

# **Instructor's Manual**

for

# EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED COUPLES THERAPY

with

SUE JOHNSON, EDD

from the series

COUPLES THERAPY WITH THE EXPERTS

with hosts

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manual by

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The *Instructor's Manual* accompanies the DVD *Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy with Sue Johnson, PhD* (Institutional/Instructor's Version). Video available at [www.psychotherapy.net](http://www.psychotherapy.net).

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*Instructor's Manual for Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy with Sue Johnson, EdD*

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## **Instructor's Manual for**

# EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED COUPLES THERAPY WITH SUE JOHNSON, EDD

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# Tips for Making the Best Use of the DVD

## 1. USE THE TRANSCRIPTS

Make notes in the video **Transcript** for future reference; the next time you show the video you will have them available. Highlight or notate key moments in the video to better facilitate discussion during the video and post-viewing.

## 2. FACILITATE DISCUSSION

Pause the video at different points to elicit viewers' observations and reactions to the concepts presented. The **Discussion Questions** provide ideas about key points that can stimulate rich discussions and learning.

## 3. LET IT FLOW

Instead of stopping the video often, allow the session to play out so viewers can appreciate the flow of the session. It is best to watch the video in its entirety since issues untouched in earlier parts often play out later. Encourage viewers to voice their opinions; no therapy is perfect! What are viewers' impressions of what works and does not work in the session? We learn as much from our mistakes as our successes; it is crucial for students and therapists to develop the ability to effectively critique this work as well as their own.

## 4. SUGGEST READINGS TO ENRICH VIDEO MATERIAL

Assign readings from **Suggestions for Further Readings and Websites** prior to viewing. . You can also schedule the video to coincide with other course or training materials on related topics.

## 5. REFLECT ON REFLECTIONS

Hand out copies of **Johnson's Reflections on the Session**, giving participants an inside view of Johnson's experience of her work with this couple. Johnson's reflections humanize the process and provide viewers a context into which they can place the person of the therapist. In this way, Johnson becomes not just an expert therapist but also a real person.

## 6. ASSIGN A REACTION PAPER

See suggestions in **Reaction Paper** section.

## 7. CONDUCT ROLE-PLAYS

After watching the video, assign groups to role-play a couples therapy session following Johnson's Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy model. Organize participants into triads, consisting of one psychotherapist and one client couple. Then rotate so each person has a chance to play the role of therapist.

As a basic instruction, suggest to therapists that they focus on helping clients identify and explore the emotions that underlie the presenting problem. The therapist can help each client verbalize emotions to their partner, and encourage the partner to hear and take in the other's vulnerable expression. Have therapists closely track the couple's experience and patterns of interactions as they occur in the session, and reflect their observation of these patterns to the couple. See Johnson's Approach to Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy in this manual for a brief review of how Johnson works.

After each role-play, debrief the groups. First have the clients share their experiences; have them discuss what they learned about the clients' experience in this exercise. Then have the therapists talk about what the session was like for them. What did participants find challenging or exciting about this way of working? If they had the opportunity to continue working with this couple, what would be their goal in terms of changing the patterns or cycles of interactions? Based on this brief role-play, did the therapist have any understanding or hypotheses about the clients' cycle of interactions from an attachment theory perspective? Finally, have the large group reconvene to share their reactions, and open up a general discussion on what participants learned about Johnson's approach to Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy.

An alternative is to do this role-play in front of the whole group with one therapist and one client couple; the entire group can observe, acting as the advising team to the therapist. Before the end of the session, have the therapist take a break, get feedback from the

observation team, and bring it back into the session with the client. Other observers might jump in if the therapist gets stuck. Follow up with a discussion of what does and does not seem effective about Johnson's approach.

## 8. WATCH THE EXPERTS SERIES

This video is one in a series portraying leading theories of psychotherapy and their application in work with couples. Each video in the series presents a master couples therapist working with a real couple who has real problems. By showing several of the videos in this *Couples Therapy with the Experts* series (See the **More Videos** section for a complete list), you can expose viewers to a variety of styles and approaches, allowing them an opportunity to see what fits best for them.

Other videos in the series use different therapeutic models to explain how couples interact and how change occurs within the couple. We can reflect upon the differences among these models by exploring how each one approaches the main objectives of couples therapy:

- removing, decreasing or modifying symptoms or problems in the relationship
- mediating negative patterns of behavior
- promoting positive growth and development within the family system

## PERSPECTIVE ON VIDEOS AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE THERAPIST

Psychotherapy portrayed in videos is less off-the-cuff than therapy in practice. Therapists may feel put on the spot to offer a good demonstration, and clients can be self-conscious in front of a camera. Therapists often move more quickly than they would in everyday practice to demonstrate a particular technique. Despite these factors, therapists and clients on video can engage in a realistic session that conveys a wealth of information not contained in books or therapy transcripts: body language, tone of voice, facial expression, rhythm of the interaction, quality of the alliance – all aspects of the therapeutic

relationship that are unique to an interpersonal encounter.

Psychotherapy is an intensely private matter. Unlike the training in other professions, students and practitioners rarely have an opportunity to see their mentors at work. But watching therapy on video is the next best thing.

One more note: The personal style of therapists is often as important as their techniques and theories. Therapists are usually drawn to approaches that mesh well with their own personality. Thus, while we can certainly pick up ideas from master therapists, students and trainees must make the best use of relevant theory, technique and research that fits their own personal style and the needs of their clients.

#### PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Because this video contains an actual therapy session, please take care to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the clients who have courageously shared their personal lives with us.



# Johnson's Approach to Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy

Developed in the early 1980's by Drs. Sue Johnson and Les Greenberg, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) adheres to the philosophy that relationships are at the core of human experience. It is based on the premises that emotionally fulfilling relationships are integral components of mental and physical health, and that emotionally focused interventions have the power to establish and re-create supportive bonds between individuals. Johnson's approach is dedicated to the understanding and enhancement of couple and family relationships through an emphasis on emotions and their interpersonal impact. She believes that all people can maximize their potential given a nurturing social environment, which she endeavors to foster in her work with clients.

