

SUMMER/FALL 2022

TANGO SERIES

THE 5 BASIC MOVES OF EFT



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WHAT IS THE EFT TANGO?

- A set of moves or interventions identified by Dr. Sue Johnson that we repeat over and over each session.
- These moves take us from content to process.
- The tango is so important because it allows clients connect in an experiential way to the attachment drama that drives their relationship distress and to share a new vulnerable message to their partner.
- When using the Tango we can never get lost in session because we can always go back to Tango move 1- reflect what you see in front of you.
- As Carl Rogers said: "A good reflection is not a repetition- it is a revelation".

STEPS AND STAGES OF EFT AND THE TANGO

- The steps (1-9) and stages (1-3) are the different stops on the journey to secure attachment- the final destination.
- The tango is the vehicle that takes us from stop to stop.
- Steps and stages are the WHERE: Where are we going?
- Tango is the HOW- HOW do we get there?
- We move through the steps and stages of EFT by using the EFT tango in each session.

THE MOVES OF THE TANGO SIMPLIFIED:

1. Reflect the attachment dance you see in front of you.
2. Choose a vulnerability to explore with one partner.
3. Have this partner share something new.
4. Process both partners reaction to the new message.
5. Summarize and/or celebrate.

TANGO MOVE 1 - REFLECT AND MIRROR PRESENT PROCESS

IN SIMPLER LANGUAGE: WHAT IS HAPPENING?

In Tango move 1 we:

- **REFLECT** what is happening right now **between** the partners and **within** each partner.
- This is where we begin reflecting the **negative cycle** of interaction by identifying **triggers/vulnerabilities** and **coping strategies**.
- **VALIDATE** coping strategies/action tendencies/moves by using an **attachment frame**.

RECIPE FOR TANGO MOVE 1

1. Reflect between
2. Reflect within and identify a vulnerability
3. Segue to move 2

1. BETWEEN:

Maria, the more time Jonathan spends at work (**trigger**), the more alone and unimportant you feel. Right here you find yourself feeling angry and raising your voice (**coping**) as you try to express how hard his absence feels to you (**attachment frame**). Jonathan, the angrier Maria gets (**trigger**), the more you shut down (coping) and the easier it feels to stay at work longer (**coping**) to avoid another argument with the person you love (**attachment frame**).

2. WITHIN:

Maria, this loneliness is "killing you" as you put it earlier. You tell yourself that you are not as important to Jonathan as he is to you (**vulnerability**) and then of course you get angry and protest (coping)—that's so painful (**validate**).

3. SEGUE TO MOVE 2:

Maria, would it be ok to stay right here, in this place where you believe Jonathan does not really care about you?

TANGO MOVE 2- AFFECT ASSEMBLY AND DEEPENING

In Tango move 2 we are slowing down to organize and/or deepen one partner's vulnerability identified in move 1.

We are assembling the elements of one partner's emotional experience, starting with the cue/trigger.

As emotions are assembled and organized, they are better tolerated, allowing us to help clients to connect more deeply with their experience.

- In Stage 1 of EFT the goal of Tango Move 2 is to help clients link their **trigger**, and the **vulnerability** underneath it, to their **action tendency** (fostering ownership and awareness of their part in the cycle).
- In Stage 2 of EFT, the goal of Tango Move 2 is to help clients link their **trigger** and the **vulnerability** underneath it with their **attachment fears** and **models of self and other** (fostering awareness of previously disowned emotions and attachment needs).

QUESTIONS FOR ASSEMBLING EMOTION IN MOVE 2 OF THE TANGO

- Find the **Cue** (trigger, often interpersonal): What triggered you?... Set you off?
- **Rapid Appraisal** of situation: What's your immediate response that pops up? What does the alarm say? Good? Bad?
- **Arousal sensation** of emotion: How do you feel inside? What do you notice in your body?
- **Reappraisal / Attachment meaning**: What do you say to yourself? How do you make sense of ...? What is the painful story you tell yourself?
- **Action Tendency** / Behavioral Response: What do you do? Feel like doing?

