

EFFECTIVENESS OF EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY (EFT)  
WITH CHINESE COUPLE CLIENTS: FROM THE CHINESE EFT THERAPISTS'  
CULTURAL LENS

by

Yifan Wang

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences Liberty University

Lynchburg, VA 2023

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the Chinese EFT (Emotionally Focused Therapy) therapists' experiences of working with Chinese couples in EFT sessions, as well as to discover how the cultural factors play a role in the effectiveness of EFT use with Chinese couples. This study was conducted by finding out 10 EFT-oriented therapists and analyzing via online interviews their experiences of working with Chinese couples. The theories guiding this study are based on Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). One of the founding therapists of this approach is Dr. Sue Johnson. EFT is heavily influenced by attachment theory, which was first developed by John Bowlby. This study also reviews EFT's major theoretical constructs—emotional, systematic, humanistic and experiential theories. The data was collected by doing semi-structured interviews virtually with 10 Chinese EFT-oriented therapists in China. The methods of analysis of the data was done by discovering themes or phenomena through their significant statements, then analyzing and evaluating the themes to distill the essence of the phenomenon.

*Keywords:* Emotionally Focused Therapy, Chinese couple, culture, emotions.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT)

Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT)

International Center For Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy (ICEEFT)

Repeat, Image, Slow, Soft, Simple, Client's words (RISSSC)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Statistics show that the divorce rate has grown dramatically by 75% over a decade, going from 2.7 million to 4.7 million in 2019. The divorce rate has surpassed half of the number of people who got married —50.7%. The divorce rate has dropped down slightly since 2019, from 0.336% in 2019 to 0.309 % in 2020 and 0.200% in 2021. (China Population: Divorce Rate | Economic Indicators CEIC, n.d.)

It is unknown if the pandemic that took place in China and over the globe may have had an impact on this shift. It is undeniable that the number surged from the past decade. One of the counselors in Guangzhou, one of the largest cities in China, interviewed for this study, reported that young people who are in their 30s and 40s are interested in doing couple/marriage counseling when they got stuck in their marriage (Tone, 2018).

As one of the most effective evidence-based couple therapy, Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy has been known to be used predominantly for white middle-class couples, but it was demonstrated to be effective with Chinese couples as well (Ho, 2018; Chang, 2014). However, this result came from one case study, as well as from teaching EFT to mental-health professionals, and evaluating the effectiveness of the method. Overall, there is a lack of research around the effectiveness of EFT with Chinese couples. Moreover, those two research studies have not captured the detailed, practical and cultural experiences of therapists using EFT theories, techniques, and EFT tango — with all stages and steps— with Chinese couples. This research study offers the “lived” experience of the cultural components as experienced by Chinese EFT therapists using EFT in sessions. Finding out the cultural barriers and cultural adaptations necessary to use EFT with Chinese clients can potentially point to the direction of

how to use this evidence-based couple therapy in a different cultural context effectively. Thus, the central research question in this study is: What are the cultural experiences of Chinese EFT therapist using Emotional Focused Therapy with Chinese couples?

This chapter starts with an introduction of the historical, socio-cultural, and theoretical contexts of the research, and explains how therapists became motivated to be part of this study. Further, it discusses the problems and the need for this research to take place, as well as the significance of this study. The last part of this chapter shows the research questions of this study.

## **Background**

### **Historical Context**

EFT research has lacked a cultural lens, as was identified 10 years ago by Greenman and Johnson (2013) that EFT has been mainly focused on white, middle-class couples. Wiebe and Johnson (2016) also emphasized that the missing area for research in EFT is to test EFT in different cultures. Therefore, finding out the effectiveness of EFT in different cultures is a significant aspect of the development of this theory. This research study helped by trying to discover the effectiveness of EFT with Chinese couples, from the therapists' perspective.

### **Social-cultural Context**

Given the historical, social and political uniqueness of mainstream Chinese culture, research shows that the direct application of the western approach to marriage and family therapy to China, including Eastern Asian context can be harmful if practitioners do not examine the cultural differences carefully (Tseng et al., 2020). It also suggests country specific-plans to develop marriage and family therapy must be considered (Tseng et al., 2020). In EFT, emotion is the agent that facilitates changes. Also, emotions are valued, perceived, awarded, and expressed differently in Eastern and Western culture. Therefore, it must be assumed that the use of emotion

by the therapist or clients within Chinese culture is the key to predict the effectiveness of EFT. It is important to utilize a qualitative or phenomenological approach to analyze the contextual reality of EFT couple therapy in China, to understand the real experiences of EFT therapists using EFT.

### **Theoretical Context**

Theoretically, this research focuses on the main theoretical constructs of EFT — humanistic, systematic and experiential therapies, as well as emotion and attachment theory. EFT has an humanistic lens of viewing clients' diagnosis and dysfunctions. Rather than pathologizing clients with different diagnoses and disorders, and perceiving clients as generally deficient, Johnson (2014) viewed couple clients as “being stuck in particular absorbing emotional states and in self-reinforcing interaction cycles” (p. 59). Johnson (2014) believed that the dysfunctions are led by “how emotional responses, such as fear, are inhibited, disowned and distorted” (p. 59). For example, emotional disorders are seen and caused by an accumulation of negative emotions, without having effective emotional regulation strategies to recover from emotional vulnerability. EFT is an attachment-based, systematic and experiential therapy. Typical experiential and systematic steps are, for example, clients get the chance to experience emotions right in the room when experiencing a trigger from their partner. Therapists facilitate clients to feel and experience the present attachment-based pain in an emotional and bodily way, through emotions like hurt, sadness, anger and fear. Thus, rather than talking about their emotional vulnerability, clients will be facilitated to experience it and experientially express this lived emotion to their partner. Couples are in a dynamic interactional system that they live with each other in a dyad system in which each person's emotions, behaviors and emotional distance affect the other significantly. This could lead to a positive cycle. However, most couples who come to therapy are trapped in a

negative systematic cycle with each other.

### **Situation to Self**

The main motivation for the researcher to conduct this study was curiosity about the cultural differences between collectivism and individualism, between a democratic society and a region where freedom of speech is not permitted. How do these differences affect EFT therapists in China and EFT work with couple clients? It could be assumed that emotions are culturally and historically differently when comparing the East and West in general. Collectivism and political values may not encourage the identification and expression of individual differences, which includes emotions. Therefore, these differences may impact the quality of the treatment if an EFT therapist directly implements the EFT model into a Chinese context.

In this study, the researcher/writer holds a philosophical assumption about the nature of social reality and ontology, which aligns itself with the reality of Chinese therapists' using EFT in China. As more and more Chinese Therapists are learning and become trained in this approach, the questions are: What are their experiences of using this approach with Chinese couples? Which elements have been effective and which haven't? The paradigm the research uses is Interpretivism/constructivism. The researcher believes that there are multiple and complex realities within this topic, which is utilizing EFT in China. The reality cannot be discovered through predefined probabilistic models. This matter is multilayered and many factors could be predicted to be involved in this issue, which can be better found out through qualitative research and interviews.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a lack of literature on EFT within different cultures, as well as a lack of research on EFT effectiveness in a Chinese context. It is not clear from previous research how Chinese

EFT therapists have adapted this approach culturally with their Chinese clients. In his study, Chang (2014) indicated that “field consultants stated that, in comparison to other cultural groups, Chinese couples do not have any additional problems in accessing their primary emotions, participating in and responding to the therapeutic enactment during EFT treatment, or acknowledging their attachment needs” (p.131). The problem with this previous research is that there is not much clarity regarding these “additional problems.” It is very likely that there are differences between Chinese culture or Eastern culture and western culture, upon which EFT is based. The cultural difference would be reflected on differences regarding matters of emotions, expression, direct and clear communication, vulnerability, all of which are core factors that influence EFT effectiveness. It would be questionable that cultural differences did not lead to “additional problems” in the EFT process.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to discover Chinese EFT-oriented therapists’ lived experiences of utilizing EFT with Chinese couples in China. This study involves 10 EFT-oriented therapists who participated in interviews online. At this stage of the research, Chinese therapists’ cultural experiences of using EFT with clients will be generally defined as: 1) Therapists’ own cultural experiences of using EFT as therapists; and 2) Therapists’ cultural challenges and adaptation of the EFT approach to be used with Chinese couple clients. The guiding theories in this research will be EFT’s theoretical constructs —humanistic, experiential and systematic— as well as emotion theories and attachment theories. Those theories laid the foundation to explain theoretically what makes EFT exist, why EFT works effectively, and its potential for adaptability to the Chinese culture.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is that Chinese EFT therapists are able to perceive what the cultural barriers are in conducting EFT with Chinese couples. After discovering the main themes regarding cultural challenges, as gathered from the interviews conducted, it is important to inform other researchers and EFT experts so that they may bridge the cultural gaps in delivering EFT in China. What cultural techniques may need to be developed to bridge the cultural gap to make EFT more effective when used on the Chinese population? Once potential problems due to cultural differences are discovered and culturally appropriate strategies/techniques are developed to solve these problems, these new techniques may be applied to a culturally sensitive practice in other collectivist cultures, or countries/regions that share similar culture to China. This research might also provide insights about what other types of couple therapy work for Chinese couples, in addition to EFT. This is consistent with the research from Tseng et al., (2020) that cultural adaptations are necessary for the success of marriage and family therapy in China. Otherwise, therapy may be harmful for the clients who receive the service.

### **Research Question**

The main research question is:

- 1) What is the experience of Chinese EFT therapists working with Chinese couples?

This study focuses on the cultural factors that influence EFT therapists' practice, their own barriers/challenges when using this approach, and their experiences with their couple clients. The reason why this research has a cultural emphasis on Chinese therapists and couples is because in both Greenman & Johnson's (2013) and Wiebe & Johnson's (2016) work, the researchers disclose that EFT missed the testing of effectiveness across different cultures. Therefore, the vivid, detailed cultural lived experiences of Chinese therapists are the central phenomenon of this study.

## **Summary**

This chapter offered an overview of the phenomenological study, which is centered around the following research question: What is the experience of Chinese EFT therapists working with Chinese couples? This research will potentially provide some important insights on EFT therapists' experiences as they relate to culture impact and challenges when using EFT for couple work with Chinese couples.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

This chapter starts by reviewing the essential theory on which EFT is primarily based — attachment theory— to understand the loving bond and connection in the attachment relationships. In addition, the chapter explains the three stages and nine steps of the EFT model, from de-escalation, to restructuring, and finally, consolidation. With the goal to explore the application of EFT in different cultures, this literature review shows both the feasibility and challenges of using EFT in a culture other than western, such as China. The critical changing elements for EFT is emotional depth and emotional expression. Although there is a primary focus on emotion, however, emotion is perceived and expressed very differently in China/East vs. the West. Based on the literature, this cultural difference in emotion could be predicted to be one of the key barriers to using EFT with Chinese clients. This has been rarely discussed in the previous literature. The emotional elements would very likely show in sessions of EFT, because EFT follows EFT's “tango moves” in all sessions (the five different “Tango Moves” that EFT therapists repeatedly use in every therapy session are described later). So, this study of the research will be centered on how emotional awareness, deepening, and expression show in EFT sessions when working with Chinese clients, through the use of EFT tango moves, especially move 2 and 3, which relate to emotion deepening/ assembly and expression passing over to their partner.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The website of the International Centre For Excellence In Emotionally Focused Therapy (ICEEFT), summarizes the key elements of EFT as follows:

EFT is a well-known humanistic approach to psychotherapy formulated in the 1980's and developed in tandem with the science of adult attachment, a profound developmental theory of personality and intimate relationships. This science has expanded our understanding of individual dysfunction and health as well as the nature of love relationships and family bonds.” (*What Is EFT?*, n.d.)

This Emotionally Focused Therapy for couples was first introduced and tested in 1980s (Johnson & Greenberg, 1985; Greenberg & Johnson, 1988). It proved to be empirically effective in producing a significant change in the quality of marital relationships. Since then, EFT has continuously shown efficacy and effectiveness in addressing a range of couple concerns, such as partners with depression, PTSD, illness, attachment injury, and sexual dissatisfaction. According to Wiebe & Johnson (2016), it has exceeded the standards as an evidence-based couple therapy

Theoretically, to understand what makes EFT effective, Brubacher (2018) made the analogy that EFT is like having experiential, humanistic therapist Carl Roger, structural and systematic therapist Minuchin, and attachment theorist John Bowlby sitting together and whispering into Sue Johnson's and Les Greenberg's ears, sharing insights about the core problems in relationship distress and how to make the bond secure in relationships

There are three theoretical constructs in EFT —humanistic, systematic, and experiential. The humanistic aspect of EFT believes that the client has an innate energy to unfold and grow organically, with empathy. Rogers (1961) emphasized that the power of therapy is to have non-pathologizing acceptance and congruence, and moment-to-moment engagement in the relationship. As Rogers (1961) believed, the therapist needs to enter the world of the client, move around in it, order their experiences, to feel and sense with one's entire mind, heart, and body what it is like to be in this client's world.

The EFT model also has an experiential and an systematic part. Johnson (1998) views emotions in terms of experiential or systematic variables. Staying and experiencing emotions in session is an experiential process in nature, and elicits a partner's responses, which loops back to impact the speaker. This interaction process not only focuses on intrapsychic content, but also the interpersonal relationship. As Johnson (2019) stated, this model focuses on within and between, intra and inter, self and system, dancer and dance; circular feedback loops, each defining the other in constant construction and confirmation. EFT therapists also would agree with what Sullivan (1953) stressed about The personality is largely shaped by interactions with important individuals in one's life, suggesting that interpersonal relationships play a crucial role. The desire for close connections with others is fundamental, akin to basic biological needs, and is vital for survival, especially considering the extended period of vulnerable infancy. As a child grows, the pursuit of security leads them to accentuate traits and aspects of themselves that receive approval, while suppressing or negating those that face disapproval. Over time, an individual forms a self-concept grounded in the perceived evaluations of significant others. The self may be said to be made of reflected appraisals. The interpersonal interactions with other significant human beings shape how clients appraise others as dangerous or not, and see themselves as enough or not enough.

### **Attachment Theory**

EFT perceives dysfunctions also from an attachment perspective. Johnson (2019) pinpointed the significance of attachment theory. The central message is that “we are first and foremost a social, relational, and bonding species. Over the lifespan, the need for connection with others shapes our neural architecture, our responses to stress, our everyday emotional lives, and the interpersonal dramas and dilemmas that are at the heart of those lives” (Johnson, 2019, p.

5). She also described attachment theory as the developmental theory of personality that explains how emotions are regulated, how human beings form core cognition about self and others, as well as their relationship with others. All human beings are inherently relational and, as social animals, we are “fixated on our connection with others” (Johnson, 2019, p. 5). All people are hardwired to build and maintain meaningful connections with others. It is like oxygen.

Greenman and Johnson (2022) pointed out that attachment science is a theoretical framework to explain the deleterious effects of loneliness and disconnection on mental and physical health, and may be seen as a map for clinicians who work to alleviate psychological suffering and bodily illness. The link between loneliness, and mental and physical health is well established, and attachment appears to play a crucial role. Greenman and Johnson (2022) concluded that, through EFT intervention, the secure bond that a client tries to build with their significant attachment figure can transform how they see themselves and others, and also vanish their sense of loneliness to better physical and mental well-being.

Johnson (2019) summarizes the ten tenets of attachment theory, which may be applied in practice to individuals, couples, and families.

- 1) Longing for a felt sense of connection is a primary need, especially when threatened. Isolation is inherently traumatizing—primes helplessness.
- 2) Safe haven connection calms the nervous system—emotional balance. Distress is framed as manageable.
- 3) Balance confers a coherent, articulated positive sense of self.
- 4) Felt sense of secure base prime sense of competence, autonomy —effective dependency.

5) A.R.E—Accessibility, Responsiveness, Emotional engagement define the quality of bond.

6) Separation distress primed when secure connection is lost---protest, cling, despair, detachment.

7) Key interaction enshrined in mental models of self and other.

8) Expectations, biases, beliefs, procedural strategies. Experienced as reality itself. Security can acknowledge needs, send clear coherent messages, reach out, take in care, give care.

Insecure attachment includes:

a) Anxious— Flight, hyperarousal, high needs, vigilant.

b) Avoidant— Flee, hypo-arousal, minimize need, connection.

c) Fearful— Avoidance, flip between the above. Other is source of fear.

Approaches can either be adaptive or transform into styles, frequently becoming habitual, inflexible, broad, and restrictive. Insecurity poses a risk factor for nearly all adaptation challenges or disorders. Adult attachment involves a reciprocal aspect, maintained in cognitive representations, encompassing both sexual and caretaking elements.

This paper focuses on attachment because this loving connection is what mammalian brains are wired to long for. Johnson's recent work (2019) emphasized three critical facts about attachment in a close relationship. First, being with significant or closest others is perceived not only as a social activity but also as fulfilling the innate needs of Homo vinculum, the one who forms bonds. The act of bonding with others is considered the most fundamental and essential survival strategy for human beings. Therefore, this bonding with the significant other has a live-or-death meaning for us, as it meets human survival needs, but may also threaten human

fundamental safety and dependency. Second, this need is not only viewed as daily anxiety. It triggers deeply to an existential level, generating core emotions of helplessness and vulnerability, as well as isolation, loneliness, and loss. Third, as Johnson (2019) mentioned, creating secure bonding with trusted others is developmentally healthy and necessary to grow our best selves. In summary, the attachment significance is related to emotions, interrelations, and human development.

The question here is whether attachment works with other cultures. Since EFT is an attachment-based treatment, the success of treatment outcomes heavily depends on whether attachment works within other cultures. This relevant research found that attachment (anxiety and avoidance) and commitment (personal and structural) are positively and significantly related to relationship satisfaction. This has been found to be applicable across cultures (Ho, et al., 2012). Therefore, the attachment-based therapeutic model EFT has a culturally applicable theoretic foundation that supports its treatment process.

### **Emotion**

Emotion plays an central role in EFT in that it is valued as the target and agent of change in EFT healing process, which is different from other non-experiential models of therapy (Johnson, 2004). Johnson (2004) emphasized that “the expansion and articulation of new or marginalized aspects of emotional experience are primary therapeutic tasks. (...) A new corrective emotional experience of engagement with one’s partner is the essence of change in EFT” (p.58). Scientific research proves that the deeper the partners are able to touch their emotional experience, the more change couples are able to see in their relationship (Johnson & Greenberg, 1988).

At the core of this discussion is the concept of emotion. Emotion is defined in the EFT

context in a different way than its cultural or traditional definition (i.e. not being able to think clearly and logically; being irrational). However, emotion is a complex process that people who emotive have action readiness, primary meaning, and expressive components to it, based on their goals and needs (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988). Thus, it is crucial to specify why emotions need to be studied in couple therapy and why it is critical in facilitating change in a couple's relationship.

Emotional experience is automatic and pre-reflective, as both feeling and thinking happen in this process. Emotional experience is compelling in a couple's relationship, which is the most significant affectionate relationship. The nature of a couple relationship is an attachment relationship in which both partners are very significant for each other to meet their attachment needs, such as proximity, connection, love, security and value. Therefore, affectionate experiences are easily triggered, deep down, by unmet attachment needs. Negative emotions and/or negative expressions are usually noticeable when there is a problem in the couple's relationship. These salient experiences that happen in the significant relationship are difficult to be seen only through a cognitive lens, and it is difficult to achieve a client's healing experiences in couple therapy if these are only repaired through cognitive restructuring. It is believed that "hot cognition" is associated with the present painful emotions in the therapy room (Safran & Greenberg, 1986). Emotion is not a product of filtered unemotional thinking. It may be instead a triggered, fight/flight reaction towards threats (such as verbal blame, or attack) in the relationship. This is a direct, fast response to danger. Emotions often have the "control precedence" (Tronick, 1989) to override purely logical thinking, and other behavioral responses when we are interacting with someone that we rely on the most (Johnson, 2019).

In the dictionary, emotion is defined as "instinctive or intuitive feeling as distinguished

from reasoning or knowledge” (Oxford Languages, n.d.). There are six core emotions —anger, surprise, joy, shame, fear and sadness, as identified by Paul Eckman (2003), with facial expressions that are universally recognizable across different cultures. Emotion does not only show instinctive or intuitive feelings, such as “joy, sadness,” but also has other functions. In order to understand one partner’s intrapsychic experience, it is critical to understand this emotionally driven “high-level information processing system” (Johnson, 2013).

First, emotion orients and engages (Johnson, 2019). Emotion shows what is important to our needs and wants. Part of the reason why people have an emotional response towards triggering cues is due to a threat, such as unmet needs or wants, which directs their attention to the threat and engages them in an emotional response.

Second, emotion has important meanings attached to it. People make an emotional meaning for the cues that they experience. At a initial first level of appraisal, the amygdala helps the body automatically evaluate the danger. Then, emotion becomes the driving energy to think “what it is” when experiencing the cues. In a couple-interaction situation, if one person says, “Can you do something to help me take care of our kids?” the other person might feel angry that “he never understands me! He does not care about my feelings at all!” Therefore, emotions show the values, needs, beliefs, and what matters to the partners in the relationship. Partners have gradually developed their view of self and others as they continue experiencing similar cues, such as “I am a failure; I’m worth nothing to you.”

Third, emotion has the function of motivating us to have expression, communication, and protection through actions (Johnson, 2019; Greenberg, 2021). *Emotion* comes from Latin word, *Emovere*, to move out. So, it has the actionable component to do something to meet, save or protect our emotional needs. Emotions prime their expressions through verbal or non-verbal



cues, such as facial expressions, body movement, frowning, eye-rolling, voice tone, and volume, as well as actions. These bodily, verbal or actional reactions carry the purpose of communicating some salient messages —the individual's emotional needs are harmed to some extent, and they have to do something to respond to their pain and protect themselves.

### **EFT Steps and Stages**

EFT has three stages and nine steps that therapists may follow to help their couple clients (Johnson, 2004, p. 17-18). These are listed as follows:

#### **STAGE 1: Assessment and cycle de-escalation**

1. Uncover the primary concerns of clients. Evaluate the relationship history of each individual.
2. Recognize the negative cycle or pattern that contributes to their concerns.
3. Identify and delve into the profound emotions underlying their negative behavioral cycles.
4. Reframe the root causes of the issue by categorizing them based on the cycle, underlying emotions, and attachment needs.

To conclude, Johnson (2019) summarized Stage 1 goal as “stabilizing the relationship around renewed hope and a sense of agency” (p.137). Its purpose is to allow the couples to see the nature of their dance and changing the emotional music behind their interactions. The key job is to allow couples to see the negative cycles in their relationship.

#### **STAGE 2: Changing interactional positions and creating new bonding events.**

5. Identify needs that have been disowned and the negative self-perception concealed

from the partner.

6. Listen and respond empathetically to your partner's vulnerabilities. Develop novel approaches to interact with each other.

7. Enable both partners to articulate their attachment needs and fears, fostering profound emotional connection by consistently offering support and being present for each other.

Stage 2 is about deepening each partner's emotions into their attachment fears and needs, facilitating an accessible, attuned and responsive interactions between the partners. The goal is to shape a healthy and constructive dependency, in which the withdrawer is able to stay close, open and engaged with their partner, and the pursuer is able to ask for their needs to be met in a soft way.

#### STAGE 3: Consolidation/Integration

8. Work collaboratively with the couple to develop fresh communication skills to address longstanding relationship issues.

9. Consolidate progress by incorporating new skills, perspectives, and fostering positive cycles to enhance emotional closeness and strengthen the bond of deep attachment.

Additionally, it is important to take the time to celebrate efforts and create rituals, as well as setting up safeguards to address concerns as they arise.

#### **EFT Tango Moves**

Johnson (2017) emphasized the use of a micro-approach in EFT. Rather than having large stages, EFT has the "Five Steps of EFT Tango," which happen repeatedly in all sessions. This shows "how humanistic ways of seeing and intervening meld in perfect harmony with

attachment principles and science” (p.46-47). Allan et al., (2021) indicated that although EFT has three stages and nine steps, what happens in sessions throughout all stages and steps is EFT tango. This is the center of the EFT intervention.