Building on a foundation of attachment theory, Emotionally Focused Therapy is designed to expand and reorganize key emotional responses in each partner. New cycles of bonding interactions occur in the couple and replace negative cycles such as pursue-withdraw or criticize-defend. These positive cycles then become self-reinforcing and create permanent change. Therapy fosters the creation of a secure bond between partners, so that the relationship becomes a safe haven and a healing environment for both partners.

In working with a couple, Johnson listens to her clients' emotions to learn about their needs in the relationship. She believes that emotions tell us what matters to people, and they organize how people interact with each other on a very basic level. Because EFT is a short-term, structured approach to couples and family therapy, Johnson typically sees a couple for between eight and 20 sessions. Johnson's interventions are based on conceptualizations of marital distress and adult love that are rooted in attachment theory. Her approach is collaborative and respectful of clients, combining experimental Rogerian techniques with structural systemic interventions. EFT is used with many different kinds of couples across countries and

cultures, including those facing traumatic stress, depression and physical illness.

*This text has been adapted from the website of the International Centre for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy, [www.iceeft.com](http://www.iceeft.com)*

## Johnson's Reflections on the Session

In this session with Scott and Leslie I am creating a collaborative alliance, finding a focus for the session, and concentrating on delineating the negative cycle that constantly keeps the couple in a state of emotional starvation and insecurity, framing this cycle as the enemy and moving into the attachment emotions that underlie and fuel it. In the session, I track each partner's experience and interactional moves, and I also direct them, at times refocusing the session or setting up specific enactments. This couple responded very well and I would expect EFT to be successful with them.

Scott and Leslie are an interesting couple from a number of angles. It appears that Scott has the potential for violence, a contraindication for couple therapy, but this couple nonetheless seems quite appropriate for EFT. He is able to acknowledge that he has a problem with anger. They are motivated to work for change and although she acknowledges that his anger can be "scary," she does not seem intimidated by him. They are also interesting in that he battles with shame around having "sissy" emotions and is a man whom most would describe as "inexpressive." He also does not appear to be highly educated. Nevertheless, research and clinical practice tell us that EFT works well for such clients, and he already has begun to shift in this short EFT session. Leslie is still present and engaged here and can see the cycle when it is outlined, commenting that it is a "circle."

The session was only 50 minutes. If I had had more time, I would have attempted to unpack Scott's rage response more specifically, exploring the specific cues that spark his anger, how it feels in his body, what he accesses in terms of thoughts that escalate this anger, how it fits into his sense of male identity (he already tells us that he thinks of himself as an "enforcer") and how it moves him to respond. The goal is to allow him to access the underlying attachment anxiety and sense of threat that moves him into rage and so sets off this couple's negative cycle. Even though I do not have time to explore this in a formal way, Scott is able to move into underlying feelings such as his sense of rejection and his fear that he is disappointing his wife and about

to be abandoned. Leslie, whose ability to stay present and reassure her husband that she loves him (but not his rage) is a great strength in this relationship; she also accesses underlying feelings of fear and loneliness.

This session is classic EFT in that I use reflection, repetition and evocative questions to heighten emotion and create enactments that bring new emotional messages into the interaction. The problem is formulated in terms of the negative cycle that leaves both partners threatened and alone. The roots of this cycle lie in the fact that each person deals with their attachment panic in a way that constantly threatens the other and blocks safe connection. He rages and becomes defensive; she confronts and then withdraws. He has no way to deal with his “raw” feeling except to fly into reactive anger. It is also classic EFT in that I actively validate him and his courage, especially when he moves into a more open exploration of his emotions. As a therapist, I stay focused on the change that is occurring in the here-and-now of the session (not on future planning or programs to reduce Scott’s anger). Scott and Leslie begin to access and share their emotions in a new way, sending new signals to one another and hearing each other differently. In the session, we are changing the music of their dance.

The key moments in the session for me are the enactments and the moments where Scott opens up and enters the new territory of his “softer feelings” – his inner fears. For example, he is “raw” and fears that he is a “monster” that she cannot accept, and goes “numb” in the face of this “rejection.” When she is able to reassure him that she does want to be close, he is able to hear this message and move into a more hopeful, active stance. He is then able to acknowledge the fear underneath his short fuse. From a systemic viewpoint, the couple’s interaction becomes less constricted in range and depth and they are able to grasp how they are stuck in a perpetual feedback loop that isolates and threatens them both.

A shift in the emotional signals that organize narrow, negative interactions is the fastest way to reorganize this relationship. From an attachment viewpoint, if Scott cannot deal with distress and anxiety by allowing himself to feel, listening to the message about

his needs implicit in these feelings and reaching for his wife, he will likely continue to react in a controlling, angry way whenever he is threatened. The attachment framework suggests that he can revise his negative model of himself and learn to ask for what he needs in a way that brings his wife close to him even though he has “never” shared his inner world before.

In future sessions, I would also explore whether Leslie has suffered any attachment injuries as a result of Scott’s rage and continue to validate her willingness to both stand her ground against his rage and fight for this relationship. If I saw this couple today, I would also give them the book *Hold Me Tight* to read between sessions. Male clients in particular seem to become more engaged in the therapy process as a result of reading the book.



# Reaction Paper for Classes and Training

*Video: Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy with Sue Johnson, EdD*

- **Assignment:** Complete this reaction paper and return it by the date noted by the facilitator.
- **Suggestions for Viewers:** Take notes on these questions while viewing the video and complete the reaction paper afterwards, or use the questions as a way to approach the discussion. Respond to each question below.
- **Length and Style:** 2-4 pages double-spaced. Be brief and concise. Do NOT provide a full synopsis of the video. This is meant to be a brief reaction paper that you write soon after watching the video—we want your ideas and reactions.

**What to Write:** Respond to the following questions in your reaction paper:

1. **Key points:** What important points did you learn about Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy? What stands out in how Johnson works?
2. **What I found most helpful:** As a therapist, what was most beneficial to you about the model presented? What tools or perspectives did you find helpful and might you use in your own work? What challenged you to think about something in a new way?
3. **What does not make sense:** What principles/techniques/strategies did not make sense to you? Did anything push your buttons or bring about a sense of resistance in you, or just not fit with your own style of working? Explore these questions.
4. **How I would do it differently:** What might you have done differently than Johnson in the therapy session in the video? Be specific in what different approaches, strategies and techniques you might have applied.
5. **Other Questions/Reactions:** What questions or reactions did you have as you viewed the therapy in the video? Other comments, thoughts or feelings?