ADDITIONAL INTERVENTIONS FOR AFFECT ASSEMBLY AND DEEPENING

There are several interventions beyond the scope of this article that can be used for affect assembly and deepening such as:

- RISSSC (Repeat, Images, Slow, Soft, Simple, and Client's Words)
- Heightening using reflection
- Empathic conjecture
- Evocative responding
- Validation

** Information regarding many of these can be found in Sue Johnson's "**Attachment Theory and Practice 3rd edition**" and in Jim Furrow, Sue Johnson and colleagues' "**Becoming an Emotionally Focused Therapist-the workbook 2nd Edition**".*

AFFECT ASSEMBLY AND DEEPENING (STAGE 1 EXAMPLE)

Therapist: Anthony, when Thomas gets upset, saying you are never physically affectionate with him **(trigger/vulnerability)**, you say you get quiet. What happens to you in that moment? What is happening right now?

Anthony: I get frustrated, what does he want from me? Just add it to the list of complaints.

Therapist: Ouch. List of complaints, that sounds hard...stressful? **(rapid appraisal)**

Anthony: Yes.. I guess. It's not enjoyable.

Therapist: Of course not. You don't like when your sweetie is upset with you. Can you notice right here what happens in your body when that stress comes up? **(arousal)**

Anthony: Umm..I guess I get tense all over.

Therapist: Tense all over, yes, this is so stressful when Thomas says he feels let down by you and you feel it inside. Can you feel that tension right here, right now? **(making it present,deepening)**

Anthony: Yes...I don't like to focus on it but..there is a tightness in my chest.

Therapist: A tightness in your chest.. amazing that you can stay with this right now. If you slow down to listen to that tightness inside for a moment, what is it saying? **(Reappraisal)**

Anthony: It's saying I let him down again, I will never be what he needs.

Therapist: Wow..never be what your sweetie needs...Anthony that sounds painful **(empathic conjecture, deepening)**...your shoulders are slumped as you say this **(reflecting body language, making it present, deepening)**.

Anthony: Yes, I guess it does hurt and I don't want to feel that.

Therapist: Right, of course you don't want to feel that hurt, it makes sense that you shut down and get quiet when Thomas asks for more affection and all you hear is that you are not what he needs..**(Tying action tendency to vulnerability/primary emotion)**

TANGO MOVE 3 - CHOREOGRAPHING ENGAGED ENCOUNTERS

EFT MANTRA: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE REACH!!

***All EFT interventions either lead up to the encounter or involve processing and consolidating after the encounter*

Choreographed encounters (previously known as enactments) are the bread and butter of EFT.

In Tango Move 3 clients are invited to share, directly with their partner, emotional realities that were assembled, distilled and deepened in Tango Move 2.

We are asking clients to reach for their partners in a new and/or vulnerable way.

We are asking clients to take a risk (ranging from tiny to huge) with their hearts in this moment. If it does not feel like a risk, the message has probably not been deepened enough.

- Sharing a new/assembled/vulnerable emotional reality promotes ownership for the person sharing and increases the likelihood that the message will be well-received by the listener.
- Significant change requires a new corrective emotional experience.
- In Tango Move 3 we choreograph engaged encounters to create new and corrective emotional experiences both within and between partners.