In recent years, research has suggested that the tango moves appear to be very important in the couple’s healing process. The five moves are listed below:

- 1) Reflect the present process
- 2) Assemble emotions and deepen emotions
- 3) Enactment
- 4) Process the encounter
- 5) Integration and validating

First, the EFT therapists focuses on the current present experiences; for example, “as you talked about the fact that your wife cannot be soothed and you want to give up, how are you feeling right here and right now.” In EFT, we do not want to talk about the relationship alone. We want to experience the emotions in the relationship. Johnson (2019) explained that “the therapist attunes to, empathetically reflects, and clarifies cycles of affect regulation (e.g., numbing flips into rage which dissolves into shame and hiding) and cycles of interactions with others (as I hide, you harangue me and I shut you out more, triggering an increase in you aggression, and so on)” (p.55).

Second, for assembling emotions, therapists put different pieces of emotions together—What is the trigger? What is the meaning? What are the emotions or body sensations? What are your action tendencies? For example, when you hear that your wife keeps asking you questions, you think "I am never measuring up," so you leave the conversation, no longer talking. Alternatively, the therapist may want to get into the client’s primary emotions by deepening or

heightening emotions, such as the client's feeling of sadness that he is unable to connect with her wife. How does that sadness feel in his body?

The third step, enactment, is passing the important emotions, longings, needs, and protection tendencies to the partner. This is the core of EFT, which the whole process aims at achieving—going toward the partner's vulnerability and passing the core vulnerability over. The changing event in EFT is to use the alive emotions to be expressed to the other person to create corrective emotions for enhancing the bond. So, the new inner process becomes a series of new ways of interacting with and relating to real or imagined others (Johnson, 2019).

In step 4, therapists process the encounter. This step's main purpose is to process what the new interactional responses are for each other, and relates the responses to the present issues. Typical questions would be: “What is it like for you to express your sadness?” and “How is it like for the other person to hear your sadness about your pain?”

Step 5 presents the opportunity for therapists to celebrate or heighten the new discoveries and/or changes, and offer validation to build the couple's confidence. It is a stage to summarize what they did and what they achieved with each other, both at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. The therapist will reinforce the client's strong sense of self and others if that shows up in the session. For example, “Look at what you just did in the session. It took an enormous amount of courage for Sarah to express that she needs your connection and she felt extremely lonely in this relationship. Dan showed with great empathy by saying that you felt sad when hearing about her loneliness. Sarah took that comfort in this and Dan felt good and competent that he is able to be there for her.”

The reason why EFT focuses on emotion as the agent for change is, as Yalom (1989) shared, that “[t]he problem in therapy is always how to move from an ineffectual intellectual

appreciation of a truth about oneself to some emotional experience of it. It is only when therapy enlists deep emotions that it becomes a powerful force for change.” (pp. 22–23). Furthermore, Johnson (2019) identified why emotions are essential in creating change, especially in the attachment relationship. Emotions are viewed as experiential and systematic by Johnson (2004), indicating that when emotions are expressed, the listening people would have lived emotional reactions which looped back to the speaker. This is the music of the couple’s relationship and the key organizing component (Johnson, 2014).

To be specific, first, intensifying involvement with a fundamental emotional encounter will reshape that experience, enabling the individual to define, endure, and have confidence in their experiences. Moreover, transformation occurs through a fresh, more transparent, and authentic interaction with others. From an attachment perspective, a transformative therapeutic event encompasses the exploration, refinement, and revelation of emotions, facilitating improved regulation and heightened emotional intelligence (Salovey et al., 1993). The nature of change happens in EFT when clients experience vulnerability and express distressed vulnerability to their partner, and the partner receives it with empathetic responsiveness. This may help create a shift in the relationship and in how the individuals see themselves and others.

### **The Effectiveness of EFT**

EFT researchers found different factors that may make this approach work. Johnson and Talitman (1997) found that in EFT, therapeutic alliance predicted successful outcomes. Couples who made most gains at follow-up are the ones who indicated lower marital satisfaction initially and, in particular, males who indicated lower levels of using attachment figures for support. Males who made the most significant gains at termination were older and rated as less expressive. Feuerman (2018) emphasized that the importance of therapeutic presence is

identified as a determining factor in the EFT treatment process.

EFT also proves its attachment-based assumptions. Couples significantly decrease their attachment avoidance and, for the partners who complete blamer softening, their relationship-specific attachment anxiety also decreases. Additionally, session-by-session, decreases in relationship-specific attachment anxiety and avoidance are positively associated with increased satisfaction across sessions (Moser, et.al., 2016). The primary role in restructuring romantic relationships is experiencing and expressing emotion (Dalglish et al., 2015b). The key changing event in EFT is when the blamer starts to become softer, which creates a positive change in the couple's marital satisfaction (Dalglish et al., 2015a). Softening events are related to the success of EFT in a positive way. Another key factor in EFT is vulnerable emotions, which are also helpful in resolving emotional injury — instances when offending partners show a high level of supportiveness at the times when the injured partners express vulnerable emotions, and the offending partners express vulnerable emotions themselves (Mckinnon & Greenberg, 2017). The process research shows that EFT therapists achieve vulnerable emotions and pass that to the other partner to be able to get attuned responses, thus making EFT effective (Johnson & Greenberg, 1988; Greenman & Johnson, 2013), through TEA: Task aspect of the therapeutic alliance, Experiential depth, and Affiliative interactions. After building a therapeutic alliance with the couple clients, the therapist would have the mission of getting to the emotional depth to allow having affiliative interactions in the session.

Fostering these two ingredients of change to work by making the flow between experiential and systematic interventions, the flow is reflected by the basic “Tango moves” (Brubacher & Wiebe, 2019). Additionally, in order to facilitate the key ingredients to take effect, EFT has its techniques and interventions to allow the change to happen. In the next section, it

will explain the “tools” that EFT utilizes to achieve the treatment goals.

### **Techniques and Interventions**

Johnson (2019) views EFT Tango as the heart of EFT interventions. Various similar techniques are used across Tango moves, to expand and restructure emotions. Johnson (2004, 2019) identified some central techniques —reflection, validation, evocative responding, conjecture/interpretation, tracking, reframing, choreographing enactment, and the “how” of the technique.

#### ***Reflection***

In EFT, therapists need to be attuned to their clients’ inner experiences, and must be able to reflect on significant ones. Therapists try to put themselves in their clients’ place and feel empathetically with them, showing how therapists understand the clients’ internal world. One of the goals of effective reflection is to allow clients to feel heard, feel that the therapist “gets them”. A secondary goal is to slow the process down through the therapist's reflection when a client talks about their experiences in sessions (fights, etc.). A therapist can identify the negative cycle that clients have experienced, or some vulnerable emotion that they want to grasp and deepen. The therapist's job is to make what clients experience go from being vague to being explicit, so clients have more clarity about their emotions, thoughts and beliefs in their relationship. Johnson (2004) summarized that a good reflection can make a client’s experience “vivid, tangible, concrete, specific, and active” (p. 79).

#### ***Validation***

Validation serves a function to make clients feel safe when they talk about what they experience in the attachment relationship with their partner. Validation conveys the message that their experience is not beyond the “normal” range. Their actions, emotions and thinking pattern

are legitimate, “make sense.” Thus, clients feel assured and affirmed that they have legitimate reasons to have their own protective behaviors, emotions, view of self and others. Consequently, clients feel more de-escalated and grounded in the room.

### ***Evocative Responding***

Evocative responding elicits deeper emotions and thoughts. It directs clients to zoom into their experiences, including emotions, thoughts, perceptions and body sensations. For example, a therapist may ask, “How do you make sense of Sam putting his head down as you .....” or “What do you feel when he said he wants to spend time alone?” Additionally, a therapist may evoke a client’s responses by offering something uncertain to clients, letting clients correct and clarify their experiences. For example, a therapist may say “I noticed that your eyes stayed with him for the whole time and your eyes had watery moments as you experience his expression just now.” The therapist’s job is to bring clients to the edge of their experiences to potentially deepen their emotions or vulnerabilities.

### ***Interpretation/conjecture***

This is another skill that stretches the client’s leading edge of their experience. It is a tentative guess that awaits clients to confirm, modify or deny the accuracy, to have the chance to expand or deepen clients’ awareness of their “new” experiences. The interpretations are done by the therapist’s immersion into the client’s experiences and by finding out their emotional experiences through the attachment lens, then making inferences that slightly push clients to experience their leading edge, although this is experimental and tentative for clients. Clients are encouraged and expected to correct the therapist's interpretation. The previous four techniques are used when therapists want to work with clients’ experiences within. The next three techniques are to be worked between the partners.



### ***Tracking***

First, EFT therapists track the interactions. The interactions could be the fights that they bring to the session or the negative interactions that they are currently experiencing in the room. Therapists will detect their interpersonal dramas in their narrative or in the room. For example, therapists can track the “hot” interactions happening between the partners —“He ask you a question, why....? You feel like you're being criticized and you are wrong again. You feel shut down and stop responding. The more shut down she feels, the more you want to push to get an response.”

### ***Reframing***

In EFT, Johnson (2014) noted that the interactional responses need to be reframed from the lens of vulnerability and the attachment. For example, if one partner is unable to take in the other partner’s comfort, instead of simply following what client said (“she feels indifferent and she does not care”), the therapist may it framed as the client needs to protect herself from hurting again so she is unable feel comfort yet. In EFT, rather than finding who has more faults, or who is the bad guy in the relationship, therapists view the cycle or the negative dance, not the client(s) as the enemy.

### ***Enactment***

This last technique is a direct choreographing of interaction and responses. This powerful interaction entails that the therapist requests sharing a clear, direct message from one partner to another. Brubacher (2018) summarized what content needs to be shared from one partner to another. In the earlier stage of therapy, partners normally are encouraged to shared their typical protective moves and emotions when they pursue or withdraw in the negative cycle. For example, “I do go away and shut you out because I need to manage my anger and frustration,” or

“I do get very loud when I feel the hurt inside.” Both in early stages or the later stages of the work, the therapist's job is to access the client's emotions, being able to let clients get in touch with their deeper and vulnerable emotions. Thus, the therapist can facilitate clients to express these newly accessed emotions to their partner; for example, “I feel lonely and hurt that you do not talk to me.” In stage 2, enactments are conducted by having one person share their deepest attachment needs, e.g. “Can you assure me that I am important to you?”.

In addition to all the techniques listed above, EFT emphasizes *tone* —how these techniques need to be delivered in sessions. In EFT, clients are facilitated to engage with newly assessed emotions and the therapist would need to use the “tones” to support achieving the goals. Therefore, the tone of EFT techniques and interventions is reflected in the acronym RISSSC, which is Repeat, Imagery, Simple words, Slow pace, Soft voice and Client's words. Couples who come to couple's therapy often show escalated interactions with each other. Johnson (2019) makes the analogy that therapists need to be a security-priming mother to sooth an anxious child. EFT therapists need to engage clients' limbic emotional brain by avoiding using abstract intellectual words, but using a soft, soothing, slow voice, sometimes even silence, to help clients drop into their vulnerable space, to be able to achieve its “emotional vulnerability” goal.

Repeating serves different purposes. Repeating the cycle and the “dance positions” in which partners are currently placed helps clients understand what triggers their reactive responses, both emotionally and behaviorally. Repeating some emotional words that clients are on the edge of expressing may help them slowly not suppress, but rather come gradually to accept them. When clients use their own words, analogies/images, these become the pathways or “handles” that therapists can use to get access to deepening the client's inner world.

## **Culture**

The central question in this research is how effective/ineffective these EFT theories, techniques, interventions, stages and steps, as well as EFT tangos are when used in the Chinese cultural context, including Chinese therapists and Chinese couples.

Generally speaking, culture is defined as patterned ways of thinking, doing, reacting, acquired and transmitted largely by human groups (Kluckhohn, 1951). Lebron (2013) also describes culture as, “culture refers to society and its way of life. It is defined as a set of values and beliefs, or a cluster of learned behaviors that we share with others in a particular society, giving us a sense of belongingness and identity” (p.126). Culture reflects people’s way of thinking, what they do and the products they produce (Bodley 1999). The shared value and belief systems in that culture will guide people to perceive and respond to situations in their own (culturally) unique way. Causadia (2020) argues that culture is a fuzzy concept without any clear boundaries. According to his p-Model, coming from a systematic lens, culture is defined as a system of people, place and practices. Culture is formed by collective activities within specific locations, and in turn, it influences how individuals participate in these activities and construct those places.

Hofstede (2011)’s definition of culture is “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (p.3). Hofstede (1991) believed that culture is shaped by languages, economy, religion, policies, class, attitudes, education, customs, status and values. Culture, in this context, means a sense of wholeness for a nation. Sub-culture normally refers to family, school and organizations. Anthropologists often emphasize that there are multiple sub-cultures that create an overall culture.

Culture has been recognized as the core concept in the field of anthropology. Anthropologists usually define culture as the “shared set of (implicit and explicit) values, ideas,

concepts and rules of behavior that allow a social group to function and perpetuate itself” (Hudelson, 2004, p.345). Anthropologists view culture as a dynamic and evolving socially constructed reality that exist in the minds of people. It serves the function of allowing the people to function effectively in their social environment. Therefore, Hudelson (2004) drew the conclusion that culture is a multi-faceted concept and it is complex. The study of culture necessitates the appropriate conceptual models and research methods to reflect its complexity, multiple voices and views. This may be done through anthropology and qualitative research methods. Averill (2011) views culture as characterized by “the emotional lives of the members, rather than intellectual contents of their ideologies” (p.7).

From all the definitions offered above, we can say that culture is defined in its own context that it is unique to a social group or field. By looking at one culture from another culture, it cannot be said that one is right and the other is wrong. They are different due to their cultural roots and the ever-evolving social changes. Licht et al., (2005) noted that every society has similar issues and problems when they regulate human activity, and “the preferred ways of dealing with them are expressed in different societal value emphasis.” Therefore, in every society, culture is utilized as the collective programming of minds that differentiate one group from another (Hofstede 1984).

### ***Chinese Culture***

Wikipedia explains that Chinese people involves people of Chinese nationality, citizenship, and/or ethnicity. Collins Dictionary points out that it is “a person born or living in China or a descendant of the people of China.” For the purposes of this study, we focus on the culture and Chinese people/couples in China rather than the people who live outside China but identified themselves as ethnically Chinese. Thus, this paper sheds lights on national culture,

which is defined as the set of values, beliefs, and way of doing things shared by the members of a nation.

So, what is the Chinese culture in China? First of all, it must be said that there are many different subcultures in different regions of China, involving different subcultural values, traditions, beliefs and practices. As Trianda (2019) indicates, China, as one of many countries, has hundreds of cultures and corresponding subcultures. This study intends to review the culture on a national level. Chan and Leung (2014) defined Chinese culture as “an extensive set of behavioral norms and beliefs shared to a varying degree by Chinese people. It is based on an ancient civilization incorporates folk culture, dominant philosophical ideas and religious traditions” (p.2).

To understand the culture on a national level, Hofstede's model of six dimensions of a national culture is a great tool to understand one nation's culture and compare culture across different nations. Geert Hofstede's work, *Culture's Consequences* (1980), is one of the most cited sources in the Social Science Citation Index. Up until 2000s, Hofstede (2010) added the 6<sup>th</sup> dimension to its existing structure. The six dimensions are Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Long/Short Term Orientation, and Indulgence/Restraint.

### **1) Power Distance**

This term relates to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality (Hofstede, 2011). It means how much the less powerful members can accept that power is distributed unequally. According to Hofstede Insights (“China,” n.d.), it scores 80, which indicates the society believes that inequality among people is acceptable. There is no defensive force against upper leadership. People feel pleased about their capacity for initiative and

leadership. According to the research, it means that Chinese citizens are pleased with the inequalities that exist in China under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). China, a country with larger Power Distance, reflects that people feel more accepting with different interpersonal dynamics, i.e. being in a lower position than the more powerful.

For example, in the larger power-distance social context, teachers, parents and government officials hold the higher power over the students, children and citizens, respectively. The subordinates expect to do what they are told. Living in the larger power-distance culture, people feel more normal with this hierarchical relationship. Children, patients and students are expected to respect and listen to parents, doctors and teachers.

Brown (2018) argued that culture is about the symbols and practices that impact people's thinking; but who created the sets of values, beliefs and way of thinking? Other than the Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism traditions that Chinese culture is influenced by Brown (2018) argued that the The CCP functions not only as a political organization but also as a social and cultural movement. Its emphasis lies on shaping the party's narratives and influencing discourse to legitimize its rule, targeting both its members and the wider Chinese society.

Culture itself is meant to create meaning, mobilize and create emotions for those involved within it or engaged within it. Brown (2018) believed that the party tried to achieve that through at least one key area: the devising of a national narrative involving modernity and progress. Therefore, the new meanings, framework and stories that the CCP created are used for Chinese citizens to understand their lives and themselves through this framework.

Brown (2018) summarized that the power distance that the CCP creates in China is to produce "an obedience to a specific set of narratives --an historic one, a moral one, an ideological and finally an aesthetic one" (p.18).

## 2) Individualism vs Collectivism

Hofstede Insights defined this dimension as “the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members” (“China,” n.d.). The difference between individualism and collectivism is whether people act in the interest of their group or for their own. In general, the field of psychology has two opposing paradigms of culture —individualism and collectivism. The core difference between them is self and group. Triandis (1995) clarified that self is an aspect of some collective in collective culture, whereas self is independent in the group in individualistic culture. Triandis (2019) provided the definitions of individualism and collectivism — Collectivism is defined as,

a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives (family, co-workers, tribe, nation); are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals for these collectives over their own personal goals; and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives” (Triandis, 2019, p. 2).

Individualism, on the other hand, is defined as,

a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; give priority to their own personal goals over the goals of others” (Triandis, 2019, p. 2).

On Hofstede Insights, China has a score of 20 and is regarded as a highly collectivist culture. However, recent research conducted by Zhang and Han (2021) shows surprising results that on the same measurement tool, Chinese college students are slightly more individualistic than their American counterparts. Their paper drew the conclusion that Chinese people’s individualism is

on the rise and the moral value of collectivism eventually will be replaced by individualistic values. Although it seems that it could be a trend in some populations, the limitation of this research is that it only targeted some college students, which does not represent the vast majority of Chinese people. Cao (2009) pointed out that the level of collectivism is lowering among the young, the wealthy and the urbanized groups. Gong, Zhu, Gurel and Xie (2020) identified that In general, collectivism tends to be more prevalent in South and North China, while individualism is more commonly observed in the Yangzi River Basin and Northeast China. According to the research above, it is hard to generally determine whether China is an individualist or collectivist culture in a binary manner since, over the past decades, China has experienced significant social, cultural and economic changes.

### **3) Masculinity vs Femininity**

In this dimension, masculinity or femininity does not refer to an individual's characteristic, but a societal value. It talks about how, on one end, a society that values masculine attributes, such as assertiveness, achievement, heroism and success, and values material rewards and competition, is more materialistic. On the other end of the spectrum, a society that values feminine attributes, such as modesty, care, cooperation, empathy and quality of life, tends to be more consensus-oriented.

Hofstede Insights pointed out that China is a Masculine society ("China," n.d.). It is competitive and success driven. Success is defined by material goods, social status, such as whether you are in the high management role or you are your own boss, or you are in a high government official role. Due to the competitiveness, people tend to/have to prioritize work over family. Leisure time is not valued and it is sacrificed for work. Confucianism highly values education and this is reflected in Chinese society — students need to get A's or top scores to be



able to feel successful. Other important masculinity quality that might show in Chinese society is that people are inclined to have admiration for having little needs, being strong, and are less sympathetic towards vulnerability. Additionally, there are clear gender roles, such as fathers are supposed to be factual, assertive and ambitious, whereas mothers are feeling, nurturing, caring.

A recent article argued that women in the business world are treated as equally as men. The emphasis on the balancing aspects of Yin and Yang in Chinese culture suggests that many gender biases are absent in China (Hofstede's Cultural Framework as Applied to China, n.d.). In this sense, Chinese society also values the feminine qualities and scores similarly to some western countries.

#### **4) Uncertainty Avoidance**

Uncertainty Avoidance is defined as whether the society feels comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. The central question becomes whether we should control the future or just let it happen. China scored low in this dimension. Hofstede (2011) noted that, like other countries, English-speaking countries and Nordic countries, ambiguity is acceptable in China. The Chinese language has ambiguous meanings that seem to lack clarity for westerners. Chinese people generally do not feel overwhelmed by the ambiguities in life. They try to have fewer rules and more flexibility. They are open to topinions that may be different from what they are used to.

#### **5) Long-Term vs Short-Term Orientation**

This dimension means "how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future" ("China," n.d.). Countries with short-term orientation value traditions and norms, view social change and personal change in a suspicious way, focus on the present, such as social spending and consumption. Countries with long-term orientation are more pragmatic. They value effort and thrift. They attribute success

and failure to effort. They tend to save money and make funds available for investment. They use tradition to adapt to present circumstances. China is regarded as having a pragmatic culture in which people believe that truth depends on the situation, context; they value effort, resilience and perseverance.

## **6) Indulgence vs Restraint**

Based on “happiness research,” indulgence allows people to have relatively “free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that controls gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms” (Hofstede, 2011, p.15). Eastern countries tend to be restrained. China, as an Eastern country, does not put emphasis on people’s needs and wants, and controls the gratification of their desires. Their actions are somehow controlled by social norm. People in China could feel ashamed of having fun and indulging themselves could make them feel they are doing something wrong. In this kind of culture, like the Chinese culture, freedom of speech, leisure, sports, positive emotions are not emphasized. The society has more police officers than its indulgence-culture counterparts.

In conclusion, through the six different dimensions of national culture, according to Hofstede’s research (“China”, n.d.), China has large power distance, weak uncertain avoidance (comfortable with ambiguity), is a collectivist culture, with an emphasis on masculinity values, long-term orientation and restraint. However, there are some arguments about where China is on the spectrum of each dimension. As there are hundreds different cultures in China, it is hard to say China’s national culture is accurately reflected on Hofstede’s research. However, it captures some of the core values that are embedded in Chinese society. This research may contribute to explaining and understanding EFT research in Chinese culture.

## Emotions in Chinese culture

Bond (1993) found that one of the main differences between Chinese culture and Western culture, is that Chinese culture shows lower frequency, intensity, and duration of the emotion being experienced because, culturally, it is believed that emotions have implications for the notion of psychopathology. In terms of expression of emotion, it is “carefully regulated out of concern for its capacity to disrupt group harmony and status hierarchy” (p.245). Ethnographic studies provide insights that Chinese culture values emotional control and moderation. (Potter, 1988). Studies have also discovered a connection between emotional expressiveness and conscious emotional awareness. Being mindful of their emotional expressiveness can be beneficial for individuals to gauge the intensity of their feelings (Immordino-Yang et al., 2016). In Chinese culture, being aware of emotions and expressing emotions are unnatural actions.

Wei et al. (2013) discovered strong results that Individuals in Eastern cultures often prioritize emotional suppression as a means to maintain interpersonal harmony, while those in Western cultures may or may not engage in emotion suppression for the same purpose. Emotion expression and emotion suppression seem to work in each culture. The recent research conveyed that emotion suppression was not correlated with positive interaction outcomes with Belgian couples, but does not harm Japanese couples (Schouten et al., 2020).

In their study, Markus and Kitayama (1991) found that western culture has been found to place a higher regard on emotional arousal to be able to influence others, whereas Asian culture values suppressing emotions to be able to accommodate, adjust and adapt to other people. So, high arousal and low arousal are used accordingly to meet their social norm in both the Western and Eastern cultures.

Gudykunst et al., (1996) found in their research that westerners favor low-context

communication, whereas easterners prefer high-context communication. Low-context communication emphasizes expressing ideas explicitly, and high-context communication expects the listener to find out what the talker means through non-verbal cues and context (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The goal of having indirect communication is to avoid confrontation, protect the feelings of each person (to not lose face), and maintain the harmony in the group. Group harmony, relationship, respecting the hierarchy are often prioritized over goal achievement. Therefore, from the Eastern cultural perspective, low-context communication could seem to be blaming, demanding, self-centered and inconsiderate. Hiew et al., (2015) suggested that direct and expressive communication is positively related to couple relationships in the West, which may not be generalized to Chinese couples. The cultural belief, which is very different from western values, is that feelings should be sensed by others, rather than being imposed through clear expression (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). The empirical research showed that people who are insecurely attached and identify themselves as individualistic tend to cope and seek social support (Frias et al., 2014). The explanation is that defining oneself as independent would increase the influence of personality on emotion regulation strategies. People from collectivist cultures would likely feel harder to reach for social support in general. It might include their intimate partner. Both individualistic and collectivist individuals who are insecurely attached hold negative expectations that others would not be able to provide support (Frias et al., 2014) and feel anxious and scared about asking, or avoid asking for support. Therefore people who are identified as having an insecure attachment style and collectivist cultures tend not to seek support, including their partner. This research implies that Chinese couples might not seek each other's support when they are distressed, including expressing challenging emotions or experiences. This factor might make their emotional expression harder.

