer trust your eyes to see, your brain to comprehend, or your heart to feel what is true."

SHIRLEY GLASS

IMPACT OF AN ATTACHMENT INJURY

- Existential decision-point "I'll never trust again"
 - Too painful to risk opening their heart again
 - Retreat into a protective place
- When partners become inaccessible to each other, the bond becomes insecure
- Hurtful event will come alive in their cycle
 - As evidence of the other's unreliability



IMPACT OF AN ATTACHMENT INJURY

Impact of the injury:

- The nature of the injury and how recent it was
 - Recent events will have more alive emotion.
 - Less recent events may have a legacy of protective strategies and cemented-in assumptions that prevent repair
- Attachment significance of the event
 - Time of need, high vulnerability, during time of personal or relational sacrifice



IMPACT OF AN ATTACHMENT INJURY

- Impact of the injury:
 - Personal factors and attachment history
 - Coping strategies, intrapsychic flexibility, emotional regulation
 - History of attachment trauma, minority stress, MOO and MOS, contextual safety
 - Relationship factors (health before the injury)
 - Rigidity of the cycle prior
 - Protective factors self and system





When partners struggle to recover from an attachment injury (a snap in their bond that breaks trust), it is often because they get stuck in ways of responding to each other that...

"Block them from having healing conversations"

LORRIE BRUBACHER - EFT TRAINER

HEALING AN ATTACHMENT INJURY

- First key task: Identify and exit patterns (cycle) that keep partners stuck and that block "healing conversations" from happening
- Repair: Help partners to have healing conversations where partners are A-R-E, to restore the bond
- Shared vulnerability is the antidote (but elusive)!



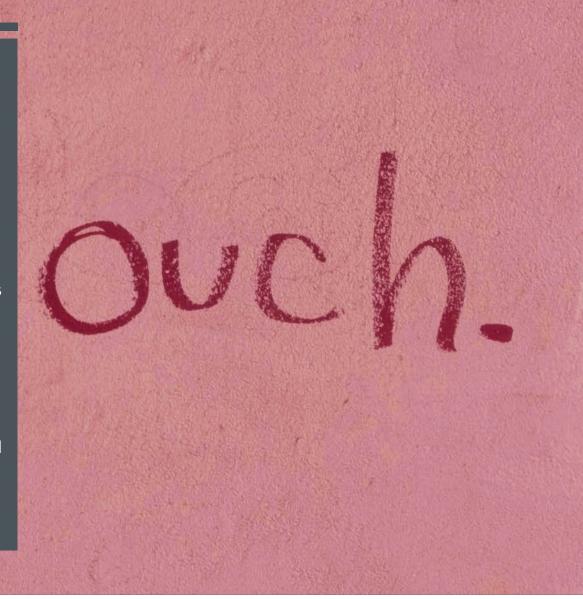
ATTACHMENT INJURY RESOLUTION MODEL (AIRM)

- 1. Stage 1: CYCLE that blocks healing Injury is expressed in heightened manner and the hurtful partner reacts in more defensive stance.
- 2. Stage 2: Help the hurt partner to articulate/share the injury and the impact: "NEVER AGAIN!"
- 3. Support other in hearing and understanding ATTACHMENT significance of the event
- 4. Hurt partner shares attachment fears and longings from a position of vulnerability BIG REACH

- 5. Other partner owns responsibility and expresses regret: "It hurts me that I hurt you, your pain impacts me" REACH BACK
- 6. Hurt partner reaches and asks for comfort and reassurance ASKING FOR NEEDS
- 7. Other partner responds with reassurance ANTIDOTE BONDING EVENT
- 8. Relationship is defined as potential safe-haven creates NEW NARRATIVE

AIRM OUTCOMES

- The therapist's use of evocative responding and structuring of enactments to foster softer, primary emotions, were associated with resolution of the injury in the relationship (Zaccarini, et al., 2013).
- Couples who resolved and reconciliated after an AI showed more disclosing, less blaming and withdrawing and deeper levels of experiencing (Makinen & Johnson, 2006)
- Results maintained at 3yr follow-up
- Couples who did not resolve their Al showed lower trust at outset, compound injuries and no changes in relationship satisfaction or forgiveness (Halchuk, Makinen & Johnson, 2010)