# Related Websites, Videos, and Further Readings

## WEB RESOURCES

The International Centre for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy

[www.iceeft.com](http://www.iceeft.com)

Ottawa Couple and Family Institute

[www.ocfi.ca](http://www.ocfi.ca)

The site for Sue Johnson's book on EFT, *Hold Me Tight*

[www.holdmetight.net](http://www.holdmetight.net)

EFT co-developer Les Greenberg's website

[www.emotionfocusedtherapy.org](http://www.emotionfocusedtherapy.org)

The University of Ottawa's Faculty of Social Sciences, where Sue Johnson is a professor

[www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca](http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca)

## RELATED VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT [WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET](http://WWW.PSYCHOTHERAPY.NET)

*The Angry Couple*

*Culture-Sensitive Therapy*

*with Jon Carlson, EdD, PsyD and Mary Arnold, PhD*

*Couples Therapy for Addictions*

*Couples Therapy: An Introduction*

*Experiential Therapy with Augustus Napier, PhD*

*Harville Hendrix on the Healing Relationship*

*Imago Therapy with Pat Love, PhD*

*Internal Family Systems Therapy with Richard Schwartz, PhD*

**BOOKS**

- Gendlin, E. T. (1981). *Focusing*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Gottman, J. M. & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Greenberg, L. S., & Johnson, S. M. (1988). *Emotionally focused therapy for couples*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Johnson, S. M. & Whiffen, V. (Eds), (2003). *Attachment processes in couples and families*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Johnson, S. M. (2002). *Emotionally focused couple therapy with trauma survivors: Strengthening attachment bonds*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Johnson, S. M. (2004). *The practice of emotionally focused marital therapy: Creating connection (2nd ed)*. New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, S. M. (2008). *Hold me tight: Seven conversations for a lifetime of love*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Johnson, S. M., & Greenberg, L. S. (Eds.), (1994). *The heart of the matter: Perspectives on emotion in marital therapy*. New York: Brunner Mazel.
- Johnson, S. M., Bradley, B., Furrow, J., Lee, A., Palmer, G., Tilley, D., & Woolley, S. (2005). *Becoming an emotionally focused couple therapist: The workbook*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

## Discussion Questions

Professors, training directors and facilitators may use some or all of these discussion questions, depending on what aspects of the video are most relevant to the audience. On-screen minute markers are noted in parentheses to indicate where a topic arises in the video and transcript.

### JOHNSON'S APPROACH

1. **Leading Edge:** What do you think about Johnson's emphasis on expanding clients' emotional experience through therapy? What comes to mind for you when she talks about taking clients to the leading edge of their experience (1-20)? Does that seem like an important part of couples therapy to you? When you think about your own work with clients, what do you imagine that would look like in practice?

### COUPLES THERAPY SESSION

2. **The Alliance:** How would you describe the therapeutic alliance in this session? How did Johnson join with Scott and Leslie? What was it about Johnson that allowed them to feel comfortable enough to engage in the therapy? See if you can identify specific interactions in the session that you think contributed to or detracted from the strength of the alliance.
3. **Mean and Nasty:** What do you think about the way Johnson worked with Scott's self-description as mean and nasty (2-16)? In what ways was this series of interventions helpful in this session? If you had been Scott and Leslie's therapist, how might you have worked differently with this issue?
4. **Range of Feelings:** In what ways do you observe Johnson helping Scott expand his range of emotional expression to include more than anger? What specific interventions stand out for you, and what about them seems particularly helpful? What do you think about the emphasis in this session on softer feelings? Are there ways you would have engaged Leslie more

around her softer feelings, rather than focusing only on Scott?

- 5. Leslie:** How do you feel about Johnson's balance of attention on Leslie and Scott in this session? Were there ways you would have focused more on Leslie and her role in this couple's discord than Johnson did? Did you agree with the decision that it was safe to include Leslie in the treatment, or would you have preferred to work alone with Scott until his anger was more under control?

## GROUP DISCUSSION

- 6. Attachment:** How do you see attachment theory influencing Johnson's work with this couple? Does it make sense to you as a way of thinking about couples therapy? If not, what about it does not fit for you? If it does make sense to you, what are some other ways you would intervene with this couple in this or future sessions to address specific attachment needs?
- 7. Insight:** According to Johnson, insight is not nearly as important as emotional experience in helping clients create change (3-12). How do you react to that? How does that fit with your own views on change in therapy? Are there any ways in which you see insight as an important aspect of this session with Scott and Leslie?
- 8. The Past:** Does EFT's focus on the present more than on the past make sense to you when working with a couple (3-22:3-24)? What do you think about Johnson's take on the relationship between families of origin and the couple? How much and in what ways does it make sense to you to bring the clients' early life experiences into couples therapy?
- 9. The Model:** What do you think about using EFT? Do you see yourself including it in your own work with couples? Are there some components of this approach that you find helpful, and others that seem incompatible with how you work with clients? What in particular would you do differently from Johnson's model?
- 10. Personal Reaction:** How would you feel having Johnson as your therapist? Do you think she could build a solid therapeutic alliance with you? Would she be effective with you? Why or why not?

# Complete Transcript of *Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy* with Sue Johnson, EdD

*Note to facilitators: Throughout the transcript below, we indicate on-screen minute markers that correspond with those that appear in the bottom right corner of the DVD on screen. You will also find chapter markers on the DVD at five-minute intervals so that you may easily skip to desired points in the video*

## JOHNSON'S APPROACH

**Jon Carlson:** Diane, this program is about emotionally focused couples therapy. What do you know about this approach?

**Diane Kjos:** Well, I was looking at the title, and the title seems to me to suggest that it's a focus on the feelings or the emotional content of the problem that the couple brings to therapy.

**Carlson:** Which would be a little bit different than some of the other ones that are focused more on thinking and more on behavior?