In terms of expressing their emotions, there are differences between the East and West. The research found that Chinese Americans who are less acculturated tend to use more somatic and social words to describe their emotions than European Americans (Tsai, et al., 2004). Kleinman (1986) found that Chinese clients experiencing depression frequently mention the presence of physical symptoms rather than emotional ones in their reports.

The notion of emotion involves the experiences that people have across all cultures. There are some emotions that are encouraged and found to be very functional in one culture, but are viewed negatively and non-functional in another culture. For example, shame is valued as a positive emotion in China, and it can be seen as modesty, embarrassment or humility (Greenberg, 2021). But shame is very unbearable in western individualistic culture. It can be predicted that emotions are hard to be identified in general with Chinese clients, and anger is even more challenging for them to admit, because they experience lower emotional arousal, and anger is also a socially undesirable emotion. If shame is a tolerable emotion, they may not find it a hard, intolerable, problematic emotion.

However, EFT is a western value-based therapy model that highlights the significance of sending a clear message of the vulnerable feelings to your loved one. EFT emphasizes expressing an individual's loving and attachment vulnerability behind all the blaming, anger and fear. Declarations of love appear to be more critical and valued in an individualistic society, which shows a sense of agency and independence (Wilkins & Gareis, 2005). The cultural differences in expressing emotions may place a barrier in EFT treatment process, since the goal and the changing ingredients of EFT are emotional depth and affiliative interaction. Therefore, the cultural barriers to having emotions and expressing emotions would very likely make the changing events in EFT hard to achieve.

## **EFT in different cultures**

Greenman and Johnson (2013) stressed that EFT has mainly focused on white, middle-class couples. The research lacks cultural consideration, although attachment theory has been proven to be universally applicable across cultures. It has been problematic since therapists, especially in urban areas, are meeting increasingly diverse populations. This is a research article that was written almost ten years ago. It pointed out the research gap that,

there have not yet been any process studies of EFT with members of diverse populations. It is essential to examine client and therapist processes carefully to ensure that the assumptions of EFT and the findings of the process studies that do exist (e.g., importance of attachment and emotional experiencing, therapist facilitation of affiliative interactions) do indeed apply to people from a wide range of ethnic and cultural background.” (p.57)

Wiebe and Johnson (2016) identified that “the only area in which empirical research is missing is in testing EFT across different cultures.” (p.404). EFT researchers point out the key importance of having cultural consideration when doing Emotionally Focused Therapy. Karakurt & Keiley (2009) identified that a human being's basic need is “having a sense of belonging to a historical continuity” (p.13), regardless of how the culture has been changing in China over the last 40 years.

The current EFT culture-related research showed that EFT therapists must be aware of clients' culturally verbal or non-verbal emotional expressions in sessions (Karakurt and Keiley, 2009). Linhof and Allan (2019) also recognized the importance of including narration to bridge the cultural gap in therapy sessions by having a narrative framework so that couples have more profound understanding of each other.

The results of a study done with couples from Japanese culture through a doctorate thesis

show validation of the universality of attachment and the importance of emotional accessibility and responsiveness in enhancing adult bonding (Hattori, 2014). However, the model needs some culturally sensitive adjustments in different steps of EFT. The potential flaw of this research is that there are conflicts of interest when “the researcher, who is from Japan, provided 15 EFT therapy sessions to the three couples in Japanese” (p.46). This might affect the therapy process and results.

There are no published peer-reviewed articles discussing the effectiveness of EFT on Chinese couples. There is a Social-Emotional Relationship approach that was applied and researched with Chinese couples. They found intangible loss, quiet fortitude/not burdening others, and duty to the family are broad areas of experience that are beneficial to understand intimacy among Asian couples (Chenfeng et al., 2017). The other doctorate thesis study (Chang, 2014) focused on Chinese couples who experience infidelity in the relationship. The research data collection for this study was done by interviewing the field experts and practitioners.

Since EFT tango reflects the EFT treatment process in every session with couples and, in its process, EFT has been lacking any research with couples from non-western cultures, it is important to study the process of what makes EFT work, not work or needs adjustment. As the research shows that therapeutic alliance, experiential depth and affiliative interactions (Brubacher, 2018) are the key changing ingredients in EFT couple work, it is also important to zoom into Chinese couples' experiences with emotional depth, and to express the depth of emotion/vulnerable emotion to their partners. However, the cultural differences regarding engaging with emotions, embracing emotions and expressing emotions to the loved one between East and West must be taken into consideration.

Tango move 2 and Tango move 3, which are related to taking clients to experience the

emotional depth and share vulnerable emotions may be crucial in adapting EFT to Chinese couples. Because culturally Chinese clients may have difficulties with identifying, owning, and expressing emotions, it can be predicted that these two Tango moves will be culturally hard for Chinese EFT therapists and clients. There has not been process-based research exploring how Chinese EFT therapists address the task of deepening clients' emotions and facilitating clients' expression of vulnerability to their partners. In this study, the research will be centered on the EFT therapists' experiences of facilitating EFT Tango moves 2 and 3, which are related to EFT's key changing emotional events.

### **Summary**

This literature review section starts by introducing EFT's theoretical constructs — systemic, attachment, and humanistic. EFT believes that every human being is wired to connect with others. By looking at the adult loving relationship, attachment theory explains the pain of disconnection and loneliness that causes couples' relationships to go downhill. Attachment theory explores how each of the partners see themselves and others. Attachment is also demonstrated to be applicable across cultures, as attachment quality will affect couples' relationships across different cultures.

This chapter also reviewed the different stages and steps of EFT, from the beginning stage of de-escalation and assessment to the second stage of reconstruction and ending with the third stage of consolidation. The Model of EFT has been proven to be an evidenced-based approach for more than 30 years. It has been proven to be useful with different races, classes, mental-health conditions, chronic physical illnesses, etc. However, there is still little research that shows how EFT is effective with the different cultural groups in the treatment process. EFT has been effective by having its unique techniques, and steps. The changing ingredients are



narrowed down to therapeutic alliance, emotional depth, and affiliative interactions. This is closely related to emotion identification, perception of emotions, what emotion means in other cultures, expressing emotions, expressing vulnerable emotions, and expressing vulnerable emotions in an intimate relationship. The literature showed that other cultures, such as China, have great barriers to achieving those due to East-West cultural differences.

In EFT, EFT tango is the model that therapists follow in every sessions. So, it is easier to find out what EFT therapists may do to deepen emotions and facilitate emotion expression in sessions, and how clients experience the facilitation of emotion deepening and expressing emotions. Thus, the literature elaborates on the operation of EFT moves in sessions. After that, the chapter addressed the possible cultural reasons why EFT could be difficult for Chinese couples to access emotions and express emotions. There is no peer-reviewed published research that has been done to explore how EFT works on Chinese couples. The key to finding out whether it is working or not is to identify how EFT techniques would be enough to address the cultural barriers on emotions during Tango move 2 and 3, so that EFT can make the key changing events happen and couple bonding can be strengthened. This section also reviewed the key techniques that allow changing events to happen in EFT, such as reflecting, reframing, heightening, tracking and choreographing interaction. These skills are carefully done by RISSSC-- Repeating, Images, Slow, Soft, Specific and Client's words.

Additionally, this chapter closely explored the various definitions of culture, Chinese culture, and how emotion operates in Chinese societies. The main focus lies on discovering the Chinese culture on a national level. By reviewing the 6 dimension of national culture, although this conclusion cannot capture so many different cultures in China, it still shows the cultural reality as a country in general. It showed some traits of collectivism, larger power distance,

restraint, and long-term oriented culture. It provided an understanding of Chinese culture, what the sets of values, norms, traditions, as well as ways of thinking and practicing in Chinese society might be. In terms of emotions, the Chinese population has difficulties perceiving, accessing and expressing emotions, due to its cultural barriers towards the emotional. Thus, there is reasonable suspicion that EFT therapists might experience some difficulties accessing Chinese clients' deeper emotions and facilitating the emotion expression within couples.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

This study aimed to explore Chinese EFT therapists' cultural experiences of working with Chinese couples in EFT couple therapy. Additionally, it explored how EFT therapists negotiate their cultural background with EFT, an approach that was first developed to serve white middle-class couples, when working with Chinese clients. This chapter covers the design (what the chosen approach is and why it can address the research question), research question (what is the focus of the research), participants (how to get the participants of the research) and procedure (the procedure utilized to get the research data). The chapter ends by indicating how to analyze data (how to process data through a phenomenological perspective).

### **Design**

This research was conducted by using a phenomenological qualitative approach to discover what Chinese therapists' emotional experiences are in conducting EFT sessions, facilitating clients' emotional engagement, and sharing vulnerable emotions in EFT couple sessions. Semi-structured interviews were used for collecting data with 10 Chinese EFT therapists who have experienced EFT or are in the process of experiencing EFT treatment and completed EFT externship and core skills training. Denzin and Lincon (2011) recognized that qualitative research is used to emphasize the importance of context to understand the phenomenon of this subject. For counseling, qualitative research provides the opportunity to find out local interactions in the therapy process, as well as the meanings for counselors and clients (Heppner et al., 2016). Ponterotto (2010) identified the critical value of utilizing a qualitative method to conduct research in counseling because it can focus on multicultural topics and

bridges the science-practice gap (Heppner et al., 2016). For this study, and its focused on the use of a cultural lens of viewing emotion, a qualitative approach is especially beneficial.

The choice to use a phenomenological approach for this topic is that it focuses on the essential structure of the “thing itself,” the phenomenon. It focuses on the lived experiences of the human being and describes its essence. Wertz (2005) summarized the characteristics of the phenomenological approach in psychology research as follows: “descriptive, used phenomenological reductions, investigates the intentional relationship between persons and situations, and provides psychological essences (that is, the structures of meaning immanent in human experience) through imaginative variation” (P.170). Wertz (2005) also emphasized the significance of using this approach with cultural studies that “it can provide culturally critical and emancipatory knowledge,” because it does not get bounded by any theoretical ideologies and honors persons' own experiences and the multiperspectivism found in the life-world. Wertz (2005) argued that phenomenology shares the same purposes with psychological study, which are meanings, and subjective processes.

In the context of this study, EFT is seen as effective with Chinese couples, but barriers are also acknowledged because of cultural differences regarding emotion. The phenomenological approach allows the researcher to delve into the essential qualities of the subject matter, understanding the cultural meanings, and multi-perspective processes to grasp the reality when facilitating to engage emotions.

### **Research Questions**

The main research question is:

What is the experience of Chinese EFT therapists working with Chinese couples?

### **Setting**

Due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, the researcher was unable to collect data by flying back to China and meeting the participants in person. Additionally, participants were located across China and it was hard to interview them when they were located physically in different cities. Thus, the site of research was selected to be online. The place for interviewees to be interviewed is flexible as long as that is the place participants feel relaxed and private. Pseudonyms were used for the individuals/couples who participate in the research.

### **Participants**

In this research, the researcher found participants by sending recruitment e-flyers through the EFT Chinese therapist network. There were 100-150 dollars given to therapists who were willing to participate in the research interviews. There are around 50 certified EFT therapists in mainland China and many therapists who have completed externship and core skills training (part of EFT certification training), currently practicing EFT with their clients in China. Thus, the researcher reached out to these Chinese therapists individually to introduce the study and the recruitment information.

This phenomenological study used criterion sampling. The criteria were that participants needed to be experiencing, or have experienced, this phenomenon. As Moser and Korstjens (2017) noted, for this phenomenological approach, participants need to have a shared experience and “vary in characteristics and in their individual experiences” (p.11). Therefore, the requirement was to recruit participants who either are certified as an EFT therapists or experienced all EFT mandatory training and currently treating Chinese couples in China for two or more years. The participants needed to identify themselves as Chinese in China.

### **Procedures**

After obtaining 10 participants who met the criteria, the researcher proceeded to collecting data. The data was collected through semi-structured and in-depth interviews. The researcher arranged interview sessions with EFT-oriented therapists, talking about their EFT therapists' experiences in the interview. The interview took place online through Zoom and took about 1.5 hours. The sessions were recorded with the participants' permission. After getting the permission, each session was recorded through Zoom to be analyzed later.

### **The Researcher's Role**

As the human instrument to gather data in this research, the researcher may have brought his cultural views into the process of collecting and analyzing the data. Based on the couples the researcher has met, males tend to avoid criticism and withdraw from the relationship, while females tend to pursue the relationship by criticizing what they are not getting from their male partners. Researchers might bring their bias about males and females into the process. Neubauer et al., (2019) identified that the life world of the researcher is important in this inquiry process, and that, by using researcher's past experience, knowledge and education, it is valuable for the researcher to follow the inquiry to be able to get their subjective experiences. At the same time, the researcher's past experience, education, and qualifications may become obstacles to getting rich data. For example, the researcher is also the therapist, and the momentary confusion with another role as a therapist may overcome their experience with EFT therapy.

## **Data Collection**

The only method used in this data collection was interviews.

### **Interviews**

Englander (2020) explained the reason why phenomenological psychological interview can help the research to reach qualitative depth “is not only actively driven by interpersonal interaction, but it is also “fundamentally guided” by the method of participant observation, this to achieve its purpose—that is, qualitative depth.” Thus, in this process, the researcher would engage with the participants communicatively and interpersonally in a we-relationship. Additionally, researchers can observe how the phenomenon shows in the interview process and the meaning of it. Especially, for this research, I was able to find their emotional quality by describing it, presenting the interview process, and interactions with their partners. Examples of interview questions are as follow:

- 1) How much have you been aware of your emotions in the session as a therapist?
- 2) How does your own cultural upbringing play a role in your EFT work with Chinese clients?
- 3) How do your own emotions affect the effectiveness of therapy?
- 4) How do you come across Chinese clients engaging in emotions?
- 5) Are there any barriers for them to deepen emotions, finding out their body sensations?
- 6) What are the cultural barriers/challenges in working with Chinese clients, when using this white middle-class-based therapeutic approach?
- 7) Apart from emotions, what are other elements that are hard for you to follow on EFT’s steps, stages?
- 8) What are the barriers when working on Tango Steps?

9) Move 1, reflecting the current process – What are your experiences in general, and cultural experiences of doing this Move with Chinese clients?

10) Move 2, Deepen/Assembly emotions– What are your experience in general, and cultural experiences of doing this Move with Chinese clients.

11) Move 3, Passing the message to the partner– What are your experiences in general, and cultural experiences of doing this Move with Chinese clients?

12) Move 4, Process the interactions– What are your experiences in general, and cultural experiences of doing this Move with Chinese clients?

13) Move 5, summarize what the couple just did– What are your experiences in general, or cultural experiences of doing this Move with Chinese clients?

The first three questions are related to the first goal 1) the experience of therapists' own emotions and culture when utilizing EFT with Chinese clients. Question 4-6 are meant to explore therapists' experience of working with Chinese clients' emotions, body sensations, and their culture aspects in therapy. Question 7 is one question to find out what EFT used to be emphasizing but still important, steps and stages. What are their experiences and cultural experiences with that? The last five questions are related to therapists' experiences of working with Chinese couples through EFT Tango different moves. The therapist would spend some time slowing down to help participant to reflect on their experience with each Tango move.

### **Data Analysis**

After all ten interviews were completed, the data collected through the interviews was analyzed. The researcher started to generate themes from the analysis of significant statements (Creswell & Poll, 2017). The researcher looked for significant statements related to the phenomenon of how Chinese couple clients deal with emotions in the session. In this stage, the



researcher explored how context influences how participants experience the phenomenon, including family context, cultural context, etc. The richness of human beings' unique contextual information gathered in this research contributed positively to understanding what really happened to this couple. After the themes were obtained from the data, the researcher evaluated the themes further and summarized the essence of the phenomenon.

### **Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

Booth (1992) indicated that the credibility of one specific research method depends on the goals of the research and how to design and implement the research. Collier-Reed et al., (2009) identify two key constructs for the phenomenological approach to be valid. The first factor is the sampling. Are the selected participants able to be related to the research questions? In this research, the research question was to investigate Chinese therapists' experience. Therefore, the focus was on Chinese, although it has limits of generalizing to Chinese couples' tendencies due to the nature of qualitative research. This research responds to the research question on Chinese couples' shared experiences with emotions. Another factor that influences credibility is the structure and content of the interviews. This research had to provide its richness to determine the completeness of the data collection (Collier-Reed, et al., 2009). This research ultimately showed the richness of the collected data. In the data-analysis phase, researchers need to hold a thorough and open attitude to be able to receive the meaning that words try to convey. This study has accomplished that part to ensure the validity of the data.

#### **Dependability and Confirmability**

For dependability and confirmability of the research, first, the researcher reread the transcript again, again, and again, up to five times, to ensure the consistency of the data

interpretation. The researcher also invited another researcher to evaluate the nature, meaning and common themes from the transcript to ensure the main researcher was not biased. During the interview, the researcher paid attention to using non-leading questions to ensure clients shared what they wanted to share without feeling they had to say something the interviewer wanted them to say.

### **Transferability**

Although this research involves 10 participants, it cannot represent the larger EFT therapists' community in China. It cannot have the capacity to generalize to other cultures. However, the richness of the participants' experiences within the context is reflected in this paper. This could also imply the transferability of this research as qualitative research.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Participants were informed that their names would be altered in this paper to protect their privacy. The research ensured the participants that the Zoom platform where the interview took place is a HIPPA-protected and paid service so that this is a confidential space. The researcher also informed all participants that the information gathered through this research would not be shared with other people and contexts. After the research was completed, the video recordings were erased. All the videos and personal information were password protected and stored electronically.

This interview process was not intended for therapy or any healing purposes. The researcher is not responsible for the emotional discomfort that this interview brought to the participants. However, participants have the right to attend, continue or quit their interviews at their own will.

### **Summary**

This chapter started with an overview and continued with a discussion of the design of the research, the central research questions, the setting of the interview, how to sample the participants, the procedures of this interview, as well as the researcher's role, data collection (semi-structured interviews) and analysis. This chapter finished by evaluating the trustworthiness of the research by looking at credibility, dependability, and confirmability and transferability. Lastly, the chapter noted ethical considerations during the process of this research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to delve into the experiences of Chinese EFT therapists working with their couple clients. As mentioned earlier, the research sought answers to the following questions: 1) What challenges and triumphs do Chinese EFT therapists face while working with Chinese couples? 2) How do cultural variations influence the emotional dynamics of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) with Chinese couples? 3) How do Chinese EFT therapists modify their therapeutic approach to navigate cultural differences and augment the efficacy of EFT for Chinese couples?

This chapter introduces the recruitment process and outlines generic information about the participants. Detailed demographic information is not provided to safeguard the participants' privacy. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their identities. Following the general participant introduction, the results derived from the semi-structured interviews are presented. Using a phenomenological approach, twelve themes were identified through clustering and categorization. These themes correspond well to the three research questions listed above, presented in a sequential order. Chapter Four concludes with a summary of the findings from the data collection process.

### **Participants**

This study was conducted by interviewing Chinese EFT therapists in China. The participants were recruited through two former EFT colleagues. They contacted certified and nearly certified EFT therapists in China (amounting to less than 50) and introduced the research project to them. By the time the researcher received the referral from my former EFT colleagues, they had already agreed to participate in this study.

During the data gathering process, 13 participants were interviewed. However, 11 interviews were utilized for this research due to one participant not meeting the research requirements (not actively working with couples) and another participant's interview not being recorded, likely due to an internet speed issue on either the participant's or the researcher's end. All remaining participants met the requirements to be a part of this research study:

1. They are all Chinese.
2. They have either completed all the mandatory EFT training or are certified EFT therapists.
3. They are actively meeting clients on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.
4. The 11 recruited participants were assigned pseudonyms as follows:

Kate, Sharon, David, Larry, Laura, Rita, Tina, Nancy, Amy, Lucinda, and Mandy.

All participants involved in this study are Chinese and have received training in these methodologies for seven to ten years. Ten of them are certified EFT therapists, and one is close to being certified. Two therapists, Larry and David, are male, while the remaining therapists are female. Their ages range from 20s to 50s. To ensure the privacy of the participants, specific demographic information was not disclosed.

## **Results**

The objective of this study was to explore the profound experiences of Chinese EFT therapists while working with Chinese couples. Eleven participants shared their valuable insights and experiences with EFT. A total of 12 distinct themes emerged from the data analysis.

### **Theme Development**

The participants were recruited using a snowballing approach. They were provided with the consent form 72 hours prior to the interview. Upon signing the consent form via DocuSign,

the semi-structured interview was conducted as per a scheduled arrangement. All participants signed the consent form before the commencement of the interview. The individual referring participants, familiar with the recruitment criteria, assessed participant eligibility before making referrals to the researcher. Upon receiving a referral through the messaging system, the researcher initiated the interview scheduling process.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted using the teleconferencing platform Voov. The interview sessions were also recorded through Voov. During the interviews, the researcher took notes and remained mindful of his own thoughts and feelings, ensuring he maintained the role of a researcher collecting data through conversation, rather than that of a learner or therapist. Following the recording, the researcher transcribed the sessions into Chinese using the machine translation app, Lark. Once the transcription was completed, he reviewed the text and made corrections as needed. In those cases where the meaning was unclear, the researcher referred back to the video and transcribed the words that were not accurately transcribed by the app. Subsequently, he used Lark again to transcribe the Chinese into English, followed by a review of the content and correction of a few translation errors. Upon completing all the transcriptions, all real names were replaced with designated pseudonyms.

The data underwent analysis utilizing Smith's (1999) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. Initially, the researcher thoroughly reviewed the first set of transcripts multiple times, capturing initial thoughts and potential codes. Subsequently, he documented key words and potential themes in the margins. Upon completing the analysis of the initial transcript, a substantial number of codes were amassed. The subsequent step involved grouping these codes to unveil clusters with significant meanings.

Once thematic clusters emerged, the same analytical approach was applied to the remaining transcripts. The subsequent stage aimed at identifying shared aspects of experiences across all participants by pinpointing commonly raised subjects. These shared elements were then recognized as the significant essence of their experiences.

Following the identification of important themes, the researcher revisited the original transcripts, examining the detailed accounts of these crucial experiences with a more focused lens. This phase allowed for a comprehensive exploration. The finalization process involved consolidating shared themes across all participants and listing relevant abstracts derived from different participants under each theme.

### **Themes**

After reading, transcribing, and carefully reviewing the transcripts, as well as watching the interview videos, the researcher was able to identify recurring words, themes, subjects, and perspectives. In total, 12 distinct themes were identified:

*Table 1*

Theme	Description	Number of participants who mentioned this theme
1. Learning EFT	EFT is challenging to learn and necessitates practice and supervision.	5
2. Therapist's fatigue	EFT can be draining and emotionally exhausting for clinicians.	5
3. Therapists' personal emotions:	EFT therapists need to confront and address their personal emotional issues	7
4. Early therapy termination	Clients frequently terminate therapy services once they have experienced a degree of de-escalation. This tendency arises from their predominant expectation of therapy primarily focusing on de-escalation rather than the goal of establishing intimacy.	6

5. Challenging population:	Working with the older population can be challenging, whereas working with younger generation is much easier	4
6. Effective techniques:	Empathy/Validation, as well as Enactment (tango 3) has shown great effectiveness with Chinese clients.	10
7. Attachment theory in China:	Attachment theory holds relevance across cultures, demonstrating effectiveness, particularly in Chinese culture.	5
8. Emotions for the Chinese:	The notion of emotions, or emotions under a western culture definition, is less common and familiar within Chinese culture.	9
9. Emotions for Chinese men	Chinese men, especially those emotionally withdrawn males or those prone to rational thinking, often struggle with emotional work through EFT	9
10. Emotion deepening and sharing:	Emotional deepening/vulnerability, and staying in emotions/vulnerability, expressing emotions/vulnerabilities are all difficult for Chinese couple in therapy.	6
11. View on Tango three:	Chinese therapists have flexible views about Tango three, enactment with their partner.	5
12. Effective techniques for men:	For clients struggling to access their emotions, particularly male clients, employing techniques like slice it thinner (i.e. breaking it down into smaller, manageable steps), offering empathy and validation, and establishing a safe alliance with the clients are all crucial in effectively working with them or teaching them about emotions.	10

### ***Theme 1: Learning EFT***

Sandberg and Knestel (2011) affirmed that achieving proficiency in EFT necessitates substantial training and ongoing supervision. Engaging in couple therapy can be likened to an art form (Palmer & Johnson, 2002). Within the study's findings, four participants expressed that the EFT model benefits from supervision, which greatly enhanced their competence in its application. Two of them specifically highlighted the demanding nature of skill acquisition, underscoring the need for extensive practice (See *Table 2*).

