

The Role of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) in Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Prevention

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Letter to the Editor

Cite this article: Javidi N and Fatahian Tehran HM. The role of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) in coronavirus disease (COVID-19) prevention. *Disaster Med Public Health Prep.* doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2021.107>.

Keywords:

COVID-19; EFT; emotion; prevention; therapy

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In late December 2019, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) spread worldwide. The disease has gotten the attention of experts around the world, including psychologists and psychiatrists, who have taken steps to increase their scientific and therapeutic knowledge to intervene in the crisis.¹ Among the most important issues related to COVID-19 is anxiety. When a person is anxious, high levels of worry and stress weaken the immune system. This disturbance of the immune system is one of the most important factors in contracting the virus and increasing its lethality. Thus, anxiety can increase a person's risk of contracting COVID-19 by weakening her or his immune system. When a person experiences a sudden reaction, such as fear, nervous shock, and incident, the person will face emotional problems and disturbance. This disturbance will have an impact on the way the person communicates with other members of the family, which will cause the stress to be passed onto them, making the family environment completely insecure.²

Another reason that causes a feeling of insecurity in the family is the existence of marital conflicts and disputes. In both cases, what can prevent stress and anxiety is awareness, regulation, and management of emotions. Emotionally focused therapy (EFT) can be very helpful in this regard. EFT was founded during the mid-1980s as an approach to help couples.³ The difference between EFT and cognitive-behavioral therapy and other approaches is that emotion enters the deeper layers of the psyche because it analyzes the attachment and repressed emotions. EFT is a short-term treatment (8–20 sessions) that is based on an experimental humanistic approach that seeks to work with individuals through the lens of emotion and seeks to reconstruct the couple's interaction cycle by focusing on corrective emotional experience and reframing. It reduces conflicts and, as a result, increases the sense of security in relationships. This model operationalizes the principles of attachment science using non-pathologizing experiential (paralleling Carl Rogers) and relational systems techniques (paralleling Salvador Minuchin) to focus on and change core organizing factors in both the self and key relationships.⁴ The EFT therapist pays special attention to each individual's style of attachment and communication patterns and, based on them, adjusts the treatment process in such a way as to lead to secure attachment, allow people to move toward a positive and constructive relationship with more confidence, and express their emotions in a constructive way. As such, the feelings of insecurity in anxiety are treated by this approach. This is because its main emphasis is on creating a safe emotional and supportive environment. In conclusion, this therapeutic approach makes use of concentrating on positive emotions, emotional reconstruction, changing people's interactive cycle, and regulating and managing emotions.⁵ By improving communication patterns and reducing marital conflicts, EFT creates security in relationships and increases individual safety. This is associated with greater psychological well-being, which in turn reduces stress and ultimately reduces the risk of developing illnesses, including COVID-19.

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