**Kjos:** Yes, yeah.

**Carlson:** And yet it's my understanding that this approach does that, too.

**Kjos:** Yeah. So the title is a little confusing.

**Carlson:** It might not... It's an approach, though, that is very structured in that if somebody uses this approach in one setting, it's the same as in another setting, because it's trained with a manual. So you can research this approach. And a lot of other approaches have the same titles, but you never really know, if somebody's doing a constructivist approach, for example, which version they're using.

**Kjos:** And I think it makes it easier to apply when you have some structure to how it's done or a manualized approach. So it would be... as well as research.

**Carlson:** Well, let's bring out Dr. Sue Johnson and find out just what emotionally focused couples therapy is. Sue, welcome.

**Susan Johnson:** Hi.

**Kjos:** Hi there. Welcome, Sue.

**Carlson:** Well, you and Dr. Greenberg were the innovators or the developers of this approach. Just what is it, in, kind of in a nutshell?

**Johnson:** In a nutshell. Okay, well, basically, it's a humanistic approach. And it's an approach that privileges emotion. I sort of think of it as kind of like, it's sort of like as if Carl Rogers sat down to tea with Salvador Minuchin, and they kind of agreed to sort of put an approach together. So what we sort of do in this approach is we try to listen to people's emotions, because we believe that emotions really tell us what matters to people. They tell us how people, their needs in the relationship, and they basically organize how people interact with each other on a very basic level. Emotion comes from the Latin word "to move." And if you read the research on emotion, it talks a lot about how emotion is a basic motivating force. It sort of pulls us to move in particular kinds of ways. So we're focusing on emotion because we feel that it organizes people's interactions and because often it's the, to help people sort of move and talk about and develop and expand their emotions is the fastest way to help them move into new stances with each other.

**Carlson:** How did you ever come up with this idea of bringing Minuchin and Rogers together for lunch? How did you become...

**Johnson:** Well, my couples taught me how to do it, actually, in fact. But the sort of academic answer to that is that I was trained as a Rogerian individual therapist, and I had also done family therapy using a Minuchin model. And then I started to see couples. And first of all, I was a little dismayed at how difficult it seemed to be to work with couples, because there was all this incredible emotion. And so I found it quite difficult. But after a while, I started to let them teach me how to work with emotion and how expressing new emotions and dealing with emotions in a different way could create new interactions. And that started to get really fascinating. That's the academic answer. Perhaps a more real answer is I grew up in an

English pub, and if you, if you are a child in an English pub, you stand all the time and you watch people interact, and you watch how emotional expression and the communication of emotion immediately organizes the dance between people.

### 1—5

What's interesting to me is that research now, you know, John Gottman's research is really saying the same thing--that emotional engagement and communication is what defines relationships. But I could see that in the pub, I think.

**Kjos:** What about cultural differences? Because we think of emotion, of some cultures as being more “emotional” and having different... What about cultural differences here?

**Johnson:** I guess the way I think about that is I think that... And again, the research talks about the fact that if you look across cultures, there are certain basic emotions that go across cultures. I think that emotion therapists, researchers have come up with something like six basic emotions, things like fear, sadness, right, joy, right, go across cultures. But how it's expressed, and the rules around expression, are different. For example, we found when we worked with Chinese families--because EFT is used with families as well as with couples--that they would talk a lot more about shame than, say, some of the couples that we, the Canadian couples that we saw or the families we saw. And they would talk a lot about that there were certain expectations of certain roles in the family as a father and as a mother, and expectations of, you know... Also coming into therapy, they would talk about that it was shameful for them to be in therapy. So we would have to attune to that. And we would have to, you know, sort of follow the client. This is a very collaborative approach. You follow the client a lot. So we would have to attune to that expression of shame and slow down and let them talk about that, right.

**Carlson:** So you really tailor it depending upon the cultural group that you're going to be working on?

**Johnson:** Yes, we do.

**Carlson:** Since this is, and as I referred to before, a manualized

approach, then it would have some set steps that you would follow.

**Johnson:** Yes.

**Carlson:** Can you take us through the steps that you would use when you work with a couple?

**Johnson:** Basically we, we developed the approach by looking at videos of couples and us working with couples, and sort of looking at the process. So we came up with nine steps. Basically they go into three stages. The first stage is a deescalation stage.

**Carlson:** Okay.

**Johnson:** And what we're doing is we're trying to look at the cycle of interactions the couple get trapped into and get stuck with. And we're trying to look at the emotional realities that sort of underlie that cycle and organize that cycle, and access them a little bit, and deescalate the negative patterns, and create safety in the session. And the second stage of the therapy is really, then, not just moving beyond deescalation and trying to create new patterns of interaction that act as an antidote to that negative cycle--and new patterns of interaction that aren't just new and different, but are specifically creating a more secure bond. So then we go into working at creating a more secure bond. And last stage of therapy is consolidation--that we try to consolidate those changes that the couple have made, and talk to them about how they've repaired their relationship and how they did that.

**Carlson:** So that's like hope and encouragement?

**Johnson:** Yes, and also sort of creating for them a real coherent image and story and version of how they managed to move from this negative cycle that created so much emotional distress for them into a more positive cycle of security and bonding and...

**Kjos:** What would be the average length of time, then, that you might work with a couple?

**Johnson:** Well, in our research, it's, it's really down to 10 or 12 sessions.

**Kjos:** Okay.

**Johnson:** But some of that depends on the couple. For example, there's



going to be a book coming out next year with Guilford on working with traumatized couples with this approach. And then you have to be much more flexible. And so some of the very distressed couples that we would see at the general hospital in Ottawa we would see maybe 20 times. Those couples would have other problems--they would be depressed or they would be having post-traumatic stress disorder, things like that. So some of that depends on the couple, but I would say between 10 and 15 sessions, something like that.

**Carlson:** Is there homework that you have in this last step? Is there any kind of assignments you give, or is this more of a dynamic approach?