The primary objective of EFT is to facilitate the processing of their emotional experiences in a non-judgmental manner. As Nancy aptly noted, although the concepts may seem



straightforward in a classroom setting, applying them in practice is "really, really difficult." EFT Practitioners must avoid getting entangled in the specific content or narratives and instead analyze the couple's conflicts through an attachment lens in a brief timeframe. All four participants underscored the crucial role of ongoing supervision when studying and practicing this approach. As Greenberg and Johnson (1988) point out, one of EFT's inherent challenges is the necessity to focus attention on both interpsychic and intrapsychic processes occurring between couples and within individuals.

*Table 2*

Theme 1: Learning EFT EFT is challenging to learn and necessitates practice and supervision	
Lucinda	"Because it has three stages, nine steps, including Tango, all laid out step by step. That framework, what you need to do, but in the actual practice, you really need a lot of practice. It's about getting a better understanding of the theory and being able to apply it more effectively..... Yes, a lot of practice, and then continuous supervision. I basically followed a supervisor for about three years, once a week"
Sharon	"I feel that seeking supervision is crucial, especially in the initial stages. Supervision felt like a lifeline for me. After a session, I immediately wanted to discuss it in supervision. It was as if it had to be done promptly and immediately."
Nancy	<p>"Since I started learning EFT, I've made it a practice to have supervision sessions after each case. I understand that not everyone follows this approach, but it has been beneficial for me personally. It serves as a valuable space for me to process my anxiety and emotions."</p> <p>"When I didn't notice this change, I would feel like I couldn't empower the other person. So, each supervision session is actually quite important for me. One aspect is to clarify my own thoughts, and the other is that supervision might empower me."</p> <p>"EFT sounds simple, just listening to the class seems simple, but it's really, really difficult to apply. And also, you have to hold in your mind, like Liu Ting, I think she's amazing, she can put everything into a framework to understand their unmet needs, this attachment need, and that's it."</p>
Rita	"I do find it challenging. The certification process for EFT is more demanding than other approaches. It seems that other modalities don't

	have a specific or rigorous certification process. I feel that EFT requires creating recordings and meeting certain standards, which adds to the complexity. It's a skill that necessitates long-term commitment and deliberate practice. It requires a lot of practice and continuous supervision for skill development.”
David	“And then, the five of us started to form a study group. Yes, we persisted throughout. Understand, we persisted for a year or two. Two years, right?..., about two years. Wow, I think this stage is quite important. Hmm, okay, having companions to practice with you. When you feel some progress, you may face setbacks, but overcoming those setbacks, eh, feeling some progress again, just like that. Okay, it's like a spiral upward.”

### ***Theme 2: Therapist Fatigue***

As can be gathered from Table 3, participants revealed another challenging aspect of EFT — Five out of eleven participants reported that conducting EFT with couples is emotionally and physically draining. All five participants emphasized the intense fatigue using terms like "very, very" and "extremely." Some participants identified that this exhaustion stems from the therapists' deep emotional involvement during sessions with clients. Additionally, two participants recognized physical signs of exhaustion, such as muscle tension, fidgeting, increased appetite, and lower back pain (See *Table 3*).

*Table 3*

Theme 2: Therapist fatigue EFT can be draining and emotionally exhausting for clinicians.	
Amy	“I think using EFT for counseling can be quite challenging. The demands on the counselor are quite high. In counseling, you essentially need to be fully dedicated and strive to understand and connect with the person seeking help. I believe this aspect actually demands a high level of emotional and energetic involvement from the counselor.”
Kate	<p>“I often find that doing EFT consumes a lot of my physical energy. Every time I start and finish an EFT session, I feel the need to take deep breaths. I can observe that I become tense, especially at the beginning of working with a client. ”</p> <p>“Yes, so the pressure on me is quite significant. Sometimes, I catch myself fidgeting with my fingers. Yes, when I'm nervous, I tend to fidget with my</p>

	fingers, and I am aware of the pressure building up inside me.”
Larry	“Engaging with emotions is very tiring. Many counselors find it easy to just have a casual conversation without delving into emotions, making it less burdensome. However, if you engage with emotions, it can be more exhausting. I tend to be more rational....However, for me, doing EFT, I consciously make an effort to engage with emotions. I understand that this channel is not my strong suit, not something I'm familiar with or instinctive about, but I believe it's effective, so I push myself to do it. Hence, I find it exhausting.”
Sarah	“I feel that doing EFT is indeed quite exhausting. I sometimes think, ‘Wow, EFT therapists are really amazing.’ Often, you have to contribute so much of your emotions, so much of yourself, and your life force to empathize with the clients and truly see them. It's very draining. It's exhausting, and when you have a large caseload, it's extremely consuming, affecting the quality of your counseling. It's very tiring, very exhausting. So, in the realm of EFT, I have a feeling that there isn't much self-care.”
Nancy	<p>“The entire state of the person during my counseling sessions should be a very draining state. After doing an individual, I wouldn't feel tired at all. When I work with couples, after finishing a session with a couple, my first reaction is that I feel very hungry and really want to eat.”</p> <p>“So I know that my body's expenditure is very high. Secondly, in that state, both my language and my body's state are very close to the other person, wanting to get close to them. I don't lean back; all my limbs are towards the other person. So, after I finish a couples session, my lower back is often very sore.”</p>

### ***Theme 3: Therapists' Emotions***

Directly connected to Theme 2, it was a surprising finding that eight out of eleven participants discussed challenges related to their own emotions when speaking about conducting EFT with their clients. Sharon highlighted her experience that many therapists in China struggle with confronting their deeper emotions and issues. Sharon, David, Larry, Rita, and Tina shared personal experiences of pushing the boundaries of their emotional depth and increasing their ability to identify and remain in their deep emotions. They emphasized that this process aids clients in accessing their own emotions and being able to stay connected with them. Without engaging in significant personal emotional work, clients have limited possibilities to connect with their emotional experiences.

Sarah, Amy, and Rita pointed out an important personal challenge that hindered their therapy process: being overly emotionally involved. This emotional involvement led to severe anxiety about being responsible for the client's problems (Amy) and losing the cognitive aspect of their therapist role (Rita). One therapist acknowledged that she is a unique individual in her own familiarity and comfort with her own emotions, unlike many people in China. In fact, several therapists mentioned that they might need to work on stretching their emotions through peer practice, supervision, personal reflection, and personal therapy.

The two male participants expressed a tendency to rely on reasoning as their default way of processing information, feeling that emotions were lacking in their lives. They acknowledged a strong desire to put in significant effort to learn about emotions to fill this missing piece in their lives. Interestingly, this aligns with findings related to male clients in couple therapy, who also face challenges in connecting with emotions. In this study, both Chinese male therapists (self-reported) and Chinese male clients (reported by therapist participants) struggled with emotions and vulnerabilities. David attributed this difficulty to attachment style, suggesting that therapists with an avoidant attachment style tend to excel in reasoning but struggle with emotions, while those with an anxious attachment style are naturally better with emotions but weaker in reasoning.

Whether they were raised in an education system that emphasized reasoning over emotions in China, or transitioned from more analytical therapeutic orientations (such as CBT), participants stressed the importance of engaging in personal emotional work, akin to physical stretching. They aim to stretch their "emotional muscle" to better delve into the emotional depths with their clients. David, Larry, Rita, Sharon, and Nancy all acknowledged this need. It is understandable that therapists can only expect and help clients access emotional depth if they

themselves are emotionally accessible. They should be able to attune to this emotional depth and vulnerability without feeling fearful. As Larry shared, "I am more sensitive to myself, and I realize there is a wealth of richness within others." Tina added, "If I can only reach a level of 3 in experiencing sadness, it becomes difficult for me to guide the client beyond that point." They all find value in practicing being more in touch with their emotions, articulating them, and expressing them. Thus, 7 participants were aware that their emotional fluidity and depth may affect how deeply they can guide their clients to connect with their own emotions (See *Table 4*).

*Table 4*

Theme 3: Therapists' own deep emotions EFT therapists need to be familiar with being accessible to their own deep emotions and vulnerability	
Amy	"Sometimes I can really empathize with them, and I think this is one of my stronger areas. However, I'm not always very aware of it. Sometimes I need supervision to help, especially with my own feelings—whether I might have some anxiety or concerns during counseling—that could potentially affect my decisions during the counseling process. It's as if I also get caught in a vicious cycle within the relationship with the clients."
Sharon	<p>"Because I come from a CBT background, I'm more accustomed to the cognitive level, so transitioning to the emotional level is a bit challenging for me. Additionally, he emphasized the therapist's capacity to tolerate deep emotions—you need to be able to stay within those emotions to be with the client. So, I think this is a personal challenge for me and also part of my personal growth. I've realized that my growth involves facing some emotions that I might not have been aware of or thought I could handle. I first go through experiencing these emotions, facing myself, and dealing with my own issues. I think in this process, I've grown quite a bit."</p> <p>"I feel that I have mostly interacted with therapists from China. From my own experience to what I've observed in others, one common challenge is dealing with personal issues. Sometimes, during supervision or training, we find that some therapists struggle with facing their own deeper emotions and issues."</p> <p>"I noticed this issue within myself, and after addressing it, I felt like the experiences of my clients are similar. Just as I, as a client seeking help from a therapist, can face certain issues and not be overly troubled by them, I find that I can now face and endure some challenges more freely. It's like the 'muscle stretch' that my teacher, Liu Ting, spoke about—I can face it and bear it, feeling more liberated."</p>

Nancy	<p>“For me, because I am very clear about my emotions, I was thinking, Oh, people are different from me. Why is it that they, after hearing about that event, cannot express those feelings in emotions very clearly?”</p>
David	<p>“I used to rely more on cognition. Yes, cognition was something I liked to use. So, when I encountered EFT, it was like there was something telling me, 'Yes, this is what you need.' ...It's about the process of growth, where no one talked to me about emotions and feelings much.”</p> <p>“My process of growth involves continually exercising my ability to feel and sense. It's like learning a language; I immerse myself in the environment, and at some point, there's a breakthrough, like suddenly understanding the language. Yes, it's somewhat like that kind of sensation—understanding. So, the challenge, as I mentioned to you, is probably in this process—whether I can stay and immerse myself continuously. I think that's where most of the challenge lies.”</p> <p>“By enhancing your capacity to feel, you'll notice an improvement in your therapy experience, and they will also become more engaged.”</p>
Larry	<p>“ while on the cognitive side, I have developed too much—too much rational thinking. On the emotional side, it seems like I'm not very good at experiencing, feeling, and expressing. So, I want to use EFT to develop this part of myself. In terms of my personal development, I also want to enhance this aspect. Therefore, I intentionally studied EFT and have been practicing it diligently.”</p> <p>“ I need to gradually clarify that aspect and be able to express and articulate it. During this practice, when I can understand the changes happening within me, deep inside, under certain stimuli or situations, it becomes clearer. Sometimes, there are subtle emotional changes. If I can start to notice this part and express them in words, I find that I have clarified this aspect within myself. When it becomes clear and I convey it to the client, the subtlety of my understanding can be reflected in my understanding of them...I am more sensitive to myself, and I realize there is a wealth of richness within others. This allows me to have the space to explore with them. Yes, and when I have empathic responses, I can understand more accurately”</p>
Rita	<p>“The second significant challenge is related to my own emotional tolerance and depth when working as a counselor. It's a challenge linked to my personal growth in handling emotions.”</p> <p>“However, with continuous practice and experience, I believe I can expand and enhance my ability to express emotions more freely and effectively.”</p>
Tina	<p>“It's possible that this aspect is related to my own personal issues. Can I effectively address this?”</p> <p>“Handling the intensity of emotions during emotional work is indeed a</p>

	<p>challenge for me. Strengthening emotions, like deepening sadness or grief, is an area where I feel I need to improve. For example, if I can only reach a level of 3 in experiencing sadness, it becomes difficult for me to guide the client beyond that point. Similarly, if my threshold for experiencing anger is at level 1, guiding the client beyond that is a struggle. It's about understanding my own emotional capacity and figuring out how to effectively guide the clients to approach and engage with their emotions.”</p> <p>“This was, I feel, the early challenge I faced regarding my own emotions and how it impacted my approach to counseling. Yes, and as I progressed, I found that it was actually the more fragile emotions—needing to delve deeper into sadness and fear. Yes, perhaps even emotions tied to one's self-esteem and shame. Yes, when trying to ascend to these emotions, if I couldn't understand what makes them sad or afraid, these finer emotions, if I couldn't effectively draw from my own experiences to comprehend them, going deeper might present challenges. Understand. So, you actually have a lot of self-awareness regarding what I can endure, what I can't endure, what I have reached, and what I haven't reached. In fact, you have done quite a bit of self-awareness work.”</p> <p>“So, perhaps this was my early challenge, the lack of tolerance towards some intense aggressive emotions within my personal issues.”</p>
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#### ***Theme 4: Early Therapy Termination***

A relevant and somewhat worrisome theme emerged regarding the length of therapy. Six out of eleven participants observed that clients tend to conclude their treatment once they experience a de-escalation, such as a reduction in arguments (Amy, Kate), an improvement in their situation (Laura), a temporary resolution (Tina), the resolution of major issues and misunderstandings (Nancy). This observation was shared consistently by all 11 participants. These six participants all suggest that clients do not anticipate feeling emotionally connected and close to one another (Kate) through experiencing stages 2 and 3, even after consolidating stage 1 work. When clients witness a de-escalation in their relationship, they often discontinue their therapy sessions. The researcher did not inquire about this with the other five participants. However, it is plausible that this phenomenon holds true for the remaining participants as well (See *Table 5*).

Table 5

<p>Theme 4: Early therapy termination</p> <p>Clients frequently terminate therapy services once they have experienced a degree of de-escalation, often foregoing the completion of the entire EFT treatment. This tendency arises from their predominant expectation of therapy primarily focusing on de-escalation rather than the broader goal of establishing intimacy.</p>	
Amy	<p>“Yes, once the first stage is completed, they easily say they won't come anymore because they feel that we've discussed a lot during the first stage, not just resolving conflicts. They believe they understand the problem, the root cause of their unmet needs. They think they can solve it themselves, and we don't argue much now, so we can handle it ourselves.”</p>
Kate	<p>“In this counseling, everyone feels that counseling is helpful. The counselor understands me well, but I find it difficult to continue with my partner. I am content now; I feel it's enough. I no longer argue, and I can have a good conversation with him. However, my satisfaction with the emotional relationship may not necessarily require a lot. At this stage, I'm already okay—no more arguing, and no attacking each other.”</p> <p>“Additionally, the third aspect is their needs. As I mentioned earlier, their needs may not necessarily require intimacy or closeness. They might already feel that it's helpful and good enough.”</p>
Sharon	<p>“I feel that when we reach that point, they tend to be quite accepting. They realize that we've both been part of this negative cycle. When they recognize and take responsibility for their actions, they often feel a sense of relief and think, "We're on the right track now!" They find closure within this cycle and feel like they can put an end to it.”</p>
Nancy	<p>“When their communication is smooth, but they are not accustomed to expressing emotions habitually. And when most of their conflicts have been resolved, or when their past misunderstandings have been largely addressed, they might suddenly stop coming for sessions. When they stop, they feel like they don't have any major issues anymore.”</p> <p>“More of a need for us in the marriage is that we don't have major disagreements, but I haven't felt that they just need this awareness, that when I lie back, you are there behind me with that sense of trust, making me feel happy. It's like when I encounter something, you'll come to help me. When I face difficulties, knowing that you have my back is enough. As for the so-called elevation to the soul level, indeed, as you mentioned, perhaps in China, couples rarely discuss this. Most of the time when people are dating,</p>



	<p>it's not for this purpose. For the most part, dating is more about addressing marital issues, and most people tend to look for a partner after they start full time employment.”</p> <p>“Most of the couples actually have a simple expectation - we just don't want to argue at home. We each do our own thing at home, not talking much. Yes, as long as we coexist peacefully, it's already a satisfying state for them. When it comes to discussing children, we can have a discussion, and the rest of the time is just about coexisting peacefully. They do have an inner desire for more closeness, but when they try to get closer, they realize they have significant differences, being too clear-headed and understanding, making it unsustainable. Many couples show signs of longing, for example, shared interests or hobbies, being able to watch a movie and discuss it, or attend a concert and talk about it. This kind of longing exists, but both have difficulty finding the right pace for it. Most of the time, they just hope that when discussing things, there won't be overreaction or malicious interpretation. So, if they can clear up misunderstandings and have a sense that the other person is not being malicious, and confirm that the other person did not have ill intentions or malicious speculations in the past, and slowly learn to understand each other, they are already very satisfied.”</p>
Tina	<p>“Hmm, my work tends to get stuck at a certain stage where clients feel things are okay, and it's like putting on a band-aid - a temporary fix without a strong drive to delve deeper, to create closeness, or to sustain a desire for closeness. Hello, it seems the expectations regarding satisfaction might not be very high, which is a phenomenon I've noticed.</p> <p>I'm not sure if this is related to our culture, but it seems like the aspiration for love, or the yearning for romantic relationships and marital bonds, may not be considered as something worth pursuing vigorously or investing a lot in. Unlike investing money for tangible returns, investing in love and emotional relationships, a high-quality return in the realm of interpersonal connections, doesn't seem to be as encouraged—that's a phenomenon I've observed.”</p>
Laura	<p>“Another part is that they feel things have improved, and then they leave. They don't understand what "closure" means.”</p>

### ***Theme 5: Younger vs Older Generations***

The researcher inquired about the challenges of implementing EFT in China, prompting participants to identify difficult client populations they had encountered. These included cases where relationships had been stagnant for over a decade, individuals with borderline personality disorder, trauma survivors, clients with autism, and those dealing with infidelity, among others. When discussing the various client groups, four participants consistently highlighted one

challenging group: the older generation.

In the realm of EFT, which focuses on emotions, Larry, Kate, Tina, and Rita acknowledged the difficulty of working with the older generation. Larry even implied that working with the younger generation is comparatively easier. The consensus among them was that the older generation tends to exhibit more resistance towards emotions (Tina, Rita, and Kate), making them a challenging population for Chinese therapists to work with (See *Table 6*).

*Table 6*

Theme 5: Younger vs older generation Working with the older population can be challenging, whereas working with younger generation is much easier	
Kate	<p>“People who were born 1960s and 1970s are hard with emotions.”</p> <p>“It seems like for them, marriage and love can be separated. I can be in a marriage without the feeling of being in love. I can have the marriage I have now and get what I want within the marriage without needing to have a marriage based on romantic love or feelings of love.”</p> <p>“I was born in 1988. Well, in my generation, there seems to be a shift among male friends around me. Although they are not my individual cases, I think there has been some (positive) change (in terms of emotions), perhaps related to the times”</p>
Larry	“90, 00 they are easier to express feelings”
Rita	“Moreover, the era in which the individual grew up is also a factor. It's easier for younger individuals to accept the process. Just a few days ago, I had a session with a woman in her 60s. I noticed that her resistance was quite strong.”
Tina	“Working with older couples, especially those in their fifties and sixties, presents a unique set of challenges, particularly regarding emotions and the resistance to seeking couples counseling. They often have a different perspective on emotions and may harbor reservations or resistance toward engaging in psychological counseling for couples. This resistance can make it more challenging to effectively work with them.”

### ***Theme 6: Effective Therapy Techniques***

Participants identified the most therapeutically effective elements within all the techniques of EFT to be either empathy/feeling understood, or enactment (Tango 3). Many

participants acknowledged the usefulness of various techniques such as validation (Laura), evoking, reflection, RISSSC, and more. However, empathy (Sarah, Larry, David, Nancy, Kate, and Amy) and enactment (Lucinda, Larry, Amy, Rita, Sharon, David) were mentioned most frequently.

The finding on the high effectiveness of enactment and empathy aligns with prior research, suggesting that Tango Three, passing the deepened emotion to their partner, is likely the most effective step in EFT (Brubacher, 2017). Additionally, Chinese therapists agreed that empathy/attunement is a powerful skill in EFT. EFT stems from a humanistic orientation, making empathy/attunement akin to a heartfelt sense of being understood. It was unexpected in this study that participants identified empathy as a key component in their EFT treatment process (See *Table 7*).

*Table 7*

Theme 6: Effective techniques Empathy/Validation, as well as Enactment (Tango 3) has shown great effectiveness with Chinese clients.	
Lucinda	<p>“I feel that being able to access those deep emotions, to go through TANGO 3, that moment of experiencing, is what I consider the most crucial, with a healing effect. TANGO 2, 3, because, hmm, many of my clients would say, 'That moment is very, very touching and wonderful.' It's because during the closure, I always ask them to summarize and reflect. What impressed you the most during these months of counseling? Hmm, and which one do you think was most effective? They all say it's the direct expression of what they experienced, and they remember it very clearly.”</p> <p>“And what moved me a lot is that, because you know, when they first come, it's like a hail of bullets. You say a sentence, and they fire back immediately, bullets flying all over. Yes, but during that TANGO 3 moment, they soften. They say something heartfelt, and the response they get is more thoughtful and emotionally rich. That moment is truly very touching. I, sometimes when I'm watching from the side, can't help but get teary-eyed, right? Some partners even say, 'Teacher (sometimes they call therapist teacher), if it weren't for you standing there, I really want to give him a hug.' I say, 'You can hug him.'”</p>

Amy	<p>“I feel the first thing is that he will require the counselor to maintain empathy for the client throughout the process. Even if you cannot maintain empathy, you still need to sustain curiosity. You know, some visitors can be a bit annoying.”</p> <p>“Get attuned, very attuned, getting extremely close. I think a person can be understood by another person in this way, which is an experience that many people may never have in their lifetime.”</p> <p>“Yes, it's like having someone who approaches you without any judgment, stands in your shoes, understands your pain, and tells you that everything is normal. You will feel that pain is normal, and your needs are also normal. I think this, in itself, is quite redemptive.”</p>
Kate	<p>“In the early stages of counseling, I feel the advantage lies in our strong desire to use proactive empathetic responses to help the clients understand themselves and each other. This element is often lacking in their marital relationship, perhaps due to being trapped in a negative cycle for so long that they can't truly hear each other.”</p>
Nancy	<p>“Enactment is indeed challenging, but it's the most effective thing in EFT.”</p> <p>“RISSSC is most effective. All the EFT skills are effective.”</p> <p>“Empathy and listening and being able to get the other, it will bring good results.”</p>
David	<p>“When you got understood by someone, they feel comfortable, they feel ‘you got me’”</p> <p>“I feel the most important aspect is the corrective emotional experience, which is the enactment. It's about using language to express emotions, allowing them to understand each other's deep emotions, which already starts to make a difference. Then, the components of the antidote start to emerge. So, fulfilling one's attachment needs and then expecting what change?”</p>
Larry	<p>“The first time they come, it's important for me to establish a relationship where both sides feel that the avoidant party doesn't feel criticized or attacked here, and they feel at least understood. I want them to feel that the counselor is not here to act as a judge or to pass judgments. Yes, to make them feel that I'm working hard to provide a safe atmosphere, where they can express any psychological grievances they might not be able to discuss elsewhere.”</p> <p>“After the first counseling session, they will often sense your understanding and clarity on their situation during the 90-minute session. This can help clarify misunderstandings and provide them a sense of being heard.”</p> <p>“A lot of empathy allows them to feel understood. I can feel that I am understood. For those whose relationships are stuck, they hope to be understood, whether they are pursuing or avoiding. They all hope to</p>

	<p>be understood.”</p> <p>“The most therapeutic element in EFT is the communication of the deep emotions between the partners. The deep communication comes from their inner needs in themselves.”</p>
Sarah	<p>“You need to engage in empathic conjecture and empathic responses. ”</p> <p>“I think the effective part is indeed what makes therapists feel tired. When you say you understand me, you empathize, I think this is something you can see. But EFT is about taking yours. If you truly empathize with me, if I truly go down and empathize with all of you, using all my emotions and experiences to truly empathize with you, it's not about being high and mighty. Yes. You look at it this way and it's really sad, but for me, there is no case where I handle their sadness and I don't cry, there is no case where they cry and I don't cry. So I think this part, this sincere aspect of EFT, this experiential aspect, where you truly allow the client to discover, that you genuinely feel their pain, is effective for people. Because if I were in their shoes, if someone truly cries with me, my pain, if they are me, I can see how much pain they have. So I think this is where it can be effective and it's also where the techniques are very exhausting.”</p>
Rita	<p>“I don't feel that any step is the most effective. Of course, if we're talking about the step of enactment, then I definitely think enactment is the most important.”</p>
Sharon	<p>“Of course, it's the enactment, Tango 3. In the depths of emotion, which antidote can come out.”</p>
Laura	<p>“In EFT, there is a technique called "affirmation, validation, and acknowledgment." Chinese people often receive little praise and validation in their education, as it tends to be critical in nature. However, through the validation in EFT, they can experience a sense of acceptance, which I believe is a very effective way to quickly establish a sense of security. Because China primarily practices a form of education that emphasizes criticism, this approach provides them with a lot of affirmation, to the extent that even their anger is considered valid. They actually feel quite accepted, and I believe in this.”</p>

### ***Theme 7: Attachment Theory in China***

As Sarah emphasized, when clients express sadness, it is crucial for therapists to connect emotionally in a genuine way. Each couple attending therapy seeks understanding and validation. To foster a safer space and a stronger connection, therapists must work hard to enable the couples to communicate more openly, making them know that their experiences are understood and validated.