WORKING WITH ATTACHMENT INJURIES IN EFT

Stage 1

Identify & contain the negative cycle that blocks healing



AIRM as part of stage 2 work to repair the bond

WORKING WITH ATTACHMENT INJURIES IN STAGE 1 VS. STAGE 2

Stage 1

- Validate the hurt partner and the helplessness to fix in the hurtful partner
- Look at how the injury shows up in their cycle: how each partner's attempt to cope triggers the other and the cycle runs away with them (rather than trying to resolve the hurt)
- Highlight how they have become stuck and cannot have the healing conversations around this event – their relationship feels unsafe and insecure now – create safety FIRST

Stage 2

- When there is more safety and they can exit their cycle, we can begin to work through this impasse – to resolve the hurt
- Have the healing conversations that repair the rupture to the bond restoring security to their bond
- Special model for this Attachment Injury Resolution Model (Johnson, Makinen & Milliken, 2001)

Hmakas

WORKING WITH EMOTION TO BEGIN REPAIR WORK

- Validate the pain
 - Be with them in their pain and helplessness
 - Be the temporary attachment figure for both partners
- Validate the attachment significance of this hurt
 - It hurts because it matters
- Put it in the context of their relational history
- Put it in the context of their life and attachment history
 - Is it a repetition of "old" relational traumas, racial trauma, minority stress, confirming MOO and MOS?

I understand why you are upset

> you have every right to feel this way

me

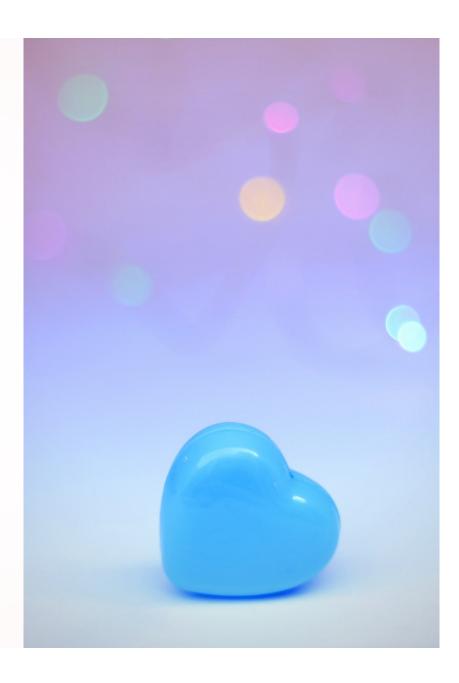




AIRM IN STAGE 1

SAFETY & ASSESSMENT

- Monitoring goals for treatment and ambivalence
 - Do they want to repair?
 - Are they aligned?
- Assessing safety physical and emotional
 - Is the betrayal ongoing?
 - How escalated do they become?
 - How are they each coping?
 - Are their coping strategies harming the other?
- Individual sessions



WORKING WITH ATTACHMENT INJURIES IN STAGE 1: ACTIVE ROLES & CAUTIONS

"Jobs" for the hurtful partner

- Commitment
- Transparency (voluntary + short-term)
- Witnessing the pain

Requirements for the hurt partner

- Open heart (even just a little)
- Manage information set own limits
- Responsible for own reactivity

Rosoman, 2025

BROKEN BONE ANALOGY TO FRAME

THE PATH TO HEALING (DR KATHRYN RHEEM)

- Assess the damage/extent of the injury
 - Enough info to remove secrecy but not so much to traumatize the wound further
- Stage 1 Stabilisation splint the broken limb
 - Agree to exit tough cycles and not trigger the other with hurtful jabs (walking on the broken limb)
 - Track the cycle that blocks healing and attempt to exit it
 - Beginning to explore the underlying pain for each partner
 - Soothes the inflammation of the wound
- Stage 2 AIRM knitting the bones together
 - This can't be done until the limb is stabilized
 - Stronger in the broken place