**Johnson:** Mostly in EFT we assume that you're going to create change in the session, but sometimes we give homework assignments. Often they're... But they're sort of, then... In a way it doesn't matter if you do them or not. There's no failure... You can't really fail here, because it's just as interesting if you can't do the assignment as if you could, because you follow the process of what happens to the client. Sometimes it's just as interesting when you ask a client to do something in therapy-- like if you say, "Could you please turn to your wife and talk to her about that?" If the client says no, that's actually just as interesting and just as useful, sometimes, as if the client says yes, because then you can help that person explore, "It's so very hard for you to turn to your wife right now and talk about this," and the person says, "Yes it is." "Could you tell her, 'It's too hard for me right now to turn and talk to you about this; it's too scary?'" And the person does that.

## 1—11

So often the homework is about, "Would you notice when you get stuck in the cycle this week? Would you notice a time when it's very hard for you to let your wife in and to talk to her the way you do here?" And then people do that, and they come in and they say, "Yes! Do you remember the time on Wednesday morning?" That kind of homework.

**Kjos:** That would be one of the sort of techniques that you would use. Are there some other things that we might watch for in terms of

interventions or techniques that would be significant or key?

**Carlson:** Or really unique to this approach?

**Johnson:** Well, basically if you look at the basic techniques, what you're going to see me doing, say, on the tape, is you're going to see me reflecting emotion. And Rogers used reflection. It can sometimes seem like quite a sort of superficial thing, but actually a good reflection better organizes somebody's experience--that's what we're trying to do--so that they grasp it and deal with it, and put shape and form to it, and deal with it in a different kind of way. So you're going to see me do a lot of reflection. Sometimes I take a particular emotional response and heighten it to kind of put it out so that everybody can see it and look at it and... You're going to see me using simple language, using the client's language, using images whenever I can, asking evocative questions like, "What's that like for you?" And this is all about expanding people's emotional experience. And then you'll see the EFT therapist creating interactions, like... This is a very active therapy in that we create interactions all the time. So you'll see me work with somebody's emotional experience and then say, "Do you think you could turn to your partner right now? Could you tell your partner what you've just told me?" So you create a new interaction all the time. So we're tracking interactions, tracking negative cycles, tracking positive cycles when there is, there are positive cycles, and creating interactions, and then going back and helping people process the emotions in those interactions.

**Carlson:** Is there... And I can see that this is going to work really well with some highly verbal people, some highly functioning people. Does it work with everybody, or are there people it just doesn't work with?

**Johnson:** That's an interesting comment, actually, because the, some of the research that's been done on EFT suggests that it works very well with people who aren't so highly functioning and aren't so verbal, perhaps because they stay in touch with their emotions and they stay more concrete. The only people we really don't use EFT with is we don't use EFT with violent couples. I think there's a lot of literature saying that that's not a good idea. But sometimes you have to adapt the model to the client. You have to slow the process down. But we

used EFT with depressed clients, for example. It works very well. But sometimes you have to slow the process down, then, and give somebody more time. Sometimes you have to stay with somebody while they struggle with formulating their emotional experience. But our experience, in the research, even, says that this model works very well with, for example, men who've been described by their partners as inexpressive and unable to talk about their feelings. The research on the predictors of success in EFT said that it worked very well with those guys.

**Carlson:** I think that's most of us.

**Kjos:** Men, yeah.

**Carlson:** I think, yeah. I saw that look in her eye.

**Kjos:** Looking right at you, right?

**Carlson:** Mm-hmm.

**Kjos:** You've talked about the research. Do you... Talk a little bit about where you see that going in the future.

**Johnson:** Well, the research on EFT is very promising and very encouraging. What we're doing right now is we're trying to look at impasses in therapy. And we've identified a certain impasse that we call an attachment injury, where somebody's been basically abandoned at a time of deep need. And we're looking at how that impasse comes up in therapy and how you help people work through it. So we're trying to focus on the process of therapy. But we're also applying this approach to different people, say, people with post-traumatic stress disorder. We're starting to do that. So I think that's where the research is going. But so far, more and more data is coming in. I mean, the research on EFT is that right now we get 70 to 75 percent of couples recovered from distress after 10 to 12 sessions. That's incredibly good. That's not improved, that's recovered. And also what's interesting about EFT is that we don't seem to be having the same problem with relapse as some of the other approaches. The research that's coming out on EFT now is that, for example, we did a study in Ottawa with the parents of chronically ill children who have very high marital distress and depression. And all the results stayed after two years. They were

all the same.

**Carlson:** Wow, that's a significant time, too.

**Johnson:** Yeah, and I think that... The way I understand that is if you do actually help people create a more secure emotional bond, that actually has a sort of self-maintaining effect on people. That can sort of, that is an antidote to negatives in the relationship, and it sort of helps people maintain that change when you've created it.

**Carlson:** You said that this approach doesn't really work or isn't, and emotional approaches really don't work well with people who are violent, and yet in a minute we're going to watch you work with a couple--

**Johnson:** Yes.

**Carlson:** --and one of the complaints of this couple is that this man is very angry and he's very aggressive, and... which is often a description of someone who will then move into violence. And yet you seem to work quite well with this man.

## 1—17

**Johnson:** Well, my assumption when I'm working with this man... EFT uses, sees relationships through an attachment lens, through the lens of attachment theory, right. And my assumption is that at least some of this man's touchiness and anger and inability to talk about other feelings is to do with his insecurity with his wife. And so what I'm doing is I'm assuming that his anger's not so much out of control that he's hitting--which I'm, which he isn't--and that if I can help him expand this narrow, rigid, angry response into talking about other feelings, he can create new kinds of interactions with his partner. That's what I'm trying to do.

**Carlson:** So he's got more than a hammer in his toolkit, right?

**Johnson:** You've got it. That's a beautiful way to put it. And all he's doing is using his hammer right now, and that he can't talk about his other needs and his other feelings. That's all he ever... So he's stuck in one rooted response. So I'm sort of... And there's lots of research that says that angry, coercive partners in relationships are, in fact, very

insecure in their attachment. That's part of what's going on for them.

**Kjos:** Is there anything in particular we should watch for as we watch this video now?

**Johnson:** Well, I hope that what you're going to see when I do this video is you're going to see me talking a lot about the cycle, because I'm trying to get the context. I'm trying to get the sense of what actually happens in this problem-dance. So you're going to see me sort of following the sequence of interactions and finding the sort of circular cycle of how they get stuck in a dance. And then you're going to see me trying to move into the sort of attachment realities of, you know, how safe they feel with each other, can they connect, is there any security in the relationship, and to move into a little bit into underlying feelings, particularly with him, to sort of see if I can expand that anger into, you know, some of the feelings that he can't talk about, some of the more vulnerable feelings. We end up, in EFT, moving people past the sort of reactive emotional stances into their more softer, vulnerable, attachment-related feelings and needs. That's where we sort of go.