As a cultural study, a critical aspect of this research is to determine the applicability of this attachment-based approach, EFT, in another culture. The results revealed that it is indeed fundamental in the context of applying EFT in China. Therapists expressed a liking for the theory and a strong belief in attachment's healing capacity (Kate), expressing a desire to perceive the relationship's nature through the attachment lens (Tina). This finding aligns with previous research findings that support the significance of attachment in the EFT approach (See *Table 8*).

*Table 8*

Theme 7: Attachment theory in China Attachment theory holds relevance across cultures, demonstrating effectiveness, particularly in Chinese culture.	
Lucinda	<p>“It's all about that depth, that attachment connection, hmm, that sharing of vulnerable and helpless emotions. I feel like it's not related to cultural characteristics or anything; it's the same.”</p> <p>“So I think, in fact, if EFT can be popularized and developed sufficiently in China, it actually has a great market. It's because this attachment need is something everyone naturally has”</p>
Amy	<p>“It's because everyone indeed has attachment needs, and everyone will have emotional reactions due to unmet attachment needs. This is a very useful tool to help me understand the clients, as I don't need to go through a lot of complexities. If I can truly understand what their unmet attachment needs are within this, I have a good clue to help me understand them.”</p> <p>“I believe for us EFT counselors, the key is to find attachment in every issue.”</p>
Kate	<p>“I feel that one aspect is my belief—I have a strong belief. Yes, I believe in attachment. I believe that a relationship can bring great strength. That's how I see it based on my personal life experiences. I have been through many challenging moments in life, but there were one or two people who cared for me during those times, even letting me know that I could seek help. I could share my vulnerability with them. I received some care. It made me realize that relationships have power.”</p>
Laura	<p>“For example, in attachment relationships, the unspoken expressions are particularly strong. My mother's expressions of love manifest in gestures like inviting me to have a bowl of soup she prepared or silently bringing in my laundry when there's a storm approaching.”</p>
Tina	<p>“Developing an attachment perspective in my work has been a gradual</p>

	<p>process. When I reflect on my early experiences in this field, it was indeed challenging to find the right words and ways to express and connect with attachment. However, through continuous learning, training, and engaging in various workshops, I've been able to refine my understanding of attachment and how to incorporate it into my practice. It's a journey of learning, evolving, and constantly improving to effectively integrate an attachment lens into my approach with clients.”</p> <p>“Yesterday, I gave them feedback that it felt quite warm, and in the depths, there was a sense of mutual flow between them. I find this phenomenon fascinating—it seems to be related to attachment and the atmosphere within the relationship, as well as the sense of security they experienced, allowing them to express themselves very authentically.”</p>
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### ***Theme 8: Emotions for the Chinese***

Being centered around emotions, EFT raises questions about how emotional work is approached in the Chinese context. Nine out of eleven participants expressed that working with Chinese clients on emotions is challenging. This aligns with the emotional difficulties that therapists themselves face, as outlined in Table 3. Therapists, sharing a similar cultural background with their clients, often need considerable practice to recognize, engage with, and express their deep emotions. Hence, it is understandable that clients may struggle with emotions as well, given their unfamiliarity with emotional expression.

Participants used varying terms to describe how Chinese clients are unfamiliar with their emotions. They mentioned that clients have limited understanding of emotions; for example, they struggle to identify how they feel (Sarah, Sharon). Clients often display emotional numbness and shame when it comes to acknowledging and expressing emotions (Laura). Some suppress their emotions (Rita), while others are reserved about displaying emotions (Larry, Lucinda), and many find it challenging to embrace vulnerability (Kate). Therapists find themselves in the position of educating clients about emotions during sessions (Sarah), comparing it to teaching children about emotions (Nancy), and assisting them in organizing their emotions (Larry, Sharon).

In the process of addressing emotions with clients, Lucina noted that clients may deny, distance themselves from, or occasionally avoid emotions. Nancy shared her observation that approximately 30% of her clients suppress their emotions completely and resist experiencing any feelings. The therapists' primary approach is to proceed slowly and patiently, allowing clients to learn and navigate their emotions. Most participants explained this challenge of Chinese clients' unfamiliarity with emotions as a result of cultural differences. However, Rita believed that this is a developmental process for China and individuals will gradually become more open emotionally. On the other hand, Nancy attributed this "emotional stuckness" to individual differences, suggesting that those facing emotional challenges likely experienced neglect during their childhood (See *Table 9*).

*Table 9*

Theme 8: Emotions for the Chinese The notion of emotions, or emotions under a western culture definition, is less common and familiar within Chinese culture.	
Lucinda	<p>“And you just help him to extract this emotion, refine it, and then discuss it with him. The early stage of this process takes a long time. Chinese people tend to be more reserved about their emotions.”</p> <p>“He would say, 'I don't have it,' for example, denying, distancing, or occasionally avoiding. He cannot endure the intensity of this emotion because sometimes we need to intensify it to a certain degree for you to be able to experience it, right? When you try to intensify it, he will move around because he can't tolerate the intensity of the emotion, yes. So, during this Tango 1 and 2, you need to be very slow.”</p>
Amy	<p>“I feel they are really unfamiliar with it (emotion). I think many people in the Chinese society are very, yes, very distant from emotions. Yes, you can't say they are distant from emotions, they live with emotions every day, but it's really quite difficult for them to see their own emotions. I think in many Chinese couples, they are often in conflicts or rigid relationships, and they are good at finding various solutions. Yes, but it's quite difficult for them to talk about their own feelings. So, I think in the beginning, you really have to proceed slowly, take it step by step, and master the skill of 'slicing thinly' exceptionally well.”</p> <p>“You see, in 'Friends,' it's also a sitcom, but in Chinese sitcoms, there's less</p>



	<p>focus on discussing these emotional aspects. In 'Friends,' when Chandler and Monica express their feelings, the emotional tension and their expressions of caring for each other seem to be more outward, compared to what I perceive in Chinese culture. ...and I admire how they can be so direct.”</p>
Kate	<p>“It's essential to continually find ways to encourage them to share their vulnerabilities and help each other. This is actually quite challenging within Chinese culture, yet it's the most crucial aspect because sharing vulnerabilities allows them to come closer to each other. So, when you mentioned delving into emotions and exploring their vulnerable parts, it's difficult for them to probe into their vulnerabilities. Moreover, it's even harder to communicate these vulnerable aspects to each other. Under this cultural context, both of these actions are very challenging.</p> <p>“I find it challenging. I think it's influenced by culture. I believe that within the Chinese context, empathy is lacking due to the societal background and living environment. In a society where empathy is scarce, most people focus on problem-solving. They feel valuable when their life goals are directed towards continuous growth and problem-solving abilities. Allowing oneself to express vulnerability and negative emotions is a thin and sparse aspect within the collective culture. I think it's due to the societal background. In fact, I believe that most individuals who come to a counselor, whether for marital or individual counseling, often lack self-understanding. They may not fully understand their emotions.”</p>
Sharon	<p>“Many people don't even know how they feel. They might just think, "I think this person should die." When you ask them what they feel, they can't articulate their emotions clearly, and what they express are their opinions and perspectives.”</p> <p>“In other words, they're not very good at perceiving and expressing their emotions. Yes, I feel that as a counselor, you need to help them organize.”</p> <p>“I feel that Chinese individuals find it challenging in this aspect...Chinese people don't express themselves much, especially in terms of crying. If a Chinese person cries in front of me, especially a male, they might feel very embarrassed. Some clients feel uncomfortable about it. Exactly, they might say, "I've never been like this," and then today they try to hold it back, but they can't, and when they cry, they feel ashamed and embarrassed.”</p> <p>“Many Chinese people tend to have a poker face, appearing quite stiff and especially so when they meet you for the first time during a counseling session. They are often very nervous in such situations.”</p>
Nancy	<p>“It feels a bit like how parents teach children about the emotions they may encounter in certain situations, right? I provide them with a lot of words and let them start choosing. Initially, they might resist and feel hesitant and fearful during their visits. However, over time, perhaps over two to three years in some cases, they start to accurately express the emotions that certain events bring them, and it's not just a simple expression of emotion. They might say, "I feel complex emotions," and as we talk, they slowly describe feeling angry and simultaneously feeling hurt.”</p> <p>“Connecting with emotions can be challenging for them. Some neglected</p>

	<p>individuals have developed strong self-survival skills as a result of the neglect they experienced during their formative years. I believe this is not limited to a specific ethnicity; When you mentioned this person, you referred to the inner child within an adult who has been neglected for a long time. They were neglected in their original family environment, where emotions and individual needs were not discussed or acknowledged. These individuals are inherently challenging to work with. Exactly, it's not just about cultural differences but also about the individual's growth environment.”</p> <p>“A considerable portion, around 40%, of individuals have experienced emotional neglect from a young age. I feel that about 80% of their emotions are suppressed, completely blocked off, and they don't allow themselves to feel. They might only manifest as being irritable, wondering why there are constant arguments over trivial matters. They tend to blame the other person, saying that if you weren't so critical, so particular, or so sensitive, everything would be fine and everyone would be happy.”</p>
Larry	<p>“I think so, regardless of gender. Perhaps males tend to lean a bit more towards logical thinking. Females tend to express emotions more, but I think both genders experience this. When individuals are educated, they tend to lean towards problem-solving. Therefore, when it comes to counseling, it's important to educate them, not necessarily through direct verbal education about what counseling is. Instead, it's about changing their misconceptions about counseling, such as equating it with legal or medical consultations. This is achieved through abundant affirmation, empathy, and gradually helping them understand what we are doing. ”</p> <p>“Most people tend to come with the inclination to directly solve their problems, expecting specific solutions. When they slowly descend from this logical perspective and start to bring out their feelings, and I can organize these feelings....”</p> <p>“Especially in the past, we Chinese people might not have talked much about intimate matters. Yes, you want them to express themselves, but it doesn't have to be overly intimate. Sometimes, being straightforward about expressing emotions is not a familiar thing. Yes, this is a challenge, and for them, it might be uncomfortable to speak it out.”</p> <p>“It's actually, I feel shy, a lot of things are a bit difficult to say or embarrassing. I think it's still leaning towards being reserved. It's not possible to express certain things directly. For example, during dating, maybe it's easier to say 'I love you,' but once you're in a marriage, it's actually not that easy. This is a simpler example and people talk about it more broadly. But if we delve a bit deeper, it's actually not that easy. For men, I've noticed many of them find it challenging to express these things.”</p>
Laura	<p>“The second challenge is that indeed some individuals are quite emotionally numb. By 'numb,' I mean they can't express any feelings. Even when I use Chinese words to describe emotions, they can't articulate their feelings. It's challenging to get close to them. They might be more inclined to express their opinions but find it difficult to touch their own hearts. So, it requires a lot of</p>

	<p>patience to enter their world and speculate on their inner feelings through their scattered cognition and viewpoints. Then, I try to see if it's like this. This is the second challenge.”</p> <p>“Many people are not attentive to their own emotions, so the first step is usually to help them observe. See if they can touch their emotions. If some clients find it difficult to touch their emotions initially, then the first thing is to help them observe. This part requires a lot of work.”</p> <p>“Because in our culture, it's not a culture that actively says emotions are a good thing, so we need to encourage them and tell them that this is a good thing”</p> <p>“Chinese culture often emphasizes indirect and unspoken expressions, especially within family or group dynamics. In my own experience within a large family, I have witnessed these unspoken expressions.”</p> <p>“I believe these are subtle yet powerful ways of expressing love without directly articulating it. However, Chinese people tend to be reserved in expressing deep emotions openly. EFT helps transform these unspoken aspects into verbal expressions, allowing individuals to truly hear and feel them.”</p>
Rita	<p>“I think it's the same for clients. I believe our culture still has a side that suppresses feelings. In the process of growing up, of course, as we enter this profession to do psychological counseling, our level of acceptance gradually increases. However, the rational acceptance and the actual experience of being opened up emotionally are different. EFT really aims to open up the emotional experience for the therapist.”</p> <p>“Opening up to emotions is indeed a slow process for people in China, something that needs explanation and understanding. However, I don't think it's a cross-cultural issue. I believe it's more about the developmental process where, as society progresses and individuals reach a more self-accepting state, they are inevitably going to slowly open up and accept their emotions.”</p>
Sarah	<p>“Because many Chinese people are not accustomed to discussing emotions. They won't talk about emotions, and when you ask them what to do, they might say, "Don't talk to me about emotions. I don't understand their usefulness." This is the first point. The second point is, when you talk to them about emotions, we often ask the client, "What are your feelings?" The client doesn't know what they're feeling. So, if you ask about their feelings, they might not understand emotions, and they will talk about their opinion on a matter. This is something I don't know about in other countries, but I think in this aspect, Chinese people may not have been educated much about emotions and lack emotional intelligence education from an early age. They don't discuss emotions or know how to describe them. This is quite challenging, to be honest.”</p>

	<p>“Even though it may not be a common practice in Chinese culture, I feel that this is something Chinese people lack. It's something they have less exposure to. However, when you start demonstrating and showing them what it is, it can be very useful for them. They can learn and benefit from it, even if it's not a habitual practice for them. They can learn and see the usefulness of it.”</p>
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### ***Theme 9: Emotions for Chinese Men***

A recurring challenge raised by participants, with nine out of eleven noting, revolves around the complexities of engaging with male clients regarding their emotions. This observation emerged organically, as researchers did not explicitly delve into their interactions with male clients. The unanimous consensus among these nine participants is that expressing emotions is a formidable task for males in China, influenced by cultural norms that discourage the manifestation of weakness, vulnerability, or tears.

In contrast, specific participants (Rita, Larry, Kate, Sharon) underscored gender role disparities, emphasizing that females find it comparatively easier to articulate their emotions within the cultural milieu. Larry conveyed that men are often indoctrinated with phrases such as "real men do not cry easily" and "blood and sweat, but not tears." Amy pointed to another cultural factor, noting that men are expected to uphold their "face," preserving their authority and position as men. Additionally, some participants highlighted the complexity of working with men exhibiting an avoidance attachment style, noting their particular challenges in emotional engagement.

Conversely, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) advocates for individuals to embrace their vulnerability, counteracting traditional cultural teachings. Lucinda shared that a significant majority of male clients, ranging from seventy to eighty percent, display resistance to emotional expression, underscoring the considerable hurdles encountered in this realm (See *Table 10*).

*Table 10*

Theme 9: Emotions for Chinese men
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Chinese male, especially those emotionally withdrawn male or prone to rational thinking, often struggle with emotional work through EFT.	
Lucinda	<p>“Chinese males tend to be... no matter what, they want to maintain it. It seems like I am capable, relatively strong. I can keep a poker face, and I can control my emotions. So, you'll find that Chinese males in your practice...</p> <p>Maybe it's also my bias, or maybe I see it in my own work, for example, maybe seventy to eighty percent of males are like this”</p>
Amy	<p>“I find it quite challenging to deal with particularly avoidant men, and sometimes, I think in Chinese culture, saving face is something that men tend to care about a bit more than women. Face means not airing dirty laundry in public, while also wanting to maintain their own sense of authority, so it's difficult....However, if you look at many avoidant men, they are very concerned about their own status and face. 'Face' in front of my family—do I have a position and authority? Working with this group of people is actually quite difficult. Mm, so I think dealing with especially avoidant men is also very challenging...They are adamant about upholding the perception that they are right, correct, authoritative, and powerful. Yes, so it's very difficult.”</p>
Kate	<p>“But I agree with my own observation. For some men in relationships, they might live in a society or culture where 'boys don't cry' is a prevalent norm. So, sometimes when our therapeutic relationship isn't very stable, and I ask them how they feel when their spouse reacts a certain way, they find it difficult to express using very specific emotional words. It's not that they don't know the words, but in that moment, they might feel like not many people ask them about these feelings or emotions. Moreover, considering the lack of strong trust in our relationship at that point, they hesitate or provide more rational and speculative thoughts. It's unlikely for them to directly say, 'I feel a bit sad' or 'I feel a little upset.' Unlike many women who can express themselves this way easily. OK, that makes sense. In this regard, I think gender roles have an impact in this culture, constituting a contributing factor.”</p> <p>“I feel that for male partners, it's important for me to validate their thoughts. Women may find it easier to express their feelings. Yes, many women can immediately express their fear, cry, and let it out. But men tend to keep talking about their thoughts. Personally, in such moments, I feel it's important to validate their thoughts....So, I do believe that there are different gender-based roles between males and females. I think males are more likely to skim the surface, not easily going deeper and tend to withdraw, especially under insecure attachment styles. In such cases, they tend to withdraw more easily.”</p>
Sharon	<p>“If a Chinese person cries in front of me, especially a male, they might feel very embarrassed. Some clients feel uncomfortable about it. Exactly, they might say, 'I've never been like this,' and then today they try to hold it back, but they can't, and when they cry, they feel ashamed and embarrassed.”</p> <p>“That also varies with the ability to sense emotions. Some men tend to be</p>

	<p>more rational in their approach, making it challenging to explore their emotions. OK, yes, you might need to help them in awakening these emotions and use various techniques. But it may require significant effort on your part in that area too.”</p> <p>“Essentially, when a couple comes for therapy, most of the time, the wife is proactive, and the husband is there to accompany her. The husband's expectation is for you to address her issues, her bad temper, or whatever it may be. He typically doesn't put himself forward. So, to build a relationship with him and encourage him to open up, you need to use certain approaches. I think this is prevalent in Chinese culture, and generally speaking, men seem to have a weaker awareness of emotions compared to women. They are more accustomed to discussing things logically and on a cognitive level.”</p>
Nancy	<p>“Working with emotions can be easier for women, but I feel that some Chinese men have rich emotions. It's just that nobody has ever paid attention to them, or no one has touched upon their emotions. When I can truly guide them to empathize with their emotions, you can feel an immediate feedback in their body language, indicating that you've hit the mark in understanding their thoughts. However, what I find challenging in Chinese cases is to express their emotions to their partners, especially in the fifth and sixth steps of our process. Men find it difficult to use softer words to express their feelings towards their partners. Unlike women who can directly express their grievances, when men try to express vulnerable emotions, I think they find it challenging, and we need to slowly guide them through this, teaching them this”</p>
Larry	<p>“It's difficult for me personally, being a male (therapist), as you know, because from a young age, males are often not encouraged to express emotions. Yes, emotional expression is not encouraged in men. It's like, since childhood, we're taught phrases like 'real men don't cry easily,' 'blood and sweat but not tears.' Crying is seen as a sign of weakness, so we try to be angry to boost our spirits and appear strong. But in reality, we don't allow ourselves to experience feelings of frustration, discouragement, sadness, and hurt, and these experiences are rarely allowed. So, this part is about allowing yourself to feel these emotions. It's a shift to begin accepting that we have a vulnerable side, instead of always appearing tough and competent on the surface. This part is actually a part of growth...Through the learning process, I've gained a better understanding and acceptance of myself, which allows me to reach this stage.”</p>
Rita	<p>“I realized that for male clients, especially when they are at work, they often exhibit resistance towards acknowledging and embracing their emotions and feelings. This resistance is more noticeable compared to female clients, who tend to be more receptive and open to exploring their emotions and experiences.”</p> <p>“When it comes to men, three cases come to mind involving male partners from couples in distress. They tend to have a more masculine and somewhat patriarchal approach in this society. When attempting to open up and display their vulnerable emotions, they initially tend to deny or resist. It takes a lot of effort, perhaps requiring a more gradual approach, and a deeper relationship-</p>

	building process to slowly unfold their vulnerability. Overall, there is resistance in acknowledging their own fragile emotions, and their willingness to continue counseling is often low. Among the three cases I thought of, most had only attended three to five sessions at most, and then discontinued, even though their issues remained unresolved. Their willingness to engage in counseling was low.”
Tina	<p>“It seems that, relatively speaking, avoidant males have the highest difficulty in accepting or connecting with emotions. However, I have also encountered avoidant females who face similar challenges when it comes to working with emotions. So, I feel that gender differences are a significant factor. In our culture, males are not encouraged to express more vulnerable feelings. Even if some individuals have a background in psychology and understand at a cognitive level that emotions need to be addressed in a more vulnerable manner for better relational communication, they still find it challenging to express more vulnerable feelings. Thus, I believe gender differences exist, and this may be viewed through the lens of attachment styles, with avoidant males and females generally exhibiting weaker emotional communication and connection.”</p> <p>“So, today we feel quite discouraged, and there are many inner concerns and anxieties. Expressing these feelings is actually not easy, and it's not encouraged, as it might be seen as a sign of weakness or exposing one's vulnerabilities. This aspect seems to be more pronounced in men, both in intimate relationships and individually. They might perceive it as unsafe or unacceptable to admit fears or sadness. It's difficult for them to say, "Today, I am afraid," or "I am sad." Unless they have spent enough time in counseling and built sufficient trust, or they feel secure in their relationship, it seems challenging for them to authentically shed tears or express these emotions.”</p>
Sarah	<p>“In China, boys are often expected not to cry, not to be perceived as weak or soft, as these traits are seen as lacking usefulness and toughness. If a boy is perceived as weak, cries frequently, or displays emotional vulnerability, he may be labeled as effeminate or not possessing enough masculine qualities. People might view him as unreliable and unworthy of dependence. There is a cultural expectation for males to be strong, to not show weakness or helplessness, and to have problem-solving abilities. This societal norm makes it difficult for Chinese men to express their vulnerability, especially through practices like Tango, where vulnerability is not readily accepted. The culture does not readily accept male vulnerability, which is a challenging aspect for Chinese men to navigate.”</p>

### ***Theme 10: Emotion Deepening, Sharing and Vulnerability***

In the context of the two previous themes, Chinese clients, particularly male clients, exhibit limited familiarity with emotions, making it challenging to engage with them

emotionally. The researcher then delved into exploring clients' experiences during Tango 2 - emotion deepening, and Tango 3 - sharing lived emotions with their partner. At least six participants explicitly stated that facilitating clients to deepen and express their emotions is exceedingly difficult (See *Table 11*).