SHAPE- THE RECIPE FOR ENCOUNTERS

Simplify (Simplify emotional reality that we would like the partner to share)

Heighten (Heighten emotion using interventions such as RISSSC)

Anticipate (Help the sharer anticipate sharing)

Present disclosure (direct client to share)

Engage (engage, redirect, re-engage or slice thinner if necessary)

ENCOUNTERS FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES:

- Enacting present positions
- Turning new emotional experience into new ways of interacting
- Highlighting new or rarely occurring responses
- Choreographing change events

More information can be found on page 88 from Jim Furrow, Sue Johnson and colleagues' **"Becoming an Emotionally Focused Therapist - the workbook 2nd Edition".*

PICKING UP FROM THE EXAMPLE FROM TANGO MOVE 2:

Therapist: Thomas matters so much and of course shutting down protects you from pain that comes up when he is upset with you. You say you worry you are not what he needs in those moments. That sounds very hard. I wonder if right here right now you could let yourself feel that worry...fear?... just for a few moments? Make some room for those important feelings? **(Simplify, Heighten)**

Anthony: Ok...I don't know what that really means but I can try.

Therapist: That's so brave that you would be willing to try. Thomas must matter a lot to you. Can you pay attention to what happens in your body when that worry comes up that you are not what Thomas needs? **(Heighten)**

Anthony: I guess I feel a pit in my stomach.

Therapist: A pit in your stomach ... can you feel that pit right now? **(Heighten)**

Anthony: Yes.. a bit.

Therapist: Can you breathe into it? Put your hand on your belly? **(Heighten)**

Anthony: (Places his hand on his belly, closes his eyes and takes a few breaths)

Therapist: Can you imagine turning to look at Thomas right now and telling him about this pit in your stomach that you feel right now? That it comes up when you fear you are not what he needs? How you shut down so you don't have to feel that? **(Anticipate)**

Anthony: I can try...(looks at Thomas). When I feel like I am trying to meet your needs and you tell me what I am doing is not enough..when you are still unhappy, I feel a pit in my stomach.. but I usually shut down before I can really feel it. **(Present disclosure)**

Therapist: Yes..a pit in your stomach. It comes up when you fear you are not what he needs. Can you tell him..I get worried..afraid? but all you see is my shutting down?" **(Engage)**

Anthony: It's true..I guess I do worry...get scared I will never meet your needs and I do shut down. It helps me stay strong.

TANGO MOVE 4 - PROCESSING THE ENCOUNTER

- In Tango Move 4, we **process the encounter** with both the **sharer** and the **recipient**.
- In simpler terms, we want to explore, with both the sharer and the recipient, how they experienced this new/more vulnerable interaction.
- We ask questions like:
 - *"What was it like to share/risk/ show your heart/confide?"*
 - *"What was it like to hear/How did this message land/touch your heart?"*

RECIPE FOR TANGO MOVE 4 (FROM BRUBACHER AND LEE, 2019)

- Check-in with sharer- What was it like to share? (Replay moment of contact and core message)
- ****Validate and or heighten sharer's experience** (if the recipient is not able to provide a safe response, our job is to be the temporary safe attachment figure).
- Check-in with the recipient- What was it like to hear? (Replay moment of contact and core message).
- Foster a connecting response/validate mistrust or hesitancy in the context of the cycle.

**** A COMMON QUESTION IS WHO SHOULD WE CHECK-IN WITH FIRST, THE SHARER OR THE RECIPIENT?**

When asked this question, different EFT trainers provide different answers. The best answer is that we should use our clinical judgment based on what we think will help facilitate a moment of connection and what will protect the risk-taker if we anticipate that the listener is not receptive.

EFT TRAINER GEORGE FALLER'S TRAFFIC LIGHT GUIDE TO ENCOUNTERS

Type of response	Recipient is	Therapist task
Green light	A.R.E. (Accessible, Responsive, Engaged)	Reflect, heighten and celebrate new the response
Orange light	Responsive + showing mistrust/defensiveness	Validate the mistrust Focus on responsiveness/longing to connect
Red light	Hostile, not open	FIRST: respond to the risk-taker, don't leave them alone THEN: process block with listener

EXAMPLE TANGO MOVE 4: ORANGE LIGHT

Julie: It's true I do get mean. When I am expressing pain to you and you seem distracted..not interested..I feel desperate..panicky-alone. It feels like if you don't respond I'll explode. So.. I say mean things just to get a response from you...I want to find another way. **(stage 1 encounter)**

Therapist: Julie, wow you are taking a big risk here..sharing your heart with Max **(validate)**. What's it like right here to talk to Max about how panicked, desperate you feel when the cycle takes over and it seems you don't have his attention, he is not responding? **(check-in with sharer, replay moment of contact and core message)**

Julie: I feel nervous..I don't know how he will react, but it also feels good to tell him.