**Carlson:** And this is an interview that's about fifty minutes long, and you usually work a little bit longer.

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**Carlson:** And as a result of compressing this a little bit, is there anything that's lost that...

**Johnson:** Well, I think sometimes I would go a little slower.

**Carlson:** Okay...

**Johnson:** Emotional responses take longer to process, and sometimes you have to give people time, and you have to repeat, and you have to stay with people. I'm not talking about catharsis when I talk about emotion. I think emotion got a bad name from catharsis. I'm talking about helping somebody go to the leading edge of their experience where they can't quite articulate it, and move into processing it further, and then being able to communicate that to their partner. And that takes time. But my experience of this couple, actually, is that they, they sort of came along with me pretty well.

**Carlson:** Well, I thought that, but...

**Johnson:** Maybe it was just me that felt like I was a bit squeezed. They didn't seem to. They did come along with me pretty well, I think.

**Carlson:** Let's let our viewers see just how that happened.

**Johnson:** Okay.

## **COUPLES THERAPY SESSION**

**Johnson:** So, what you're telling me, Scott, is that you know you've been having problems in the relationship and you don't want to lose Leslie. That's what you're telling me?

**Scott:** Right.

**Johnson:** Yeah?

**Scott:** I don't want to lose her and the kids. I don't want to be a weekend daddy.

**Johnson:** Right. And as I understand right now, what's happened is that you guys have just separated for a little while. Is that right?

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Yeah? Okay. As we go on, if I... I'm going to sort of reflect back some things to you that I might say. And if I somehow get it wrong or get a slant that isn't quite right, or I put a word in that isn't quite right, I really want you to correct me and help me with that. Okay?

**Leslie:** Okay.

**Johnson:** Can you do that? Is that all right?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Okay. Because I'm going to try to sort of understand your relationship. What I'm going to try and do is kind of understand some of how you guys interact together, and some of the ways that you kind of get stuck with each other that stops you being able to be close and create safety in your relationship. Is that okay?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** All right. So you're saying that you don't want to lose your wife, yeah?

**Scott:** Right.

**Johnson:** Right. And you understand that, Leslie?

**Leslie:** Yes.

**Johnson:** You understand that he, he really wants the relationship?

**Leslie:** I, I do understand that, yes. That's what he says, anyway.

**Johnson:** That's what he says?

**Leslie:** Yes.

**Johnson:** Do you sort of find that reassuring when he says that? What's that like for you to hear him say that he really wants the relationship?

**Leslie:** I would like to see it in, in actions rather than words, really.

**Johnson:** Is that right?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Okay. Because the relationship's been pretty painful for you, that's, yeah?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Yeah. So, it doesn't really matter where we go in here, so why don't we go in there? What would, what would it mean for you, how would you know that Scott was really trying and really valued you, and really wanted to keep this relationship? How would you know? What would change in the relationship?

**Leslie:** If he, if he acted... I shouldn't say acted, that's not the word I'm looking for, but we'll say acted.

**Scott:** Was more of an adult.

**Leslie:** Acted more of an adult, there you go, sure. If he would change the major problem I have with him.

**Johnson:** Which is...

**Leslie:** His temper.

**Johnson:** You guys, I just read a couple of things that said something about that Scott, you get caught in temper.

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Scott:** I've got a bad temper. Very short fuse.

**Johnson:** Is that right?

**Scott:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** Okay.

**Scott:** I, I don't want to outright, how do you say, I would never just come out and hurt one of my kids. Our kids.

## 2—3

**Leslie:** Not intentionally, but when he starts losing his temper I don't think he really pays attention to what comes out of his mouth, what he says to them.

**Johnson:** That's kind of the main issue that comes up in your relationship, is, and you're saying, "Sue, I would know that Scott was serious about keeping this relationship--"

**Leslie:** If he actually...

**Johnson:** --if he could, if he could change the short fuse," right?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**Leslie:** All right. I understand people have short fuses and that's not something... that's part of somebody's personality, but at least take the time to step back and think before he acted or, you know, said something.

**Johnson:** Right. So help me--what is that like for you, then, to be living with Scott and knowing that somehow he's got this short fuse, and hearing that he wants the relationship, but somehow having this sense that he's not going to be able to control it? That must be very hard for you.



**Leslie:** It is very hard. It's very difficult, you know. And it's been hard... Like we just recently separated--if that's what you want to call it--it's been, you said almost two weeks, a week, you know. And it's been hard because this is not where I wanted the relationship to go. But I've been, we've been having the same argument for many years, and I've been asking of him the same thing for a long time, and I haven't, he hasn't changed that part about him--I don't want him to change as a person, just that part of him.

**Johnson:** So when he has this short fuse and you keep trying to get him to look at this and somehow your sense is that nothing changes, that gets real difficult for you. And what do you do then, when Scott gets caught in having a short fuse? What do you do with that?

**Leslie:** If he's having the short fuse with one of the children I, I interfere. I step in.

**Johnson:** Okay. And is that all right? Do you, can you sort of defuse it then? Or does it just escalate?

**Leslie:** No, then it turns into an argument between him and I. It escalates.

**Scott:** Mm-hmm. But she, a lot of times, will step in and watch out so I don't go and get myself in trouble with my, with my temper.

**Johnson:** You step in and you try to tell Scott, you try to give him the message, "Hey, your temper's sort of taken you over and..."

**Scott:** And that's, that's, that's not, with just say, at home, I mean, in general.

**Leslie:** Anywhere.

**Scott:** Huh?

**Leslie:** Anywhere.

**Scott:** Yeah. Anywhere. And I appreciate that...

**Johnson:** And you guys get into an argument...

**Scott:** Well, I appreciate that part because it keeps me from going to jail. You know? Because...

**Johnson:** You appreciate that. You actually see her as trying to support

you when she steps in, yeah?