*Table 11*

Theme 10: Emotion deepening and sharing Emotional deepening/vulnerability, and staying in emotions/vulnerability, expressing emotions/vulnerabilities are difficult for Chinese couple in therapy	
Lucinda	<p>“Going further down, there's no way to delve into deeper emotional visits. Exactly, there's no way to go deeper. Mm-hmm, or you could say he doesn't follow you, he escapes. Mm, there's a very typical example, where I initially deepened the emotion, and I saw the gentleman's eyes turning red, and I stayed there for a long time. I wanted to continue and ask him, 'I see your eyes are red, what happened?' He just turned away, wiped his tears, and said it was nothing, hmm, then ran away, you know? It's quite a pity. He's accustomed to suppressing, to not revealing these things, and then, then I know next time I'll have to start all over again, bit by bit”</p>
Kate	<p>“I guess maybe they also feel uncomfortable with the idea of having to speak out, to delve into a relatively deep internal level and share with someone. For me, it's not yet entirely comfortable to fully entrust my heart to you and speak. Yes, there's still some discomfort, unfamiliarity, and I'm not adept at it.”</p> <p>“But if the mainstream culture only advocates for focusing on prowess, abilities, not humanities, then it becomes a situation where everyone only knows that this is the only direction for them to be respected and admired. If I myself lack empathy and acceptance towards myself, how can I use acceptance towards my partner? The concept of sharing vulnerabilities is something they completely don't understand; it's impossible for them to know if they lack this experience.”</p> <p>“They themselves haven't been loved, nurtured, empathized with, or allowed to grow in this societal environment. So, when this is reflected in the dyadic relationship, it becomes even more unlikely for them to have the opportunity for genuine connection.”</p>
Sharon	<p>“Each case is different. In some cases, no matter what, you can't seem to tap into their emotional aspect.”</p> <p>“I understand. In the second stage, you need to experience those deep emotions, placing yourself in vulnerability and helplessness, even experiencing shame and fear for some individuals. Right, it's about putting oneself in those emotional states that may trigger certain behavioral</p>



	<p>responses, like using anger as a way to protest when feeling fear. However, delving into that deeper emotional level, the vulnerability, isn't as easy.”</p> <p>“I see. So, sometimes clients tend to deflect or avoid going into those deeper emotional levels during the session. They might divert the conversation towards cognitive aspects, feeling uncomfortable with the emotional exploration.”</p> <p>“For him, this is a venture. It's already not easy for him to reach these emotional depths, and if you push him further, it requires giving him more strength to be able to do it.”</p>
Laura	<p>“I feel the hard part is about deepening, using Sue Johnson's words, it's about deepening the vulnerable and helpless aspects. Yes, dealing with emotions alone, I think if the client can touch the surface emotions, it's already remarkable. In Chinese culture, going deeper and holding onto those emotions is challenging, as it feels very unsafe for them. Yes, personally, I think being a counselor requires a lot of repetition and continuous training. As you mentioned, it may take until the fifth or sixth session to touch on emotions, and then we need to guide them to stay in those emotions and express vulnerable aspects.”</p> <p>“Tango 3. It's not particularly difficult for them to talk to the counselor. The challenge lies in discussing it with their partner. In Chinese culture, love isn't something you talk about, it's something you show through actions, right?.....Most of the time, they may not want to talk about it, or they may think that the other person already knows. That's how Chinese people are - they assume that if someone is around and has heard, they don't need to directly talk about it.”</p>
Tina	<p>“Reaching a certain stage where I need to delve deeper with the clients and engage in more profound emotional work might present a challenge for me. For instance, with clients who tend to avoid or are unfamiliar with their emotions, it could be difficult for them to express or understand their emotions clearly, making this aspect of the process challenging.”</p> <p>“The second stage of deepening integration is indeed more challenging than the first stage. It can reach a point where I genuinely fear abandonment and feel quite powerless. That pure emotional state, I feel like they need to stay in that place and not leave, or if they leave, they can come back. In this aspect, I personally feel that when it comes to reaching very deep and fragile places, each individual's acceptance of themselves, their emotions, and their unmet attachment needs in that place is limited. They dislike this part of themselves, as if they dislike feeling so fearful or scared of being abandoned. They may feel unimportant, unlovable, or inadequate. These expressions or self-images, such as feeling useless or incapable, are not well-liked. Accepting this part of themselves is difficult. I'm not sure if this is part of our culture, but I feel it's challenging to work with.”</p>
Sarah	<p>“Difficult. It's difficult, because even though I'm quite good at doing Tango 2, even though I'm quite good at doing Tango, it's still difficult, very</p>

	<p>difficult, because basically, moving from Tango 2 to Tango 3 is the most difficult. Yes, moving from Tango 2 to Tango 3 is the most difficult. Tango 2 might even be harder than Tango 3, because touching upon vulnerability and helplessness is still quite challenging for people, especially for those who have experienced trauma. It's challenging for someone like me who has experienced it. In this aspect, touching upon vulnerability and helplessness is actually a very dangerous thing, because I might... it's very dangerous, I'm very afraid to touch upon that vulnerability and helplessness. It's still the most difficult.”</p> <p>“The second stage is difficult, just like the first stage is difficult. I understand. Each stage has its own unique challenges. Because I'm thinking in the first stage, you also have areas where you do the Tango. Yes, in the first stage, you go into the Tango, and you might want to help them go through negative cycle, which is also challenging because the relationship is still not safe, very difficult. Then, in the second stage, when you expose vulnerability and helplessness, you might be going through TANGO 2 in this phase. I think doing TANGO 2 in the second stage might be slightly easier than in the first stage.”</p> <p>“TANGO 3 is relatively challenging in the second stage, especially sharing this vulnerability and helplessness. This part is a bit challenging because it's about getting beyond their normal experiences.”</p>
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### ***Theme 11: Views on Tango 3***

Participants emphasized the degree of difficulty in the process, with comments such as "there is no way to go deeper" (Lucinda) and "touching the surface emotions is already remarkable" (Laura). Expressing the challenge of Tango 2, Sarah stated, "Difficult, it is difficult, although I am good at tango 2. It's still difficult, very difficult."

This finding is quite intriguing and was not anticipated prior to conducting the research. In Tango Three, clients experience deep emotions and are expected to share their vulnerability with their partner. However, this study revealed varying perspectives among five participants regarding this aspect. Some believed that in Stage 1, sharing emotions is expected to be with the therapist (e.g., Amy), whereas in Stage 2, it is supposed to be shared with their partner. It appears that the expression of deep emotions and vulnerability is primarily seen as applicable to

Stage 2 work and not expected in Stage 1 (Sharon). Greenman & Johnson (2013) pointed out that emotionally engaged self-disclosure and warm, empathetic response could lead to successful outcomes, particularly stage 2. It does not mean in it is not successful in stage 1. Stage 2 is more likely to have a more powerful outcome. Johnson (2004) confirmed that enactment has transformational impact throughout all steps and stages, not necessarily only in stage 1.

Additionally, some participants believed that Tango Three could entail sharing emotions with either the therapist or the partner. One participant (Sarah) even suggested that it could mean sharing these emotions with oneself, the partner, or the therapist.

This flexible interpretation of Tango Three contrasts with the researcher's own EFT learning experience, aligning more with Sue Johnson's approach, where Tango Three encourages clients to share their deepened emotions with their partner, starting from Stage 1. The idea is that discussing these deeper emotions with the therapist in Stage 1 is a part of training, helping clients expand their ability to verbalize their emotions (Lucinda and Larry). This can be viewed as a technique in EFT, slicing the process into smaller, manageable steps. This approach is seen as essential in the Chinese cultural context, where direct communication with the partner may be overwhelming for both the individual sharing their emotions and the partner receiving them. Training clients to initially communicate with the therapist is perceived as a necessary step and is regarded as a cultural adaptation within EFT practice (See *Table 12*).

*Table 12*

Theme 11: View on Tango three Chinese therapists have flexible views about Tango three, enactment with their partner.	
Lucinda	“For Americans, perhaps what I say to a therapist is similar to what I say to my partner, however, if I can say it to a therapist, I'm sure I can say it to my partner. But for Chinese people, the partner is their source of stimulation. That is, speaking to a relatively safe person like a therapist is something they

	<p>can probably manage. ...that is, the influence of cultural differences on this step”</p> <p>"Stretching, this is done in a relatively safe place. Then practice, let's rehearse it once here with the therapist, say it out loud, right? ... I think if someone has said it in the first stage to me, then it's definitely easier for them to directly say it in the second phase because they know what they want to say and how to say it, and you've already helped them organize or have practiced it once.”</p>
Amy	<p>“The first stage. TANGO 3 often involves encouraging him to speak more, not with the other person but with me (therapist). So, when I'm doing the first stage, doing TANGO 3, I hope he can express his vulnerability and helplessness in a self-consistent manner.”</p> <p>“So most people or others may do enactment during the first stage, not necessarily talking to the other person and expressing it, but also discussing it with the counselor.”</p>
Kate	<p>“Because sometimes in Tango Three, they talk to the therapist. Oh, it doesn't necessarily have to be with the partner. If it's with the therapist, in my first session, I would do tango 3. Talking to the partner, I would do that in the third session.”</p>
Larry	<p>“You'll find that if they struggle to do this within the couple relationship, the therapist can first encourage them to practice with me (therapist). For example, I can help him gradually express his deeper needs, such as unmet attachment needs or deeper emotions. As he gets used to speaking about these aspects, he begins to develop the ability to express emotions on his own. At this point, it becomes a form of training, and I think it's a training process....”</p> <p>“This is the Tango 3, which includes him talking to the counselor and him talking to his spouse. This is all part of the third step.”</p>
Sarah	<p>“The "handover" you mentioned, where the person expresses their emotions to the therapist, is just one aspect of this process. Regarding this handover, I was thinking there are many kinds. The one they talk about is just one of them. You hand over to the therapist, it's one aspect. You hand over to yourself, it's another. Moreover, they hand over to the other party, to their partner, which is yet another form of handover. So, it's not that any one kind of handoff is the only appropriate one. You need to assess and evaluate in the specific case process which type of "handoff" to use based on the person's capability and their level of acceptance.”</p>

### ***Theme 12: Effective Techniques for Men***

The final theme pertains to strategies and techniques for working with emotionally blocked clients, particularly many male clients. Eight out of 11 participants emphasized the importance of establishing a strong alliance to help clients feel safe. Seven participants identified

that empathizing and validating their experiences are the means to achieve this. Additionally, at least six out of eleven participants recognized "slicing it really thin" as a skill they use to meet the clients where they are and gauge the level of emotion they can tolerate. Amy emphasized that the skills of "slicing it thinner" is used everywhere because it reduces the difficulty of their enactment. Amy and Kate brought the importance of slicing the "words" thinner because clients, especially male clients, very likely will disown their feelings. Therapists have to use lighter words, replace fear with alertness (Amy), replace anxiety/fear with pressure (Kate), which they are willing to own. Laura also focused using different words for Chinese clients. She believed that using western words or the direct translation, such as sadness, fear, is not helpful as these are not the way Chinese people like to describe their emotional experiences. They would say “心如刀割” (heart like being cut by a knife). For Laura, Kate and Amy, changing words for clients, the goal is the same, which is to meet the clients "where they are".

They also mentioned being prepared to go very slow with them, keep providing comfort just like soothing a baby (Amy). Being patient is important (Tina, Sarah, Lucinda), as Lucinda elaborated that male clients can start to experience their emotions after the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> probing. Nancy explained that completing a direct expression probably happens around Session 16-20, whereas before session 12, they normally can only say something “very thin” and “extremely subtle”, or copy what the therapist said and pass that to their partner.

This is the consensus that making the male clients feel safe in the session is incredibly important for them to be able to talk about their emotions. Attuned empathy and validation is the most important humanistic skill that is used to make clients, male in particular, to feel safe so that therapists and clients can build a strong alliance. When male clients do feel non-judged (Kate), protected (Larry), they start to open up. Therefore, to summarize, empathy/validation,

"slicing it thinner" and establishing a safe alliance are key components in effectively implementing EFT (See *Table 13*).

*Table 13*

<p>Theme 12: Effective techniques for men</p> <p>For clients struggling to access their emotions, particularly male clients, employing techniques like slice-it-thinner (i.e. breaking it down into smaller, manageable steps), offering empathy and validation, and establishing a safe alliance with the clients are crucial in effectively working with them or teaching them about emotions.</p>	
Lucinda	<p>"First, you may need to be more patient. You know they will take more time to delve into deep emotions, to reach that place where they can experience their own emotions. Mm-hmm, for women, for example, it may take two or three times, while they may need five or six times. Mm, in this way, on the one hand, you need to be mentally prepared, it's going to be very slow. Mm, it's difficult for him in this regard. Mm, the second point is that you need to find that every step should be taken in very small steps....Right, slice thinly. And it's a bit like that small step fast run, meaning you have to take a small step each time. If he can keep up, then you continue to move forward, it's these small steps, but continuously moving forward....You may have to persist and try several times because he is quite rigid in this aspect, it's quite difficult."</p> <p>"I feel that creating a relatively safe relational environment is also very important. For example, to protect him, you can create a better atmosphere to express your emotions. In fact, for example, the relationship between you as a therapist and him, including at this moment, it's important that the spouse is not attacking, not provoking him. This is often crucial, as they tend to have a vicious cycle. Why is the husband so numb, so...? Besides his own reasons, there is also the continuous stimulation from the spouse, making him increasingly withdrawn and less willing to speak."</p>
Amy	<p>"I feel that taking it slow and offering more validation is important. One of the approaches I use quite often is in the early stages of establishing a relationship with them. I emphasize and highlight their attachment intentions, the positive attachment intentions. I make them realize that, yes, you are actually making a sincere effort to repair this relationship."</p> <p>"You have to slice it very thinly, and you have to proceed slowly, acknowledging their progress little by little. It's like coaxing, I feel it's a bit like coaxing a child. If you want to encourage them, give them a little pat, saying you've been working hard. You actually care a lot about the other person. You've tried various ways, constantly attempting to maintain the relationship in your own way, validating him on one hand,</p>

	<p>while touching upon his vulnerability on the other”</p> <p>“So, I heard about something new, maybe something we haven't grasped in the past, that even enactment can be sliced thinly. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, slicing thinly is everywhere. This helps in reducing the difficulty of their enactment”</p> <p>“So, the therapist used a technique, slicing it very thinly. Saying, 'As you talk about this regret, you might feel a slight touch. When you talk about it and shed tears, there's a deep sadness. But if we slice it very thinly, you might feel a touch, a different experience.' I observed, 'I noticed your eyes getting slightly red, and it seems your voice is a bit choked up, different from before. Could you tell me what's different that happened?' You don't directly use the emotion, like saying, 'It seems like you have red eyes?' or 'You seem to be upset, sad?' Initially, you use softer words, like slicing it very thinly, saying it seems like there's a slightly different feeling, and then it seems the voice becomes a bit softer. Yeah, I think slicing it very thinly...”</p> <p>“But you have to tell him that he's afraid, and he might not own it, so you can only say to him, 'In this situation, you might have some alertness or you might heighten your sensitivity to make yourself more keen to observe this situation.' Then he said he felt a bit nervous, and the gentleman still didn't acknowledge and own it, he became cautious, he used caution. The other party might have accepted it a bit, and from this point, I started to think, 'Oh, it seems really... when you later practice on your own, it reaffirmed once again, you really have to slice it very thinly.'”</p>
Kate	<p>“One of the most challenging tasks for an EFT counselor is to establish a strong and mutual trust relationship with both partners. In the initial stages, both parties may even perceive me as an attachment figure, allowing them to trust that I won't judge them and will truly understand them. So, when I can achieve this, the real challenge comes next - delving into the deep emotions and allowing them to feel the shame and fear that are often difficult to express.”</p> <p>“I often find myself validating their thoughts when working with men... if I want to touch upon their vulnerability or deeper emotions, I need to let them know that I understand them. There are many aspects where I validate their thoughts...I would also let them know that the pressure they felt in the past, men are willing to talk about pressure. I use the term 'pressure,' and they usually don't become defensive. I use RISSSC, slowing down the pace is essential. If, at the moment when you're starting to delve into their emotions, you're still moving too quickly, for this type of male client or those who tend to stay on the surface, they may revert to intellectual discussions.”</p>
Sharon	<p>“When a person feels empathy, they can relax, at least in the context of EFT. Your validation and empathy, as EFT emphasizes, can help them gradually let go of some of their rational aspects and guide them to have finer experiences. Yes, taking slower steps in the process can indeed be</p>

	<p>challenging. The wife might already be expressing emotions, but the husband might not have stepped into that role yet.”</p> <p>“The husband's expectation is for you to address her issues, her bad temper, or whatever it may be. He typically doesn't put himself forward. So, to build a relationship with him and encourage him to open up, you need to use certain approaches.”</p>
Larry	<p>“He may have some resistance at the beginning when it comes to sharing the TANGO 3 part. It's important to establish a good relationship with him and make him feel that you are not taking sides, that you understand him and want to get closer to him. He will start affirming and slowly share his grievances. Then, make the husband feel that you can protect him, that it's safe for him to speak his mind. At that point, he can tell you things like feeling on edge, not knowing when he might make a mistake, and feeling tense when returning home.”</p> <p>“Break down the sharing in the practice to a level where he can speak about it. If he struggles to articulate it and after encouraging multiple times, you realize it's still challenging for him to express, then you may need to wait a bit longer. Provide additional guidance to strengthen his connection with you, deepen his self-understanding, and encourage him to take a risk to share on a very subtle level.”</p> <p>“You can start by discussing something a bit lighter, something smaller. As soon as he begins to practice, he can gradually become more comfortable expressing himself. It's a process where, with practice, he starts to speak more naturally.”</p>
Laura	<p>“When it comes to expressing emotions, I don't think Chinese people necessarily use direct emotional words. For example, some may express, "I feel blocked inside, I feel stuck when I hear that sentence," which is essentially an expression of emotion. So, I think when it comes to expressing emotions, Chinese people may not use words like "angry," "upset," or "sad." Instead, they use language from their daily lives to express themselves. Another aspect is the use of Chinese idiomatic expressions which are four-character phrases. For instance, when expressing sadness, they might use phrases like "心碎" (heartbreak) or "心如刀割" (heart like being cut by a knife). Therefore, in the process of learning to express emotions, I believe it's important to find appropriate expressions for Chinese individuals rather than directly using Western approaches, such as asking, "Are you feeling upset?"</p> <p>“The counselor's focus is needed to gradually make them feel that this can be easy, it's not something that's difficult to articulate. I think this part requires a lot of genuine effort in creating a safe atmosphere where they feel that this aspect is not frightening. ”</p> <p>“...meaning initially, people might not know what emotions are, or they</p>



	<p>might feel shy to express them, or they might think emotions are illogical and scary. However, through the counselor's repeated work in delving into emotions step by step, they gradually realize that emotions are not a big scary tiger.”</p> <p>“EFT has a technique called validation and affirmation. In Chinese culture, people are not often praised or affirmed, and through the validation from the therapist, they can quickly establish a sense of safety. Chinese culture tends to be critical in its approach to education, but in the context of EFT, clients receive affirmation, even validating their anger, which they find very accepting.”</p>
Rita	<p>“I believe firstly, trust within the counseling alliance is crucial. The individual needs to trust that you have their best interests in mind and that the counseling relationship is built on trust. This, I find, is the foremost and very important aspect.”</p> <p>“Secondly, there are various counseling techniques, such as constantly affirming the individual and validating their responses. Additionally, validating and helping them see that their reactions are reasonable can be helpful.”</p> <p>“To rationalize their difficulties, validate their feelings, and perhaps take smaller steps, ensuring certain emotions, and slowly confirming with them. Yes, confirming step by step, and gradually.”</p>
Tina	<p>“As a professional, whether in EFT or personal experience, I've been doing this for a long time. However, I still face significant difficulties in expressing my own fears or shameful emotions. So, I might approach the client in this way to empathize and understand them more, to spend a bit more time, to strengthen a bit more, and to encourage them. However, if I find that they are really struggling, I may accompany them a bit more and wait a bit longer.”</p> <p>”I use techniques like empathy and reinforcement to help them stay in that place, to connect more with their own emotions”</p> <p>”In establishing the relationship with the client, there is a sense of safety that allows for a genuine expression of their inner feelings and concerns. It's remarkable how this atmosphere of safety, even in a session with a same-sex couple, can lead to a more authentic expression of their relationship worries, even without explicitly delving into the intimate or deeply connected aspects of their relationship.”</p>
Sarah	<p>“...I find it quite normal because they may not be familiar with discussing emotions. So, in this regard, Empathic conjecture could also be a valuable complement in this aspect.”</p> <p>“I think for cases like this, not only in Chinese males but also in many avoidant cases, we need to incorporate a lot of affective processing, which involves combining it with thin slicing. I like to use imagery to illustrate. Sometimes, when you talk and walk through the emotions, and</p>

	if it's not enough, you can directly give them a vivid mental image to help them feel and understand better.”
Nancy	<p>"You could say, for example, in a session, when you push for the second or third time, you can relay a very thin information to the other person. Generally, conveying complete and direct expressions is quite challenging, and it has to be extremely subtle, especially during the early stages of therapy. Yes, I think in the initial 12 sessions, most enactments are in a relatively simple space, and it's difficult to express a complete emotion. However, I think, by around 12 sessions and leaning towards 17, 18, or 20 sessions, when visiting them, they can probably start. For instance, you can start a conversation and ask if they want to talk about this with their husband or partner.”</p> <p>“When telling the other person simply, I mean what I said. You can ask, 'How do you see what Mrs. Wang said about this?' 'What are your thoughts on this matter?' They might not be able to express it in their own words. They may just say they want to know the answer but can't articulate it in their own language. They just involve me in it. This is in the early stage, and they might not be accustomed to this; they are not used to talking like this at home. Yes, I think for the initial 10 sessions, most people, if they are good at dialoguing, can “copy the assignment” relatively comprehensively. If it's average, they can continue visiting after about 12 sessions. Those who persist until this point in their visits are mostly about copying the assignment and adding some self-expression.”</p>

## Research Question Responses

The primary research objective of this study was to explore the experiences of Chinese EFT therapists working with Chinese couples. The study was guided by three research questions:

### 1) Challenges and Successes Encountered by Chinese EFT Therapists:

Challenges were explained through themes one to five. These encompass continuous learning and supervision support (Theme 1), emotional and physical tiredness (Theme 2), personal emotional exploratory work (Theme 3), clients ending treatment prematurely (Theme 4), and working with older populations (Theme 5).

Successes were addressed through themes six and seven, which focused on the effectiveness of using attuned empathy/validation and enactment (Tango 3) with clients (Theme

6), and the applicability of attachment theory for Chinese couples (Theme 7).

## 2) Influence of Cultural Variations on Emotional Aspects of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) for Chinese Couples:

This aspect was explored through themes eight, nine, and ten. The research revealed that Chinese therapists face significant difficulties in working with the emotional aspects of Chinese couples due to cultural factors (Theme 8). Particularly, Chinese males tend to be logical and cognitive, making it challenging to tap into and express emotions (Theme 9). Consequently, executing Tango 2 and Tango 3 is difficult for therapists as it involves accessing clients' deeper emotions/vulnerability and conveying this vulnerability to their partners (Theme 10).

## 3) Adaptation of Therapeutic Approach to Address Cultural Differences and Enhance the Effectiveness of EFT for Chinese Couples:

This research question was addressed through themes eleven and twelve. It was found that Chinese therapists adopt a more flexible approach, viewing Tango 3 as a stage where clients can share their lived emotions with therapists (Theme eleven). This adaptive approach aims to optimize the use of EFT in China. In dealing with Chinese clients' emotions, especially males, a safe therapeutic alliance was identified as crucial (Theme twelve). Techniques such as attuned empathy and validation, as well as "slice it thinner," were emphasized. These findings provide valuable insights into how Chinese EFT therapists navigate cultural nuances to enhance the effectiveness of EFT when working with Chinese couples.

## Summary

In this chapter, the findings regarding the experiences of Chinese EFT therapists working with couples were discussed. The participants, introduced as a group, were recruited

through snowball sampling. Eleven participants underwent semi-structured interviews, providing substantial insights into their utilization of EFT. Following data collection, twelve themes that addressed the three research questions were identified. The study unveiled both the challenges and successes that EFT encounters when applied to couples. It also shed light on the cultural obstacles EFT therapists face when working with clients not accustomed to processing emotions. Finally, the themes illustrated how EFT therapists culturally adapt to overcome these challenges.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Summary of the Findings

This phenomenological study aimed to collect the EFT therapists' experience of working with Chinese couples. This study gathered data by conducting semi-structured interviews with eleven participants. The data was transcribed into Chinese by an application on Mac, named Lark. The English-to-Chinese translation was done by Lark as well. The Chinese version of the transcriptions was sent to the participants for member check. The researcher used Moustakas's (1994) way of processing data and produced twelve different themes to address the research questions.