COMPLEX ATTACHMENT INJURIES

Dual injuries

Eclipsing injuries

Retaliation injuries

Erosion injuries

Both partners are hurt by the other in similar or different ways & each require repair from the other

The attachment injury takes central focus, leaving other, possibly pre-existing, issues unresolved

Either partner lashes out in retaliation after an attachment injury, furthering the damage Build up of ruptures over time that erode the trust, rather than a clearly defined attachment injury

COMPLEX ATTACHMENT INJURIES

List the injuries

Agree on order to repair

Set intentions for repair

Each partner reflects on the key hurts that they need addressed personally

Together, partners must agree on an order to approach each hurt one by one Tackle the issue that presents the biggest threat to the attachment security first

Both partners must reflect on why it matters to repair this bond & what they can bring to the process

REAL WORLD EXAMPLE OF ATTACHMENT INJURY REPAIR



30s, cisgender, heterosexual, monogamous couple, together 7yrs

History of Andrew breaking up with Chenae out of the blue, sometimes for no reason, other times for superficial reasons

One instance of Andrew having a relationship with another woman and breaking Chenae's trust

VIDEO - SESSION 5: ATTACHMENT INJURIES IN STAGE 1 TANGO









AIRM IN STAGE 2

HEALING CONVERSATIONS

- Stage 2 is all about:
 - Restructuring self and system
 - Moving both partners into a felt sense of security in themselves and their partner
 - Being able to tune in and share own inner world
 - To take in and receive care corrective moments
- AIRM in Stage 2:
 - Sharing vulnerably and attending to pain in ways that allow healing and re-establishment of security

ATTACHMENT INJURY REPAIR IN STAGE 2: HEALING

CONVERSATIONS

Hurt partner shares vulnerably

- Shares the pain
- Shares attachment impact
- Asks for comfort

Hurtful partner takes in pain

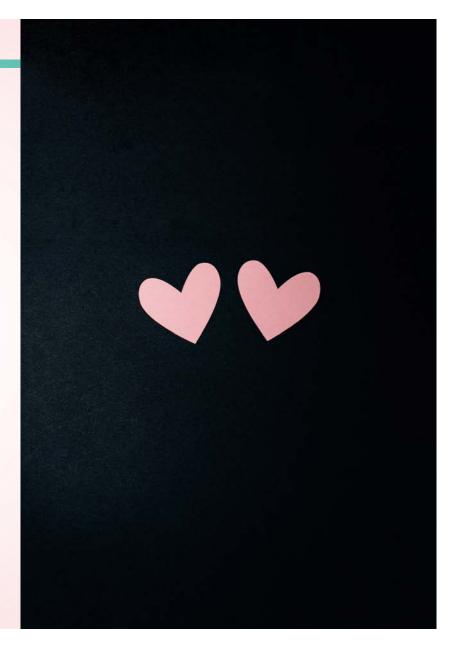
- Witnesses pain
- Allows self to be impacted
- Reaches with remorse
- Offers comfort

Rosoman, 2025

AIRM IN STAGE 2

HEALING CONVERSATIONS

- Repair process for hurt partner:
 - Help them to explore and be with the pain caused by the other's actions
 - To share the impact of the injury in vulnerable ways
 - To seek comfort from the other
- Repair process for hurtful partner:
 - Make space for them to process how they came to be hurtful, to go against their values or to have lost their way
 - Feel and stay with the pain of this let the other see this
 - Heal self by healing the other



AIRM IN STAGE 2

HEALING CONVERSATIONS

- Supporting the hurt partner in sharing:
 - Help them to share the impact of the injury and its attachment significance – in an alive way – with you first
 - Feeling the emotion is important for the hurt partner to move into and through the emotion
 - Feel the full impact of the pain in our presence and with the partner there able to hear because they have been left alone with this and may will not have been heard, felt and understood by the other
 - Therapist validation and holding helps the experience to distill and deepen and prepares them to disclose
 - We want to be sure that the hurtful partner is ready to witness and hold this experience in an attuned and responsive way