Therapist: It feels good to tell him, to let him see this part of you that longs for a response from him **(Reflect, seeding attachment)**. And of course you feel nervous, it is risky to open up and Max is so important to you. **(validate, seeding attachment)**

Therapist: Max, what is it like for you just now as Julie shares the panic that comes up for her when she does not get a response from you..that her mean words are a desperate attempt to get you to respond...to quell her panic? **(check-in with recipient, replay moment of contact and core message)**

Max: I had no idea she gets so panicked...I am happy she is telling me. It's confusing though because when she gets mean she does not seem desperate or panicked...she actually seems very sure of herself. **(Orange light, ambivalent response)**

Therapist: Right, you don't want her to feel panicked in those moments..and of course it is hard to trust this right now...this is one of the first times that Julie has shown you what is behind what she calls her spikes. In the cycle all you see is an attack and meanness as you say...and now you are hearing something very different. Of course that is disorienting and your mistrust here protects you from being hurt again **(validate the mistrust)**. I also heard you say you are happy she is sharing her panic with you... I noticed how your body started to lean closer to her as she spoke... can you say more about that? **(Bring focus back to the longing to connect)**.

TANGO MOVE 5 -INTEGRATING AND VALIDATING

- In Tango Move 5 we summarize Tango Moves 1-4, highlighting **new** emotional awareness and **new** ways of reaching and responding that have taken place.
- By zooming out in this way, we are helping partners **integrate** the new experience(s) they just had.
- In Tango Move 5 we build **competence** and **confidence** in our clients by **validating** their courage, willingness, and ability to have a new experience.
- As we reflect moves 1-4, we are describing a more positive, self-reinforcing cycle: how new ways of relating to oneself lead to new ways of reaching and responding, which in turn shapes view of self and other.
- Although in Tango Move 5, we are ideally reflecting and celebrating new, positive discoveries and interactional responses, this is not always the case, and that's ok!
- Our job is to reflect the process unfolding in front of us, including blocks and stuck places. If, during moves 1-4 of the tango, one or both partners are stuck in old ways of responding, in Tango Move 5, our summary will include any stuck places, which we validate and normalize in the context of the negative cycle and/or partners' attachment histories.

EXAMPLE #1

Therapist: Wow! I am so touched by what just took place here. Jia, you walked around in the panic that comes up when Alex gets that unhappy look on their face...that fluttering in your belly that usually sends you into shut down mode as you put it. Just now you didn't shut down, you bravely took the risk to share your panic with Alex. Alex you responded to Jia's reach, sharing that when she shares her inner world with you it both calms and reassures you. Helps chip away at your fear that you don't matter. This is so different from the negative pattern that results in so much distance between you two.

EXAMPLE #2

Therapist: Julie you just took a huge risk to touch your deepest fear and to share it with Marie-Claude. The fear that you will never be able to get things right with Marie-Claude, and that she could leave you.. like your ex-wife did. I am so moved by your courage here. Marie-Claude, you shared that a part of you is relieved that Julie is opening up to you, but that a part of you feels numb when she expresses her fears. Julie, hearing that a part of Marie-Claude is numb..cannot take in your risk just yet, feels very hurtful, and as you said, almost confirms your fear that it's better not to share. This is a tricky place that we will work on together. Marie-Claude, going numb protected you during very painful times in your life, so it makes sense that it is coming up here as you enter new, unknown territory with Julie, your most important person. It is also hopeful that you were able to also connect to the part of you that does long to be invited into Julie's inner world.

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