**Scott:** In some things, yeah.

**Johnson:** Yeah? But somehow it's still hard to let go of the anger...

**Scott:** There's other... Oh, there's, there's, there's, the, the, the anger part is real hard to let loose. But...

**Johnson:** But you see her as trying to help you when she steps in, so.

**Scott:** Yeah, in certain cases. Not in all the cases, but...

**Leslie:** It usually takes him a while, until after... It takes him until after he really calms down to realize that, you know, that's what I was trying to do. But we usually end up having to go through our argument first, before he realizes what he has done.

**Johnson:** So Scott starts to lose it, he gets a short fuse. You point it out to him. You, on one level, you somehow know she's trying to help you not be taken over by the anger, but it sort of gets going and...

**Scott:** She kind of runs a, she runs as a blocker when I'm going, when it's, when I'm there. I've got the short fuse all the time. It's when I'm ready to blow up is when she starts to step in, and she's running, you know, as a blocker to stop me. And a lot of times I can hear her telling me, "Hey, knock it off, stop it," and stuff like that. And in a couple of instances I've heard it, and...

**Johnson:** But it's still hard for you, it's still hard for you to let go of it at that point. Yeah.

**Scott:** Of the anger? You just about have to have a temper to understand what I'm saying. It's just not like you can be way up here and just turn it off.

**Johnson:** Right. It's real hard for you to let go of... You get caught in that, right?

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** And you try to tell him, "You're losing it, you're losing it." You step in, and then what happens, guys? I'm trying to get a sense of that, the sort of negative dance that happens between the two of you, right.

**Johnson:** After I step in, whether it's something with somebody outside the home or one of the children living inside our home--because he's had problems with, you know, people, whoever, a neighbor or whatever. It can be any instance, but if I say something, at first he takes it and gets defensive about it. You know, like I'm out after him or something. And then, like I said, the argument starts between him and I then. You know, he tells me not to tell him what to do, and...

**Scott:** Don't make me look bad.

**Leslie:** Don't make him look bad, and...

**Johnson:** You somehow feel criticized, is that what happens?

**Scott:** Sometimes.

**Johnson:** Yeah, you...

**Scott:** Sometimes.

**Johnson:** Okay.

**Scott:** We had a, just for instance, a problem with a kid. And it was several problems, and I finally went over and I told him, "You come over here, you do this--you mess up again, we have a problem." And then I talked to his father and I told him, I said, I wasn't going to talk to the kid or his wife or anybody else, so I was coming over here and I'm going to deal with him. And needless to say I got in trouble for telling him what I did.

**Johnson:** But although one part of you somehow knows that she's trying to help you...

**Scott:** Well, she was not there when that happened.

## 2—9

**Johnson:** What you're telling me is that when this sort of thing happens, you end up getting kind of sensitive and hearing your wife being critical of you, and that's pretty hard. You don't want to look bad. You don't want to hear that she is disappointed in you. Am I getting it, Scott? Can you help me?

**Scott:** It's almost like she's trying to discipline me. It's not like she's

so much disappointed, in my eyes. She's trying, it's like she's trying to discipline me, like I'm the kid and she's trying to discipline me for something I said.

**Johnson:** You feel sort of like you're being told what to do or that you're...

**Scott:** Sometimes.

**Johnson:** You're somehow being told that you're not measuring up. Yeah?

**Scott:** Measuring up, maybe.

**Johnson:** You're being told you're doing something wrong.

**Scott:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** And that's pretty hard for you?

**Scott:** Oh, yeah, being told that I didn't measure up by her, yeah. And you know, I try to, I try to do everything that I can, you know, for her and us. And even, even in going off on a neighbor because they did something, whether it was to my kid, to my wife, disrespected anything that I have anything to do with, you know. I'm wrong sometimes in doing it because I've gotten P.O.'d.

**Leslie:** It's how he does it. It's his approach.

**Johnson:** Right. Okay. Can... Forgive me, I'm going to sometimes interrupt you because I'm going to, I'm aware that we don't have much time, so I'm going to... Forgive me for leaping about.

**Leslie:** Okay.

**Johnson:** I'm going to make a little leap here, okay. I want to know what happens then, what happens when you try to tell him, "Hey, your anger is taking you over. It's getting too big here. I want, I don't want you to do it this way." You start to feel somehow like you're being talked to like you're a kid, like you're being criticized--

**Scott:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** --like you don't measure up. You know on one level maybe she's trying to help you, but you're getting caught in it. Then what will happen between the two of you? So you're having a hard time hearing

her feedback. Then what?

**Scott:** Then we're arguing.

**Leslie:** Yeah, then we argue. We end up arguing for a couple hours.

**Johnson:** Oh, wow. A couple hours?

**Leslie:** A couple hours, we end up arguing for a couple hours, and...

**Johnson:** And how does that go then? You're trying to get him to see?

**Leslie:** Yeah, I'm trying to get him to see what he doesn't see in himself when he's acting that way, and when he's saying what he says. I don't, I think, I actually believe if he could ever see a videotape of himself, or even an audiotape of himself, when he's acting this way, he'll be shocked. He will absolutely be shocked.

**Johnson:** What would shock him, do you think? Leslie, what would shock him?

**Leslie:** I think seeing himself in that rage. And I don't think he really pays attention to the words that come out of his mouth when he gets that way, and how violent he can be.

**Scott:** And it's, and it's... That's exactly what it is, it's a rage. It's not just getting mad, it's rage.

**Johnson:** Help me, is that scary for you? Is it...

**Leslie:** It's scary for me. He doesn't, he... Well, we argue, but he hasn't physically turned on me. But it's scary for me in the fact that when he does this to one of the children, one of our children, is damaging to them. They're too young. I mean, the name calling...

**Johnson:** You need to protect them.

**Leslie:** I need to protect them and...

**Scott:** I don't, I don't get physical with them either, like...

**Johnson:** But it's also scary for you. Yeah?

**Leslie:** Yes. And I'm also afraid he's going to get himself in trouble also, if it's somebody in the outside world, you know. We've had the police called on him before.

**Johnson:** Right.

**Leslie:** And...

**Johnson:** So you're trying to get him to see, and you have a hard time hearing. And then how does it go then? How does it, how does it end? How does this two-hour fight end?