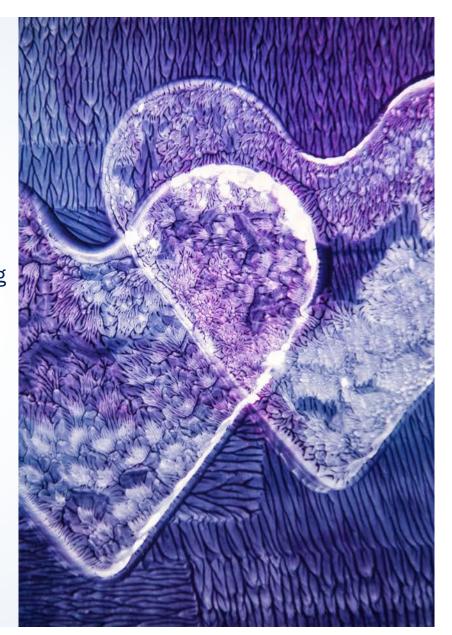
AIRM - HURTFUL PARTNER OWNING IMPACT & EXPRESSING SHAME

CORRECTIVE "ANTIDOTE" MOMENTS

- Antidote moment recognition that the hurt partner is impacted by knowing that they caused pain is restorative to their bond – soothing balm for the wound
- This is how we restore the bond through witnessing and sharing pain
- THE HURTFUL PARTNER'S PRESENCE IS THE ANTIDOTE

AIRM TARGET:

The injury was caused by *lack of presence* and care, so the repair needs to be characterized by attentiveness to the other's pain and *bottomless* care for their pain (pain has to have a witness)