### *Research Question Addressed*

The primary research question focused on the Chinese EFT therapists' experiences of working with their Chinese couple clients. Sharon summarized that "I feel it's effective, quite effective actually. However, the challenges are not easy. It's really not easy to handle them effectively." If EFT can work effectively, the core healing power can happen because, like Sharon shared, "EFT goes deeper and enables the reestablishment of emotional connection within vulnerability and helplessness." This study found the challenges that Chinese EFT therapists face are: 1) It needs long-term practice and supervision support; 2) EFT therapists are limited by their own emotional flexibility, familiarity, comfort level; and 3) EFT therapists experience fatigue from using attuned empathy and emotions with their clients.

### ***Research question 1: What are the key challenges and successes Chinese EFT therapists encounter when working with Chinese couples?***

Participants approached the question from various perspectives, highlighting the challenging nature of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). Lucinda emphasized the need for extensive practice and constant supervision to truly internalize the theories and effectively apply

them in sessions. Sharon regarded supervision as a lifesaver, requiring immediate discussions with her supervisor after each session, underscoring its crucial role.

In comparison to other therapeutic approaches, Rita noted that the EFT's certification process is notably demanding. The process involves creating recordings and meeting specific standards, adding to its complexity. Participants also expressed exhaustion, particularly when working with the elderly, a challenging demographic. Central to their experiences were the profound emotional depth, richness, and fluidity demanded by EFT.

Drawing from their trainers' analogy, therapists likened the process to stretching both the therapist and the client emotionally, akin to physical exercises in a gym. This dual stretching was seen as vital for personal and professional growth. A common observation was that clients often wish to conclude therapy after experiencing some de-escalation in their relationships, displaying less interest in progressing to Stage 2 and Stage 3 for a closer bond.

Despite the challenges, therapists reported success with EFT and highlighted two highly effective techniques: attuned empathy and validation to establish trust and delve into emotions, and enactment to foster deep closeness between clients through vulnerability. Additionally, therapists recognized attachment theory as the foundation of EFT, aiding in understanding client relationships and facilitating healing through enactment.

***Research question 2: How do cultural variations influence the emotional aspects of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) experienced by Chinese couples?***

The research question focused on understanding how the emotional aspect of EFT applies to Chinese clients. Three themes emerged from the study. Most therapists discussed the cultural factors contributing to clients' avoidance, denial, and escape from their emotions. Chinese clients often struggle to navigate their experiences through an emotional lens, particularly male clients who were taught to suppress vulnerability, maintaining a sense of authority (Amy) within the

family. Comparatively, female clients were seen as more receptive to working through their emotions. Consequently, Theme Ten highlighted the cultural challenge impacting Tango two (emotion deepening) and Tango three (emotion expression to their partner), making it difficult for therapists to facilitate these emotional processes with their clients.

***Research question 3: How do Chinese EFT therapists adapt their therapeutic approach to address cultural differences and enhance the effectiveness of EFT for Chinese couples?***

It is uncertain whether some EFT therapists in China anticipate clients sharing vulnerability in stage two, bypassing stage one. Additionally, certain therapists expect clients to enact with the therapist rather than with their partner. Consequently, participants hold the belief that Tango two is more likely to occur in stage two, and enactment is anticipated to take place between the client and the therapist, rather than between the client and their partner.

The study revealed that overcoming emotional challenges, primarily rooted in cultural reasons, especially for male clients, hinges on establishing a secure and trusting therapeutic alliance with both partners. This achievement is facilitated by employing two crucial skills: attuned empathy and validation, and the technique of "slice it thinner."

## **Discussion**

### **Confirmation of Previous Research**

As reported by the participants, they came from backgrounds in either psychoanalytic or CBT approaches. Even if they initially began their careers in psychotherapy with EFT, Chinese culture often discourages open discussions about emotions and hindered their emotional experiences. Consequently, they had to adapt the emotion-oriented approach to align with cultural norms, therapeutic methods, or both. These findings parallel those of Knestel's 2011 research on the challenges of learning EFT. This study revealed that therapists transitioning to EFT from another model face a steep learning curve, which "can be taxing and requires time,

support, and additional supervision/training to increase comfort and competency with EFT" (Sandberg & Knestel, 2011, p. 393). This observation aligns with the first theme —Mastering EFT necessitates extensive practice and continuous supervision.

Both EFT therapists and therapists in general must be fully engaged with their clients, as noted by Lum (2022). As Amy pointed out, "EFT requires therapists to maintain empathy throughout the entire session" (Johnson, 2007). Johnson defined empathy as an "active leap of imagination," where therapists connect with and process core experiences with each client as they unfold (Johnson, 2007; p.48). However, continuously imagining the client's core experiences and sharing their pain can lead to compassion fatigue (Negash & Sahin, 2011), similar to the second theme found in this research.

Brubacher (2017) stated that the cornerstone of EFT is establishing a safe alliance and fostering empathetic understanding to facilitate emotional experiences within individuals and between partners. She identified the key elements of EFT as TEA, where "T" stands for Task alliance, "E" represents Emotional Depth, and "A" signifies Affiliative sharing, which is executed through EFT's technique called Enactment. Enactment serves as the fundamental and most potent intervention in EFT for creating attachment-based bonding dialogues and forging new interactions (Tilly & Palmer, 2012). It assists couples in moving underlying emotional experiences into new, attachment-significant contact and creating secure bonds (Tilly & Palmer, 2012, p.1). In this study, Chinese therapist participants also recognized the significant healing power of enactment in couples (theme six), consistent with prior research findings.

Empathy is already proved to be an essential component for most clinical modalities (Elliot et al., 2004). Empathy was found to be particularly critical for Chinese clients' therapeutic experience in EFT. Amy's assertion, "get attuned, very attuned, getting extremely close. I think a



person can be understood by another person in this way, which is an experience many people may never have in their lifetime” is supported by Myler's research (2009). He noted that Chinese individuals often appear to lack basic empathy towards others and identified two primary reasons for this phenomenon. First, the one-child policy restricts opportunities for social empathetic learning during upbringing. Second, overpopulation has led to resource scarcity, resulting in more self-centered behaviors that hinder the development of empathy. Given that empathy is not a common experience outside the therapy room in their daily lives, it can be understood why experiencing empathy from another human being, such as a therapist, is a rare and profound encounter. However, Fukuyama (1995) characterized Chinese society as a "low-trust" society, suggesting that, when people are seen as outsiders or part of an out-group, there tends to be a strong distrust of strangers. In contrast, there is a higher level of trust when people are considered part of the in-group, such as family members. This perspective indirectly explains why therapists must invest time in building trust and creating a sense of safety with their clients by demonstrating a high degree of empathy, especially when working with couples. Once clients experience this deep, attuned understanding from the therapist, who reassures them that their reactions are entirely normal, as Amy stated, "it is quite redemptive." Laura highlighted the significance of validation in building trust with the therapist, explaining that "China primarily practices an education approach that emphasizes criticism, and this approach provides them with a lot of validation, to the extent that even their anger is considered valid. They actually feel quite accepted."

Therefore, both empathy and validation are interpersonal experiences that clients in the Chinese culture often do not encounter. Chinese clients have come a long way, and therapists play a critical role in bridging the gap required by Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) by

emphasizing that "emotion is acceptable, and your anger is acceptable." Without this emphasis, individuals may not even allow themselves to express any emotions in the first place, not even close to get in touch with anger. As culturally, anger is generally not considered an accepted emotion. They may be culturally accustomed to suppressing or completely numbing it out. Being validated and empathized are rare interpersonal experiences outside of therapy. Thus, once they can feel being empathized and validated by a therapist, it is clinically very effective.

Attachment theory has been proven effective in Chinese culture, aligning with Johnson's (2015) statement that "key emotional experiences and attachment needs and behaviors are universal" (p. 101) across various demographics, such as socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, and family structures. Theme seven reaches the same conclusion as previous research regarding the effectiveness of attachment theory in China.

The primary findings are reflected in themes eight and nine. Chinese culture often places a strong emphasis on emotional restraint, particularly among men. This concept aligns with the literature review section on emotions in Chinese culture. Bond's research (1993) on Chinese emotional expressions reveals that they tend to control their emotions, both to avoid judgment and because it contributes to social harmony and hierarchical order within groups. This study revealed an important experience by most of the participants that Chinese men, in particular, exhibit a relatively narrow emotional range and tend to guard against vulnerability.

Chinese clients need to be taught about feeling emotions and sharing emotions/vulnerability because it is not the experience that they are used to when they grew up. Over the decades, the Chinese culture has been greatly influenced by expressive American culture; thus, expressing love/affectionate communication is becoming increasingly accepted (Hatfield & Forbes, 2013). Still, some clients need to learn emotions from scratch by a therapist providing

multiple emotion words for them and let them pick and choose, according to Nancy in this research, whereas in the west, emotions are learned from a very young age.

Emotions often appear foreign and too vulnerable for Chinese clients to access and express. Seok (2021) has shed light on the unique perspective of Chinese emotions, stating that (Chinese) emotions are not necessarily or fully understood as subjective feelings. Nor are they characterized as irrational or excessive urges of passion that disrupt or challenge rational thinking. Instead, emotions play broad psychological and moral roles in the cultivation of virtue and the political order, as well as the stability of society. (p.3)

Virag (2017) further emphasized that emotion is not tied to subjective experience; instead, it serves as a "crucial interface between self and the world, mind and cosmos" (p. 194). Emotion can be seen as the "holistic affectivity of the sensing, thinking, and feeling mind that is always related to and interactive with the world" (Seok, 2021, p.4).

Sharon encountered this cultural difference when she asked her client about emotions, and the client responded with "I think this person should die!" This answer reflects various psychological states, such as desire, feeling, and thinking, rather than a simple "I feel angry." In the Chinese context, the closest equivalent word to emotion in Western languages is *Qing*. *Qing* is defined by Liji (*The Book of Rites*) as encompassing "joy, anger, sadness, fear, love, disliking, and liking. These seven feelings belong to men without their learning them." While *Qing* could refer to internal feelings, it is a more complex concept, "consisting of a multidimensional or multi-factorial process of the mind" (Seok, 2021, p.6). This partially explains why clients struggle to pinpoint their internal feelings and generate precise emotional descriptors recognized in Western definitions unless they have been influenced by Western culture to understand the

concept of emotions. Otherwise, their expressions might be categorized as thoughts and perspectives, such as "I think this person should die," which can still be considered an emotional state, though not necessarily an emotion in the Western sense.

Secondly, emotions are not purely personal internal states for the Chinese. Emotions are shaped through an individual's negotiation with the social, cultural, physical, and political environments. They are "interactive, perceptual, cognitive, motivational, and affective states of the mind in their constant interactions with the world that is affectively constituted and embedded" (p.6). This means that emotions are a product of their interactions with the external world. Emotion control or vulnerability control is highly valued from a Confucian perspective and is used to maintain interpersonal and group harmony (Kung, 2003), as well as social hierarchical order (Bond, 1993).

Thirdly, the Chinese regulate their emotions not only for the sake of external factors like group harmony, but also because they possess an internal capacity to manage their less aroused emotions (compared to their American counterparts, as reviewed in Chapter 2) and transform them into a harmonious state (he, 和/和谐). Traditionally, Confucianism emphasized the cultivation of individuals to maintain a stable, balanced, and neutral state in daily life to attain sagehood. This cultural expectation means that, especially for Chinese men, having a calm and stable character is highly regarded, making it challenging to openly express emotions. This explains why some participants have observed that Chinese individuals, particularly men, tend to maintain a stoic or "poker face" in therapy sessions. Furthermore, Easterners tend to engage with mixed emotions (Schimmack, et al., 2002) and can perceive mixed emotions in others (Fang, Kleef & Sauter, 2019). This complexity can make it difficult for the Chinese to identify and verbalize their emotions, especially when emotions are intertwined and mixed. In summary,

these three reasons contribute to the challenge that Chinese individuals, particularly men, face when it comes to expressing their emotions.

Although challenges in expressing emotions may not necessarily have a detrimental effect on the well-being of Chinese men, it does present a significant obstacle in the process of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). Yueng and Mak (2015) have identified the mediating role of the perception of the social situation, particularly the sense of safety in sharing tender emotions, and its impact on the well-being of Chinese men. In an EFT setting, it is vital to assist men in establishing a safe environment where they can openly share tender emotions without judgment. This, in turn, can gradually reshape their perception of the social situation in a secure manner, enabling them to share their vulnerabilities with their therapist and, ultimately, with their partners.

As for Chinese women, they may not encounter similar challenges with emotions. The existing literature consistently supports the notion that men and women differ in terms of emotion expression (Wexler, 2009). Men often face difficulties in psychotherapy activities, such as identifying and discussing their feelings, recognizing the impact of their behaviors on their partners, and accessing vulnerability or seeking support. Gottman and Silver (1994) further elucidate that men frequently deal with marital stress through stonewalling, emotional withdrawal, and emotional suppression, which aligns with the ninth theme in this study.

In this research, nearly half of the participants compared the emotional experiences of men and women. The findings indicate that men encounter greater difficulties with emotions than women. A related study by Davis et al. (2012) compared gender and cultural differences in emotion expression and regulation between the United States and China. The results emphasized that Chinese men tend to exhibit lower levels of emotion, while American women tend to

express higher emotional intensity. Chinese men often reported using disengagement strategies, such as distancing, to manage their emotions. This is in line with the findings of this study, which indicate that women are more emotionally accessible than men. Fischer et al. (2004) also identified gender-specific patterns, with women being more at ease in expressing vulnerable emotions. This aligns with the observations of this study within a Chinese context, where several participants noted that women can readily access and express vulnerable emotions compared to men.

Song and Hird (2014) conducted an analysis of masculinity among men in contemporary China to shed light on the challenges they face regarding their emotions and vulnerability. The study revealed that Chinese men experience significant pressure to be the primary breadwinners. While the media often portrays the "New Man" image in contemporary China as warm, sensitive, caring, tender, and emotionally expressive, being the family's provider is still considered a crucial aspect of masculinity. Even if men display soft and tender qualities in their interactions, the prevailing discourse around the "New Man" image in China does not fully endorse or validate the idea that men can be emotionally vulnerable or show weakness to others.

In Song and Hird's study (2014), some male participants expressed that, as heterosexual men in romantic relationships in China, they are expected to be the primary providers for their families, bearing additional responsibilities such as purchasing a house, while women are traditionally expected to take care of the children. This research indicated that the commitment to "breadwinning masculinity" has far-reaching implications for family dynamics and work activities. When society and families hold high expectations for men to exhibit their breadwinning masculinity in the context of consumerism, individualization, and even soft masculinity, it is less likely to change the fact that men must maintain their strength and provider

role, irrespective of social, economic, and societal changes. This aligns with Jamieson's (1999) observation that, both in British society and in the Chinese context, "men and women routinely invoke gender stereotypes or overlook gendered processes when defining themselves as lovers, partners, mothers, fathers, and friends" (p. 291). In everyday life within Chinese families, stereotypes that demand strong breadwinning masculinity, material success, and a persistent emphasis on a son's filial duties, as well as religious constructs of men's domestic authority, all contribute to the challenges in realizing a genuinely pure relationship characterized by an expressive, egalitarian, and caring husband and father (Song & Hird, p. 252). Under these varying forms of pressure, it becomes understandable why some Chinese men may be hesitant to display vulnerability, as doing so contradicts the social and gender expectations placed upon them. In the broader Chinese cultural context, showing weakness or vulnerability is discouraged and is likely to result in negative judgment.

This research uncovered that men in therapy often respond by withdrawing emotionally, distancing themselves from their partners, and focusing on performance, problem-solving, and sexual issues in romantic relationships. These responses are explained often by the notion of masculine gender role stress (MGRS). Men may feel pressured by societal expectations that discourage the open sharing of their softer emotions. Therefore, the emotional aspects of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) interventions can be daunting for men who have been conditioned to suppress emotional experiences and vulnerability. Greenman et al. (2012) noted that working with men in EFT can present challenges, which aligns with the ninth theme identified in this study.

To effectively work with men in EFT, Greenman et al. (2012) recommend initiating the process by creating a safe and supportive environment. Welch et al. (2019) also emphasize the

significance of safety, as couples are more likely to take risks and share vulnerability when they feel secure. Key steps in working with men include validating the challenges they face related to gender roles, acknowledging their protective mechanisms, slowing down the therapy process, focusing on their emotions, and providing an extensive emotional vocabulary for men. Greenman et al. (2012) stress that empathy and validation play a crucial role in deepening men's emotional experiences. The therapeutic alliance, accounting for 20% of the variance in EFT outcomes, further underscores the importance of these factors, aligning with the conclusions drawn in the twelfth theme of this study.

### **Extension on Previous Research**

In working with men, besides establishing safety and offering empathy and validation, another frequently mentioned technique among the participants was "slicing it thinner" (theme twelve). This approach necessitates therapists to maintain close proximity to the client's awareness of their experiences (Brubacher, 2018). Notably, this research found that Chinese therapists often employ the "slice it thinner" technique when working with Chinese men. When therapists create a safe environment but still find that male clients hesitate to share their newly accessed emotions, they facilitate these clients to take smaller, more manageable emotional risks—effectively "slicing" the risk thinner.

In the Chinese context, participants shared that, when working with men, it is crucial to take "very small" steps, as Lucinda noted, and slice emotions "very thin," while also acknowledging any progress, as emphasized by Amy. Amy further highlighted that "slicing thinly" is a persuasive strategy that eases the difficulty of emotional expression. Rita described the initial resistance exhibited by male clients when vulnerable emotions are revealed, necessitating gradual progress in slicing the emotional content thinner and rebuilding the



therapeutic relationship. Sarah pointed out how using light, carefully chosen words and taking small steps can be beneficial when working with Chinese male clients. She explained that, with Chinese men, stepping back a bit and allowing a touch of frustration or discomfort can encourage them to acknowledge their emotions.

Larry also patiently worked with male clients, utilizing various strategies to prepare them for delving deeper into their emotions after overcoming resistance. He explained:

Take that emotional enactment and gradually slice the content thinner to a level he can express. If he still can't express it after a few encouraging attempts, then you might need to wait a bit longer and give him some more work. This helps him become more strongly connected with you, gain a deeper understanding of himself, and eventually reach a point where he's willing to share at a very subtle level of vulnerability.

Therefore, Chinese therapists frequently employ the "slice it thinner" approach, sometimes making it even "very thin" or "extremely thin," by assigning small emotional tasks. This technique is often complemented by other strategies, including patience, building a stronger connection, enhancing the client's self-awareness, providing encouragement, consistently returning to their emotions, and determining the right timing to probe emotions, among others. This adaptability in working with clients is also emphasized by two participants, Lucinda and David.

All the strategies mentioned above for working with Chinese male clients demonstrate the challenges they face in dealing with their emotions, especially in terms of emotional expression. Iwamoto et al. (2010) noted that for Asian American men may still adhere to masculine norms and use avoidant coping strategies, a practice that remains significant for their mental well-being. Interestingly, despite Hofstede's findings suggesting a balance of Yin and

Yang in Chinese culture, with few gender stereotypes and biases, working with Chinese men's emotions in couples therapy can be highly demanding, as these men often experience gender norm-related stress, particularly when it comes to accessing and expressing emotions.

### **Contribution of this Study**

A review of the literature underscores the lack of process-based EFT research involving non-Western couples, with a specific focus on Chinese couples. Consequently, many findings within this study constitute novel contributions to the application of EFT in non-Western cultures. EFT's core efficacy hinges heavily on emotions, encompassing the ability to access, deepen, sustain, and express emotions, coupled with fostering empathetic connections. Given the central role of emotions in the EFT treatment process, both therapists and clients must possess emotional competence. The cultural challenges associated with emotions in Chinese clients result in various difficulties encountered by Chinese EFT therapists, as elucidated by the themes generated in this study.

These cultural challenges manifest as obstacles for Chinese therapists when working with older generation couples (theme five), grappling with their own deep emotions (theme three), navigating Tango two and Tango three, which involve deepening emotions and emotional expression (theme ten), formulating different perspectives on Tango 3 (theme eleven), and dealing with premature termination (theme four). Intriguingly, the challenges across these themes stem from the fact that Chinese are not used to express and share emotions.

Participants in this study shared that particularly challenging client populations include those with attachment injuries, individuals entrenched in patterns for over a decade, or those diagnosed with personality disorders. Notably, the older generation emerged as the most frequently mentioned group (theme five). Marsh (2016) emphasized the high effectiveness of

EFT when working with older individuals. Hazrati et al. (2017) concluded that emotion-focused couple-based interventions significantly enhance couples' satisfaction. However, Chinese therapists appear to grapple with significant challenges when working with older clients. Ma et al.'s study (2013) also yielded similar results, indicating that Chinese older adults are less likely to experience negative emotions compared to younger adults. This explains the difficulty in applying the EFT approach to this demographic.

Additionally, modern China is witnessing the growing influence of individualistic values, which is making Chinese individuals increasingly emotionally expressive (Sun & Ryder, 2016). The demographic most profoundly impacted by Westernization is the younger generation, which is more inclined to discuss feelings and share intimate thoughts (Yan, 2003). As a result, therapists in this study found that the younger generation who were born in 1990s and 2000s (Larry) are more receptive to emotional exploration compared to older adults who were born in 1960s and 1970s (Kate), and women generally exhibit greater emotional openness than men.

As therapists engage in emotional work with their clients, it is imperative for therapists to connect with their own deep emotions and vulnerability (theme three), in addition to guiding clients to explore their emotions and vulnerabilities. The literature review suggests that expressing emotions is inherent to Chinese individuals, including both therapists and clients, due to cultural reasons. This challenge pertains to both Chinese clients and Chinese therapists, in contrast to their Western counterparts who are generally more attuned to emotions. Chinese individuals raised in the native culture encounter difficulties in deepening emotions and expressing them. To facilitate clients in exploring their emotions and vulnerabilities, therapists, like Larry, emphasize the necessity of possessing rich internal emotional awareness. This internal awareness equips therapists with the capacity to empathize, imagine, delve deeper, and stay

present when clients express their vulnerability. Amy used her personal experiences to relate to clients' fears of disclosing their own vulnerable emotions. John (2016) shared his personal experience, highlighting the necessity for self-exploration and the willingness to confront personal emotional barriers. It is plausible that therapists in different cultures also engage in personal emotional exploration. However, in the Chinese context, it constitutes a common obstacle for therapists striving to become proficient EFT therapists.

The study reaffirms the literature's implications, indicating the challenge of working with Chinese clients regarding deepening emotions and transmitting emotions to their partner (theme ten). Participants used terms like "no way to go deeper emotionally" (Lucinda) and "if clients can touch the surface of emotions, it is already remarkable" to describe Tango 2. Regarding Tango 3, terms such as "difficult," "very difficult," and "moving from Tango 2 to Tango 3 is the most difficult" (Sarah) were used. Kate expressed that they cannot engage in Tango 3 because there is a sense of discomfort, unfamiliarity, and inadequacy. These descriptions underscore the considerable challenges faced by Chinese therapists. Tango 2 and 3 are integral components of EFT and, while participants acknowledged the difficulties, they also recognized that EFT is highly effective once these challenges are overcome. In the Chinese context, love is often perceived as something expressed through actions rather than words (Laura). However, a study by Haris et al. (2013) examining the expression of "I love you" in China and the United States found that Chinese respondents tend to minimize both verbal and non-verbal love expressions. This explains why participants described the Chinese as emotionally reserved, including in their expression. Given this reserved stance, EFT necessitates therapists to invest additional effort in engaging and eliciting emotional expressions from clients. This accounts for the high level of

difficulty reported by therapists when working with Chinese clients, as they must facilitate a departure from traditional emotional expression norms.

