

Emotion-Focused Therapy: A New Approach in Psychotherapy

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Extended Summary

Many people who want to benefit from psychotherapy are fighting with intense emotions and the feeling of being trapped. Emotion-focused therapy (EFT) focuses on the messages that those emotions give. In this way, it includes the emotions in the process of therapy by using them as a tool. In this study, the emotion focuses therapy model that is pioneered by Leslie Greenberg and applied in individual psychotherapy, its theoretical framework, basic concepts, and therapeutic techniques that will be applied by the field specialists and individuals who may need psychological counseling and can increase the awareness of those people with the application examples were aimed to be included.

EFT, also known as process-experiential therapy, is a new-humanistic experimental approach that has been reformulated in terms of modern emotion theory and affective neuroscience (Greenberg and Goldman, 2009). EFT suggests that emotional change should be placed at the center of the therapy to ensure a permanent change, and therefore adopts modern emotion theory. It suggests that emotions have an adaptable potential on their own, if actuated, and adopts the idea that emotions help clients to re-organize negative self-experiences and to change problematic emotions and interactions. This view that suggests that the emotions, in essence, are an innate adaptive system that has evolved to help people for survival and development has also found broad empirical support. The main purpose of EFT is to empower the self, to regulate the emotions and create new meanings (Greenberg, 2016).

Although EFT does not deny the importance of meaning and behavioral change, draws itself a new path different than the traditional approaches by emphasizes the importance of emotional awareness, acceptance, understanding, and emotional change for psychotherapeutic change. The departure of traditional approaches from excessive emphasis to cognition and behavior paves the way for more permanent changes in therapy in terms of questioning the expertise role of the advisor and solving the psychological problems using the output of modern emotion theory. In this way, individuals become more psychologically functional. EFT succeeds in eliminating the lack of gestalt, existentialist, and individual-centered therapy in the case formulation thanks to the ideas that it brought to the case formulation (Greenberg, 2011).

EFT has developed a content-oriented and process-oriented approach for case formulation (Greenberg, 2010a; Greenberg, 2011; Greenberg and Watson, 2006). Case formulation process provides a descriptive framework for therapist regarding the development of problems and the factors that maintain those problems (Goldman and Greenberg, 2014). Therapeutic cooperation for formulation must be definitely established. The consultant cannot fully recognize the client throughout the therapy, s/he cannot know exactly what the client feels; for this reason, the formulation is not immediately brought to a final result, but it is modified and structured in the process (Greenberg and Goldman 2009; Greenberg and Watson, 2006). That means, the case formulation is based on context and is shaped in accordance with the client's experiences in the process (Greenberg, 2011; Greenberg and Watson, 2006). The direction of the therapy can be changed according to the information and signs received from the counselor (Greenberg and Watson, 2006). The main purpose of the therapist is to follow the consultation process, to define the main pain and to identify signs of current emotional problems (Greenberg, 2011). For this reason, the emotion-oriented therapist is regarded as a process specialist who notices the changes in client moment by moment (Greenberg and Goldman, 2009).

Emotions penetrate the daily lives, social relationships, traumatic events of all individuals, and profoundly affect them. Especially dysfunctional emotions can become quite destructive if the intense emotions experienced in every situation are not taken into account. Unfortunately, the general practice in our country is based on solving the problem by ignoring the emotions. This causes the dysfunctional emotions to stay and hence leads to the destruction of the psychological process. Emotion-oriented therapy, which places emotions in the main center of the therapy, allows the emotions to be used as a separate driving force in therapy thanks to

different perspectives and intervention methods it contributed to the field. Emotion-focused therapy aims to take clients to the best level, to make them aware of their emotions, differentiate between maladaptive and adaptive emotions and to change maladaptive emotions with adaptive emotions. This approach, unlike traditional therapies, regards emotions not as a secondary means of supporting the thought or as the material to be emptied in order to achieve internal relaxation, but as the main material of therapy. In this respect, it brings a new momentum and life to therapy. This study sought to emphasize the importance of this therapy technique to the client by providing information on the basic principles of emotion-focused therapy, the steps used in therapy, the techniques applied, and the formulated case formulation.