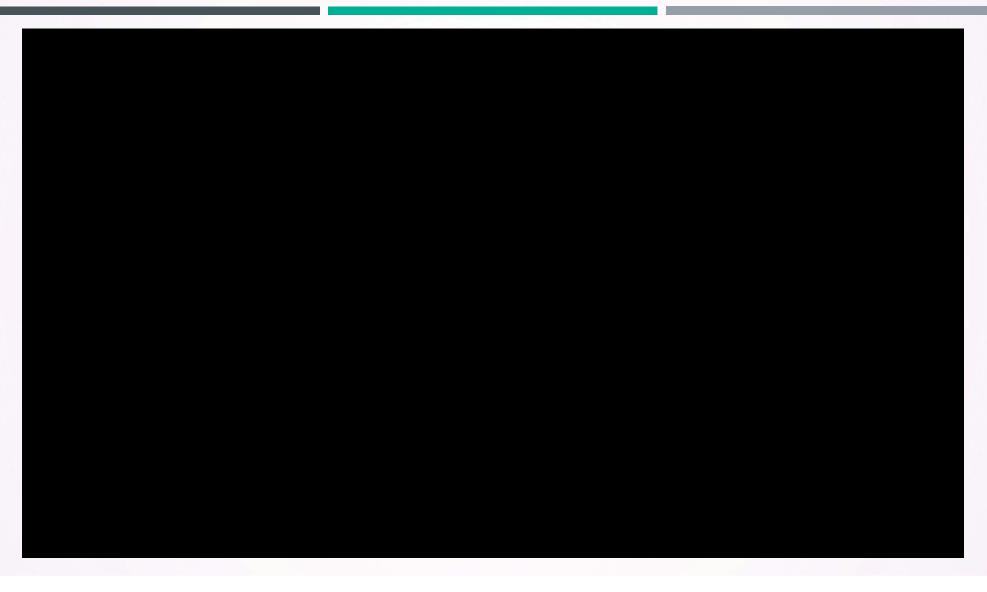
As loud as your silence was

As present as your absence was

As engaged as your distance was

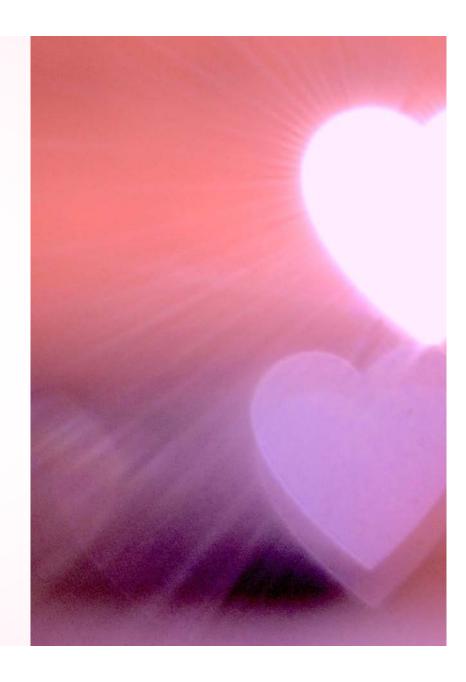
Dr Clare Rosoman

AIRM – ANTIDOTE BONDING EVENT



RESTORING SECURITY IN THE BOND

- Secure bond = being able to give and receive love and to ask for attachment needs
- Restoring trust asking for needs vulnerably, giving self permission to need (key element in restoring security)
 - Help the hurt partner to ask for needs vulnerably
 - Help the hurtful partner to safely catch them by offering reassurance and comfort
 - Process whether this can be felt and let in by the hurt partner (revision of MOO and MOS)
 - Process the agency this creates for the hurtful partner (revision of MOO and MOS)



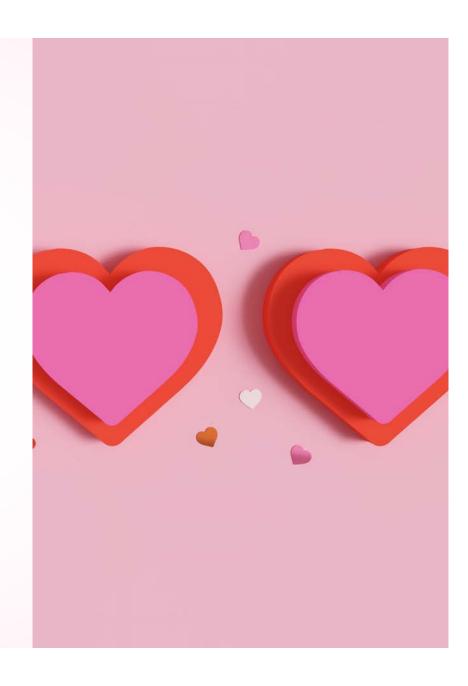
RESTORING SECURITY IN THE BOND

- Healing is a process change will continue over time, grieving will happen, trust and agency can grow again,
- Repetition is required repeated encounters of the other's presence cements the bond
- We are healing their bond and trauma in each individual – not specific events – this is a growth model
- AIRM is a "specialty tool" to be used within the larger EFT roadmap



STRONGER IN THE BROKEN PLACE

- Bone analogy stronger in the broken place
- New cycle of reaching and sharing pain and holding each other – stronger in the broken place as a system
- Hurtful partner:
 - Helping the other to heal transforms the shame for the hurtful partner
 - Stronger in the broken place within the individual
- Hurt partner:
 - Speaking up for the pain from the hurt partner
 - Stronger in the broken place for hurt partner I matter, my pain matters, I can seek comfort



WHAT IF WE CAN'T HEAL?

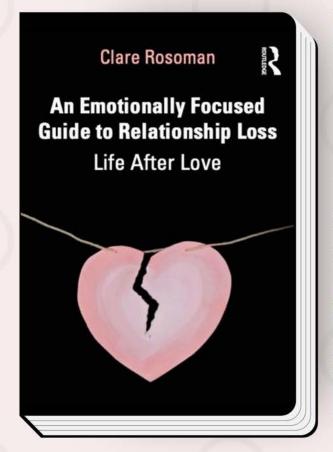
- For some people, the hurt is just too great to live with the risk of being hurt again
 - Explore the fear, any past traumas that impact the level of fear and what they would need to feel safe – is that possible?
- Support a conversation about ending the relationship in order to honor each partner's need for safety
 - Look for what would be untenable for each
 - Facilitate clear signals about needs and fears either to move through the block or to consider the possibility of lovingly separating