Another notable finding pertains to Theme eleven, wherein some therapists believed that emotions should initially be shared with therapists during the initial stage, rather than with their partner. This interpretation connects to the notion that emotional expression, love, and direct verbal communication remain culturally unfamiliar to Chinese clients. Therapists must guide clients in embracing these core elements of EFT, thus necessitating the creation of a culture that values and validates emotions, vulnerability, and emotional expression. Consequently, therapists refrain from immediately prompting clients to share emotionally charged content, recognizing it may pose a cultural shock for both clients and therapists. Instead, they guide clients toward sharing lighter emotions that are more tolerable, a technique akin to "slicing it thinner." This approach likely stems from cultural adaptations made by trainers like Liu Ting in the Chinese context. It can be envisioned that without this stepwise approach, clients might find direct emotional sharing with their partner overwhelming and risky, completely foreign both culturally and personally. This "twist" in Tango three aims to adjust and make it culturally viable, akin to the notion Amy highlighted – "slicing it thinner is everywhere in the EFT process."

Theme four, as discussed here pertains to premature termination by clients. Premature termination is a common occurrence in individual, couple, and family therapy sessions. In this study, participants did not primarily report clients abruptly ending therapy after one or two sessions. Instead, participants noted that clients often discontinued therapy after experiencing some initial gains, such as recognizing patterns in their relationship, cessation of arguments, or improved problem-solving abilities. These achievements align with the goals of Stage one in EFT, which primarily seeks to de-escalate conflicts. EFT encompasses subsequent stages (Stage

2 and Stage 3) that involve restructuring and consolidating the relationship. The termination observed may stem from a misalignment between the client's personal therapy goals and the broader objectives of the EFT model.

Why do Chinese clients tend to end their sessions after experiencing initial de-escalation in their relationship (theme four)? This pattern is possibly linked to the fact that individuals in China who seek couples counseling to address relationship issues mostly come from the younger generation. Understanding whether they align more with traditional Chinese values or Westernized values is crucial in explaining early therapy termination among Chinese clients. According to Johnson (2019), EFT aims to foster a secure, intimate, and enduring bond in couples, transcending mere problem-solving. However, it remains unclear whether this is the desired outcome for Chinese clients in therapy or the type of relationship they seek.

Blair and Madigan (2016) suggest that the younger generation in China is finding their way amid the demands of traditional Chinese culture and the progressive values of a constantly evolving modern society. Traditionally, in heterosexual relationships, men were driven by a desire for physically attractive and youthful women, while women sought men with greater resources, such as higher social status and financial stability. In a collective culture, societal and familial obligations often outweigh personal desires (Kwang, 2001). In contrast, individualistic cultures emphasize romantic love as essential for marital relationships.

However, research indicates that the Chinese youth are increasingly influenced by Westernized notions of love and romance. As a result, contemporary Chinese youth seek both the traditional, pragmatic aspects of relationships and a Westernized romantic connection. They strive to balance these elements in their relationships (Blair and Madigan, 2016). This dynamic explains why some clients are committed to the entire EFT process, while many are content with

non-escalated, non-chaotic relationships and show little interest in forming deep, intimate bonds with their partners.

The exchange theory, rooted in pragmatism, elucidates this theme by positing that men seek relationships with women to have offspring, while women seek relationships with men for protection. Even as women gain more power and social status, this pragmatic approach endures. Blair and Madigan (2016) revealed that Chinese women value partners with pragmatic qualities, while men seek partners with caring qualities. Given the persistence of this pragmatic dynamic in Chinese relationships, it is reasonable to conclude that many couples are not primarily interested in cultivating secure, enduring romantic love with each other.

## **Implications of the Study**

### ***Theoretical Implication***

Emotionally Focused Therapy faces challenges when applied to non-western cultures, particularly collectivistic cultures like China. In this study, it became evident that asking clients from collectivistic cultures, such as China, to immediately delve into deep emotions and share them during the initial sessions in Stage one is a daunting task. Chinese clients require a safe and supportive environment to become acquainted with emotional processing. Creating a safe environment can be achieved by helping them become familiar with emotion-related vocabulary, using native Chinese emotion words instead of directly translated terms like "sadness" or "hurt." Additionally, strategies such as slowing down the process, consistently validating their experiences, acknowledging progress, and offering encouragement are crucial. EFT Tango Move 3 might benefit from a more flexible approach that considers cultural diversity. Introducing the practice of sharing deepened emotions with the therapist first serves as a culturally appropriate preparation or stepping stone before sharing these emotions with their partners.

When it comes to clients prematurely terminating therapy, it is imperative to reevaluate how EFT's three stages and nine steps align with the cultural needs of individuals whose relationships are not predominantly based on romantic love. There may be a fundamental difference between clients who seek to reduce conflict and the EFT model, which aims to establish long-lasting bonds. It is essential to question whether individuals from non-western cultures truly desire this goal for their relationships. EFT theorists should consider rethinking or redesigning the treatment process from the perspective of different cultures.

### ***Empirical Implication***

Empirically, this research has discovered that clients often terminate couples counseling services after achieving a certain level of success. Premature termination typically refers to clients quitting after one or two sessions due to minimal progress or lack of interest in therapy. However, this study reveals another phenomenon where clients choose to end sessions because they are satisfied with what they aimed to achieve, primarily aligning with EFT's goals for Stage one. This novel phenomenon warrants further investigation to understand why Chinese clients frequently end therapy early. Are the offerings in Stage two and Stage three not effective for most Chinese clients? What adjustments can be made to better serve Chinese clients using the EFT model? These questions necessitate additional empirical research in the future.

Furthermore, this study indicates that Chinese therapists need to address their emotional depth and vulnerability, an area that has received limited attention in the EFT field. This aspect is undeniably crucial and forms a solid foundation for deepening their clients' emotions, as suggested by most participants. Therefore, further research is required to delve into the emotional challenges they encounter, their personal experiences with discussing emotions, their



ability to delve into their emotional vulnerabilities, and their practices in recognizing and staying with deep emotions.

Some therapists have already begun addressing these questions. Notably, this theme emerged late in the interview process and was not the primary focus of the study. Therefore, more focused research is needed to comprehensively explore this topic.

### ***Practical Implication***

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that working with Chinese individuals on their emotions is a challenging task, and working with Chinese men's emotions presents an even greater challenge. Achieving success with Chinese men's emotions is crucial for the successful application of EFT in China. To this end, there should be a greater emphasis on training EFT therapists in effectively working with Chinese men. The "slice it thinner" technique, which has been identified as widely used among Chinese EFT therapists in this research, could serve as a key focus for future EFT training in China. Specific training sessions or workbooks can be developed on the topic of "Working with Chinese Men on Their Emotions Using 'Slice it Thinner'" or "How to Effectively Work with Chinese Men."

Theme eight highlights the unfamiliarity of Chinese clients with emotions, often requiring therapists to provide emotional education similar to teaching a child. Therefore, training should have a cultural focus, addressing the question of "How to work with clients who are culturally unfamiliar with emotions"

Theme two sheds light on the emotional exhaustion experienced by EFT therapists, with Sarah pointing out the lack of self-care groups in China. Given the emotionally demanding nature of EFT therapy, it becomes essential to establish self-care and secondary trauma support groups to promote the well-being of EFT therapists. Additionally, there should be more training

and therapist workbooks available on the specific topic of "Developing therapists' own emotional depth" or "Strategies to navigate therapists' emotional stretch."

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

In this study, the participants were exclusively individuals of Chinese nationality residing in China. The research did not encompass Chinese individuals living abroad, such as those in Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macau, nor did it include Chinese individuals residing outside China who engaged in psychotherapy with non-Chinese mainland clients. The rationale behind this selection criteria was to narrow the focus to therapists and clients who share the same political, social, economic norms, and practices within mainland China, not the Chinese who live in other social, economic and political environments.

Given that Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) necessitates extensive study, practice, and supervision for mastery (as highlighted in theme one), the participants in this research were required to be certified or actively preparing for certification. This excluded individuals who are not actively employing EFT or undergoing training specific to EFT. The intention was to capture the perspectives of individuals who possessed a comprehensive understanding of the EFT model and its practical application.

Moreover, the research concentrated on the experiences of Chinese clients who were born and raised in mainland China. The focus was deliberately limited to mainland Chinese therapists and clients, omitting other Chinese populations (e.g., Hong Kong, Macau, American Chinese) due to the scale of the research. Additionally, the researcher, originating from mainland China and currently residing in the U.S. while working with Chinese immigrants, American Chinese, and European Americans, is inherently interested in exploring how this emotion-oriented therapy model operates in China, where emotional norms differ from those in the West.

Regarding the limitations of this research, it is important to note that the study involved only eleven certified and close-to-being-certified EFT therapists. This sample may not fully represent the entire population of EFT practitioners who have mastered the EFT model. Consequently, caution must be exercised in generalizing the findings, especially considering the ambiguous criteria for qualifying as an EFT therapist. While it is debatable whether only certified EFT therapists are capable of conducting EFT, this research did not include individuals who can effectively practice EFT but lack certification, thus limiting the scope of the study.

In phenomenological research, data is generated through the interaction between the researcher and the participants. The elicitation of data relies on the researcher's subjective questioning, influenced by factors such as safety levels, trust built between the therapist and participants, timing, and the flow of conversation. The researcher's subjective decisions during the interview process, including what questions to ask and how to facilitate clients in discussing their experiences, introduce a level of subjectivity. The researcher's own biases can impact the validity and reliability of the data, with some biases being consciously acknowledged and corrected, while others may remain unnoticed, influencing the results.

Given that the literature review established certain presumptions for this research, there is a potential for therapists to unconsciously guide clients towards predetermined conclusions. However, the researchers were cognizant of this tendency and actively monitored and addressed this bias during the interview process. Lastly, it is crucial to recognize that the phenomenological approach inherently involves subjectivity, lacking the scientific and objective elements typically associated with other research methodologies, which can impact the robustness of the conclusions.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

As indicated in the literature review, there is a dearth of research exploring the application of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) in non-Western cultures. This study serves as a pioneering venture into potential research areas. For instance, the observation that clients tend to terminate treatment post-de-escalation success raises questions about the overall effectiveness of EFT for Chinese clients. Future research avenues could investigate the prevalence of premature treatment termination, the underlying reasons, how EFT can be tailored to meet the specific needs of Chinese individuals, and whether the treatment goals of EFT align with the couples' goals for therapy. To obtain more accurate insights into these phenomena, future research should collect data through direct interviews with clients themselves. The impact of a therapist's own emotions and vulnerability on the effectiveness of EFT remains unclear. Further qualitative and quantitative research could delve into the correlation between a therapist's vulnerability and its influence on treatment outcomes.

The study emphasizes the significance of working with men in heterosexual relationships within the context of EFT treatment. However, the prevalence and severity of the issue of Chinese men engaging with and expressing emotions remain unclear. Additionally, while the study notes that women are generally more accessible in expressing their emotions, the extent of this difference, whether women are significantly or slightly more accessible, or if attachment style rather than gender plays a determining role, requires further exploration in future research.

This study primarily relies on therapists' descriptions obtained through interviews to understand clients' experiences with EFT. Future research should directly incorporate clients' perspectives, allowing them to share their experiences and contributing to the overall validity of results. For instance, although therapists assert that empathy/validation is effective in EFT with

Chinese clients, understanding the clients' perspective on which components they find most helpful is crucial.

The research focuses exclusively on mainland Chinese individuals, neglecting the opportunity to explore the experiences of other Chinese populations outside mainland China, such as those in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Future research could examine whether individuals from these regions, influenced by collectivist cultures, perceive greater difficulty, ease, or experience a similar level of difficulty in engaging with emotions in EFT. Additionally, comparative studies between Chinese, Japanese, and Korean populations could provide insights into cultural variations in emotional engagement within the context of EFT.

### **Summary**

This phenomenological study delves into the experiences of Chinese therapists employing Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) with Chinese clients. Within this overarching subject, three research questions were explored: 1) Challenges and successes of utilizing EFT; 2) The emotional engagement of Chinese clients in EFT; and 3) strategies for adapting EFT with Chinese clients. This research engaged 11 certified or close-to-certified therapists, eliciting their insights into working with Chinese clients using EFT. Subsequent data analysis revealed twelve key themes: 1) EFT necessitates prolonged practice with continuous supervision support. 2) EFT therapists grapple with physical and emotional exhaustion. 3) Therapists are cognizant of their ability to connect with deep emotions and vulnerability. 4) Clients often conclude therapy after experiencing some de-escalation. 5) Working with the older generation poses challenges. 6) Empathy, validation, and enactment are effective techniques with Chinese clients. 7) Attachment holds relevance in the Chinese context. 8) The concept of emotion is unfamiliar to Chinese clients. 9) Chinese men, particularly those who are rational or withdrawn, struggle with

emotional work in EFT. 10) Emotional deepening and expressing vulnerability are challenging for Chinese couples in therapy. 11) Chinese EFT therapists use Tango three flexibly (sharing deepened emotion). 12) "Slice it thinner" is an effective technique for emotionally stuck clients, especially men. The study highlights challenges for both Chinese clients and therapists, emphasizing the premature termination of services by clients, hindering the achievement of EFT goals. This underscores the need for EFT trainers and cultural work specialists to address this issue. Additionally, the study identifies men's difficulties with emotions as a significant barrier to successful EFT implementation. The high percentage of men unable to access and express emotions in couples counseling suggests a need for more training on men's topics. Future training, particularly on working with Chinese and Asian men's emotions, could become mandatory. The study suggests refining the "slice it thinner" technique by incorporating lighter vocabulary, local Chinese terms, and increased validation. The broader implication is the necessity for a cultural emotion training protocol for Chinese clients, necessitating further research and development to bridge the cultural "emotion" gap.

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## APPENDIX A. IRB Approval Letter

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 21, 2023

Yifan Wang  
Thomas Vail

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY22-23-1703 EFFECTIVENESS OF EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY WITH CHINESE COUPLE CLIENTS: FROM CHINESE EFT THERAPISTS' CULTURAL LENS

Dear Yifan Wang, Thomas Vail,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: August 21, 2023. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

**For a PDF of your approval letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found on the same page under the Attachments tab. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.**

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## **Appendix B. Interview Questions**

### **A. EFT learning experience**

- 1) How and when did you start learning EFT?
- 2) What attracted you to choose this method?
- 3) Have you noticed cultural differences while learning and applying EFT with clients?
- 4) In this interview, what cultural challenges or advantages do you see in learning EFT?

### **B. Experiences as a Therapist Using EFT**

- 5) How do you feel when using EFT with clients from China?
- 6) As a therapist applying this method to Chinese couples, what cultural challenges do you face?
- 7) How does your cultural background influence your approach when using EFT with Chinese clients?
- 8) To what extent are you consciously aware of and managing your emotions during EFT sessions?
- 9) How do you address these cultural challenges?

### **C. Experiences of Using EFT with Clients**

- 10) How do Chinese clients experience EFT when working with you?
- 11) What challenges and successes do you and your clients encounter during EFT sessions?
- 12) What cultural barriers arise when applying this therapy method, based on the white middle-class, to Chinese clients?
- 13) Based on your experience, how do Chinese clients typically express and engage with emotions during EFT sessions?
- 14) In your experience, what cultural obstacles or challenges do Chinese clients face when

attempting to deepen emotions or connect with bodily sensations?

15) Based on your observations, what is their experience in becoming aware of emotions, accessing emotions, deepening emotions, and expressing emotions?

16) How do you adjust to address cultural challenges, making EFT more effective for Chinese couples?

#### D. Cultural Experiences in EFT Tango

17) Regarding the second step, deepening/integrating emotions, what is your general experience and cultural experience when practicing this step with Chinese clients?

18) Regarding the third step, conveying information to the partner, what is your general experience and cultural experience when practicing this step with Chinese clients?

19) Regarding the fourth step, processing interactions, what is your general experience and cultural experience when practicing this step with Chinese clients?

20) How do you cope with cultural challenges to make EFT more effective for Chinese clients during the EFT Tango process?

## Appendix C. Consent form

### Consent

**Title of the Project:** Effectiveness of Emotionally Focused Therapy with Chinese Couple Clients: From Chinese EFT Therapists' Cultural Lens

**Principal Investigator:** Yifan Wang, Doctoral Candidate, School of Behavioral Sciences, Liberty University

You are invited to participate in a research study. The participants must 1) be Chinese and currently practicing couple therapy with Chinese couples 2) have completed ICEEFT (International Center For Excellence In Emotionally Focused Therapy) recognized EFT training for couples, which are Externship and Core Skills, meeting couples on a weekly or biweekly basis in your practice for 2 years, or you are certified EFT therapist by ICEEFT, or you are certified EFT Supervisor or Trainer. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

The purpose of the study is to explore the cultural experiences of Chinese Emotionally-Focused Therapy (EFT) trained therapists when using EFT with Chinese couples in mainland China, including key challenges and successes, emotional aspects of the cultural differences and their approaches of addressing the cultural differences when using EFT with Chinese Couples.

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to participate in a 1.5-hour interview through Zoom and the interview session will be audio- and video-recorded. After completing the transcription, participants will be asked to review their transcripts and are invited to check the accuracy of the data. Participants will be given the opportunity to add, remove, or clarify their statements.

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include the contribution to the research of Emotionally Focused Therapy in China and improving the quality of couple/family relationships in China.

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and the researcher will have access to the records. Researcher's committee members also have access to the data upon request.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. The hardcopy will be stored in a

password-locked file cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. The researcher will have access to these recordings.

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will receive a 30 dollar Wechat e-gift card through email for compensation within an hour after the interview. The compensation will not be prorated based on the procedures completed or time spent as a participant.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationships with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Would you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

The researcher conducting this study is Yifan Wang. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Thomas Vail, at [REDACTED].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio- and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Printed Subject Name

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Signature & Date



## Appendix D. sample transcripts of interviews

Participant 1 03:32

Well, I think there are quite a lot of difficulties and challenges. The challenges at different stages are different. I think in the early stage, there may be fewer sources of cases. Well, let's compare. Well, on the one hand, there is less experience, and then there are not so many people who can accept significant other consultations, so this part may be limited at that time. If the work experience is less, in fact, some of their own technical progress will be affected, because there is no practical practice may also practice less. Yes, and later on, if there are more stable cases, I started to receive significant other cases in 2016, but at that time, there were not many cases. I understand that there may be more cases in the next 19 or 20 years. There are some early words that in addition to saying that there is no source of the case, some are falling off. Maybe this case has been done three or four times, or some may be done once, so there is no way to do it well. This is also a dilemma at the time. Well, even if you can only do it once, you may have to supervise it with your teacher to see if it is possible to get some inspiration. Yeah, so this is early.

Participant 1 04:50

Well, when it comes to the back, I will write about the case of entry and exit for the depth of emotions, and I can slowly go deeper and go to the second stage to do on-site drills. This part may be stuck for a long time for myself, because my 17 years is actually equivalent to that time. According to the standards at that time, I was able to get the bag of the first volume, but when I was doing the second stage later, I always encountered It seems that some can't go on. Hmm, and then, um, it seems to get stuck in some kind of loop, which is a bit difficult. Yes, maybe this part is also related to your own personal issues. That is, eh, I want to be able to do it? There are still some personal issues in this, but it is true that the vicious circle from the first stage is slightly reduced, and the part that goes to the second stage strengthens the mood, and then holds the case, in such a state, there can be Some on-site exercises of interpretation, this part may be a greater challenge to yourself.

Researcher 05:50

Understand, understand, OK, there are different challenges at different stages.

Participant 1 05:58

Yes, and then as now maybe the challenge is that there will be a little more cases now. Yes, and then my expectation for myself is yes, that is, on the contrary, I hope that I can do it a little faster, so I don't get stuck in their cycle like a case first. Yes, although we can slow down a little bit to get in touch with their emotions, we also hope that they can be a little faster, which can reduce their vicious circle.

Participant 1 06:23

OK, because in working for a while, I may find that, hey, sometimes I seem to fall into their cycle, or the work is a little too long, but a little away. EFT is relatively short-range, which can be compared to, say, an average of 8-20 times, but I may do it longer. So I am looking forward to how to be more accurate and faster to see the cause or root of their problems. Yes, these are some of the ones I might be at this stage. Well, I hope there can be some differences.

Researcher 06:58

I'm thinking that you might be talking about calming them down in the beginning, in the first phase, bringing them down, taking out this negative cycle, the vicious cycle a little more precise, a little faster, and then they say the event can take this thing out, right? Extracted, yeah.

Participant 1 07:18

Yes, it is a bit faster to come out of the content, see their process, and then you can not be disturbed by some very detailed things, so that you can see the fundamental understanding of the problem faster.

Researcher 07:34

OK, okay, um, next I want to ask, that is to say, you are, um, in terms of use, when you are using EFT, do you think that if you are using it, do you think it is easy to use? Or is it more difficult to use? Well, it can't be said that way, that is, how do you feel about your own use.

Participant 08:05

Um, just use, use various techniques, right?

Researcher 08:10

Using various techniques, using all things EFT.

Participant 1 08:17

I feel it, I think because I don't learn so many genres. Well, so basically I am working with EFT, and then I feel that it is not bad, that is, I think I have a deep feeling for EFT, and then I will be very grateful, because it is really after I come out of college, and then the first school I learned was ET, and then I saw how Mr. Liu worked. He had a lot of demonstrations in the course. Then I will feel that some of my so-called basic skills in counseling are listening to empathy, or I think that kind of humanistic attitude is to build a relationship with the case, because I think it seems. Well, my relationship with the case is a consulting alliance. I think it's okay, but there are relatively few things that fall off. Yes, so I think this is all given by IEFT, or it is related to Mr. Liu's experience of learning, so like Mr. Liu said that the same principle is the soul of e FT, and then I think basically, um, I am using the same principle. Reactions or guesses and affirmations, um, I think these technologies that are relatively basic to ET are quite easy to use when they are used. Well, then it is also very helpful for me to establish a relationship with a lot of the work of the case or to deepen it.

Participant 1 09:44

Understand? Yes, I heard you say that I have it, I have it, I don't know why there is such an association in my mind, that is, I think you are like us, I also learned something about the body at the beginning, or learned CBT, learned something at the beginning. As a child, I think it means that I broke up many times, and finally found this person who can go for the rest of my life together and die for life. Yes, when I think of you, I feel like, wow, maybe it's the feeling that someone who can keep going just after meeting his first love for the first time has met the right person, so I am quite lucky.

Participant 1 10:22

Ah, yes, yes, it's really true. I think you are right about this point. That is, I think my study with EFT and Teacher Liu's course has a kind of love at first sight. I really like it, and then it fits very well. Because although it is not very systematic to learn some schools later, but may also continue to participate in some workshops, may still feel that this first love seems to be the most feeling, and then it will also be very I feel that there will be some loyalty to the school, or a sense of connection, so it may be more other schools, such as the toolkit, it will assist me, maybe it will also have some limitations of its school. Yes, that other technology. It will enrich some of my intervention technology. But EFT seems to have always been a major axis for me, because Mr. Liu is actually teaching later, or the school is also developing, and there are significant others and individuals, including some family courses starting this year. Yes, yes, so I feel, eh, it seems that the application of this part will be wider, and then my learning and practice path will also seem to be wider. Yeah, well.

Researcher 11:25

Yeah, okay, okay. Well, then you just said that there are a lot of technologies, a lot of things are still used better, and then there is a lot of help in the visit, it is helpful, do you think you have some problems in your use as a consultant? Used, yes.

Participant 1 11:52

I think it may still work with emotions, although we will learn a lot, that is, affirmation, empathy, and then guessing, arousing, these parts I think are technically very good. Then you can also see, for example, peers who are sharing some of their demonstration tapes in case supervision or teachers in class, you know that this is a good technology, but you really need to apply it to some specific cases.

Participant 1 12:22

Indeed, EFT is a good medium, but it is possible to go deeper with the case at a certain stage, and to work with the case with deeper emotions. I think that part will be challenging for myself. Well, for example, in some cases, they are avoidant, and then there is no experience or cognition that is not so familiar with emotions. If emotions are used, they may not know, or they may not be clear, or they may be very vague., yes, so this is one. Then another possibility is that when working with emotions, I think it will be a challenge for me to be able to tolerate the intensity of emotions, that is, to strengthen emotions, for example, to strengthen sadness, for example, I can only go to three points of sadness, then I may only be able to bring the client to 3 points of sadness, it may be difficult to go to 5 or 6 points. Well, then for things like anger, if I can only tolerate 1 point, then I may only be able to catch 1 point of anger. This may be when working with emotions, how much of your own hemorrhoids can bring the case to that place, or so that you can effectively contact the case and keep close to the emotions.