

Cherishing each other and the emotional connection will help it to grow. Supporting each other to be the best and the most that they can be allows the family to flourish and reach its best potential.

How Emotion Focused Couple Therapy (EFT) can help:

Emotional connection and responsiveness to each other is the key to a secure relationship. In EFT* the therapist can help build a secure relationship and you can:

1. Begin to understand your patterns of interaction e.g. what happens when you disagree? What is the negative cycle between you?
2. Recognize the sensitive spots for each of you and develop ways to support and care for sensitivities.
3. De-escalate your conflict and remain open and attentive to your partner and show caring even if you disagree.
4. Develop positive patterns. Negative cycles need to be replaced by positive cycles of support, mutual appreciation, affection and caring.
5. Forgive injuries: Are you both able to forgive past mistakes and build new ways of interacting?
6. Nourish your physical intimacy and build trust and connection.
7. Build a deposit of positive experiences in the bank of love. When distress occurs you will have plenty from which you can make a withdrawal on your investments.

Conflict is Inevitable: Repair is Critical

We are different people and differences between partners are inevitable. We do not come with owner's manuals and so there will be times in our relationships that we will disagree or make mistakes with each other and be in conflict .

Successful marriages are able to repair ruptures that naturally arise. If repair is successful, the relationship will actually deepen over time.

Learn to resolve conflicts effectively and repair the relationship by:

1. Being open to making and receiving repair by conversing openly and with mutual respect and caring
2. Soften your approach and start the conversation gently without criticism or contempt
3. Difficult conversations are upsetting and activating. Soothe yourself and your partner by taking frequent breaks, taking deep breaths, using calming techniques, validating the positive aspects of each other, etc.
4. Compromise
5. Accept each other's limitations and recognize strengths.

Strengthening a marital relationship bond requires a focus on the emotional life of the couple. Consultation with a professional therapist can be helpful.

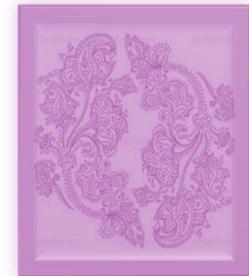
Emotion Focused Therapy for Couples



Anita McLean, Ph.d., Psy.D.
20 Nassau Street, Suite 221
Princeton, NJ 08542

Phone: 732-319-9104
website: dranitamclean.com
E-mail: amclean845@gmail.com

Building Marital Happiness



Tips for South Asian Couples

Anita McLean Ph.D, Psy.D.

*EFT was developed by Sue Johnson and is based on research.



Understanding Marriage Differently

Marriage in South Asian cultures symbolizes a union between families, as much as it signifies a partnership between husband and wife. Our traditions teach us that the husband and wife develop a relationship within the context of the larger family and the wishes, needs, and influences of the family are ever present in our marital relationships.

Living in the US challenges us to also develop a strong partnership with our partner since life here places demands for:

- ◇ economic stability requiring changes in professional and family related activities for both,
- ◇ emotional adjustment/acclulturation to an unfamiliar & different culture
- ◇ parenting children in a foreign environment,
- ◇ shifts in responsibility for household tasks for which there is no help
- ◇ taking care of aging parents for whom this is a foreign land and who may or may not be living with us
- ◇ developing ways of negotiating effective relationships in a foreign culture

These demands are different from the ones we experience in the country of origin and, at the same time, our support systems (of close friends and family and people who understand our culture) are no longer available to us.

Making Adjustments

Developing an effective marital partnership is key to a successful and happy emotional life.

When we are in healthy relationships we:

- Are happy – have a deep sense of well being and self esteem
- Enjoy optimal physical health
- Feel safe and supported so that we can be creative, innovative, successful, productive and effective in all aspects of our life
- Can be our best self and in touch with our human compassion, capacity to love, generosity and tenderness
- Feel resilient and our capacity to recover from conflicts, repair and maintain good relationships is intact,
- Are able to bounce back from untoward events in life that cause loss, trauma, anxiety or distress

*There is now lots of research that documents **the marriage advantage**: and it is clear that marriage is profoundly connected to health and well-being.*

Several studies also show that the marriage advantage doesn't extend to those in troubled relationships, which can leave a person far less healthy than if he or she had never married at all. One recent study suggests that a stressful marriage can be as bad for the heart as a regular smoking habit.



Research shows that conflict and distress in our primary intimate relationship with our partner can cause chronic stress which in turn is linked to:

- Physical health problems such as: hypertension and heart disease, high cholesterol, diabetes and gastrointestinal distress
- Mental health problems such as anxiety and depression
- Family distress and negative outcomes for the well being of our children

Research also shows that the presence of the following negative attributes in a relationship predict the collapse of the relationship:

- * Defensiveness,
- * Stonewalling,
- * Criticism, and
- * Contempt

The level of negative sentiment slowly starts to overtake the positives, so that the relationship becomes too painful to be sustained.

A Successful Marriage requires Emotional Skills:

Marriage is an emotional bond beyond two people.

We don't always have a lot of training in recognizing and expressing our emotions effectively and our partners don't come with owners' manuals which help us understand and support them.

Learning these skills is possible and can enhance our lives.