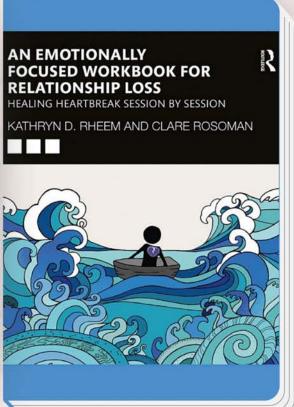


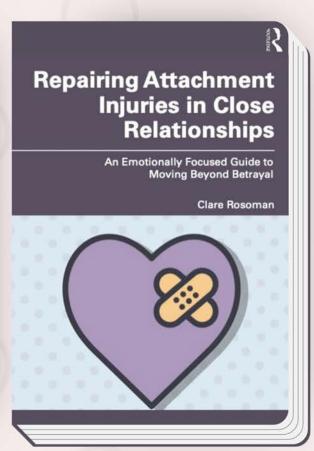
Questions & comments

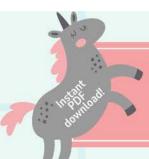


My EFT books



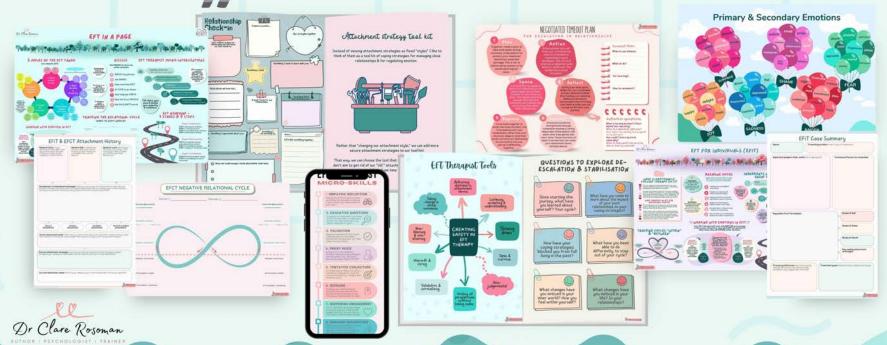






THERAPY TOOLS BY CLARE

Clinical Psychologist & EFT Trainer



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EFT THERAPIST TRAINING OPTIONS

Introduction to EFT

One-day introduction to Attachment Theory & EFT across all modalities individuals, relationships & families.

Fundamentals of **EFT**

EFIT

EFT for **Individuals**

Essentials of EFIT

Four days of training in EFiT (24hrs)

EFIT Mastering Skills Course
Overcoming challenges in EFIT (10hrs)

EFIT Additional Training

Approved training videos/courses (6hrs)

Externship in EFCT

Four days of training in EFCT (24hrs)

Core Skills in EFCT

Skill-building in EFCT (24hrs OR 48hrs)

EFCT EFT for Couples

EFT Supervision **EFT Supervision**

Work with an ICEEFT Certified EFT Supervisor to develop your EFT skills in EFCT/EFiT/EFFT

EFCT Masterclasses

Workshops on special topics (e.g. attachment injuries, high conflict couples) to build upon EFCT training. **EFCT** Master

Classes

EFFT EFT for

Families

Essentials of EFFT Four days of training in EFFT (24hrs)

EFFT Mastering Skills Course
Overcoming challenges in EFFT (10hrs)

EFFT Additional Training

Approved training videos/courses (6hrs)

CERTIFICATION - EFCT

CERTIFICATION - EFFT

CERTIFICATION - EFIT





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BRISBANE CLINIC

Clare has a talented group of clinicians working with her at the Brisbane Centre for Attachment & Relationships

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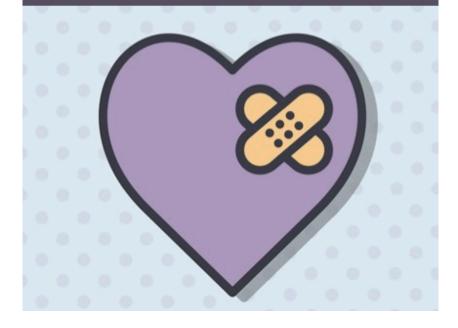
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Repairing Attachment Injuries in Close Relationships

An Emotionally Focused Guide to Moving Beyond Betrayal

Clare Rosoman



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THIRD EDITION

The Practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy Creating Connection



Susan M. Johnson