**Scott:** I usually leave.

**Johnson:** You leave.

**Leslie:** Well, actually...

**Scott:** I walk out of the house...

**Leslie:** ...nothing gets solved after the two-hour argument. Usually the argument goes the same way and ends the same way, and nothing has ever gotten solved. He, you know, he'll just say, "Fine," you know, "I'll never do this again," or "I'll never do that." And "I'll try and change." But up till to this point, he hasn't changed.

**Johnson:** And then you leave. And then what do you do?

**Leslie:** I just go about my life. He usually comes back fifteen minutes later. He doesn't leave for really...

**Scott:** I don't mean like move out of the house. I mean just--

**Johnson:** No, I understand.

**Scott:** --leave the situation.

**Johnson:** But can you guys talk about it then, or what?

**Leslie:** Yeah, later. Yeah. Usually after he comes back or towards the end of the argument, it simmers down to a conversation. But I always try and show him, and he gets defensive about it, how he acts. And you just, you can't go through life acting that way and treating people that way. And I don't think he's ever really...

**Johnson:** You want, you're somehow trying to... Help me here. I think what I'm hearing you say is, part of this is a big struggle on your part to try and get through to him that this is too hard for you, that you can't, you, you know, can't live with his temper--

**Leslie:** Right.

**Johnson:** --with him doing this to you or to the kids. This is too scary. This is too difficult for you. But somehow you feel like he doesn't hear that, yeah?

**Leslie:** Right.

**Johnson:** And so you'll try for two hours. And then you'll leave. And then when you get back together, I guess then it's pretty hard to be close or supportive with each other, is it? Or do you manage it in spite of being...

**Leslie:** It is. It's hard, it's hard to be close.

**Johnson:** Is it?

**Leslie:** Yes.

**Johnson:** Help me, how does that work, then? What does that look like for you, Leslie? It's hard to be close, it's hard to, to... what? Be held, or be...

**Leslie:** Yeah, exactly. I have been...

**Johnson:** You withdraw, do you?

**Leslie:** Well, you'd call it withdrawal.

**Scott:** Don't want me to be around her. Period.

**Leslie:** Pretty much.

**Scott:** If she's laying on the sofa and I lay on the loveseat and I put my head by, on the same end as where, like this, she'll put her head down there. She don't want to be there. I have to come over and apologize, want to get a kiss, and "Get out of my face!"

**Leslie:** I can't, I can't, I can't be close. And the apologies--after you've apologized for seven years or eight years or nine years over the same thing, pretty soon the apology doesn't mean anything, if it continues to happen. So to me the apology means nothing. Prove it with your actions, really.

## 2—15

**Johnson:** So somehow you get to the place where you're just sort of standing back, and it's too hard for you to then really connect with

Scott, right? You're just kind of sort of protecting yourself. Am I getting it right? And then that's, and then that's hard for you, Scott.

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** You go and you try to connect with her, but the message you get is somehow the thing again about that you've blown it, you didn't measure up. Am I getting it?

**Scott:** Pretty much. I guess you'd say it would come across as "I blew it," yeah. You know. "Yeah, you screwed up, now I don't want to be around you" kind of thing with her.

**Johnson:** Well, how do you deal with that? How do you deal with it when you get the message from Leslie--

**Scott:** I don't like it.

**Johnson:** --"You've screwed up, and now I can't let you close." What do you do with that?

**Scott:** Pretty much just leave it alone. Just leave it alone. Sooner or later she's going to turn around she'll give me a kiss.

**Johnson:** So there are times when the two of you, in spite of you getting...

**Scott:** The next day. The next day she might give me a kiss, but if I'm over there trying to apologize today, she wouldn't, she wouldn't give me a kiss today for nothing, right now. Tomorrow...

**Johnson:** Even though this, you guys get caught in this thing we're talking about here, there are times, there are little islands when you can be close, and you can connect....

**Leslie:** They're very few and far between. And when they are, they're very short lived.

**Johnson:** Is that right?

**Leslie:** Yes.

**Scott:** I'm generally a mean and nasty kind of guy.

**Leslie:** I have a hard time...

**Johnson:** You are?



**Leslie:** I have a...

**Johnson:** You don't... I didn't hear your wife say that. Is that...

**Scott:** Leslie?

**Johnson:** Is that... Is that what you...

**Leslie:** No, he's not.

**Johnson:** Are you worried that that's how she sees you? As a nasty...

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** You are?

**Scott:** Mm-hmm. Sometimes I feel that's what she, what she figures-- she doesn't want to be around with me because I'm mean and nasty.

**Johnson:** Gee, Scott, that must be hard to feel that way.

**Scott:** Sometimes it is.

**Johnson:** I guess--

**Scott:** Sometimes it's just, "Oh, well."

**Johnson:** --it sort of hits me--you help me here, but it sort of hits me that if I was feeling that way and I really valued my relationship, it would leave me kind of raw and it would make it all the easier to have a short fuse and get caught in being angry again.

**Scott:** Oh, yeah, it's pretty easy, yeah. If, in just that instance, if I come over...

**Johnson:** So you feel sort of rejected, right?

**Scott:** Oh, yeah. If I come over and we had an argument, and I try to apologize and give her a kiss, "Get out of my face!" "Fine!" There's another argument. You know, "I'm coming over here trying to apologize," and then she's like, "How do you expect me to be close to you when you've went off like that and you did this? And now you want to come over here and get in my face and wanting a kiss!" And you know, that's how it goes. And it's like bam, bam.

**Johnson:** Okay, guys.

**Scott:** Right?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Okay, guys. Let me see if I got this right. So I'm sort of parachuting in, here, okay?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** So you help me when I get it wrong, okay? It sounds like what's happening in your relationship is you've got caught in a particular kind of pattern, a particular dance together where-- whatever comes first doesn't really matter, let's just start anywhere-- you have a short fuse, and you get angry, right? And you're a big guy and you get, your temper gets really powerful. And that gets pretty scary and pretty difficult for you. And you get caught in trying to have him see that and understand that it's scary and difficult for you. And you can't get through to him somehow, right, and that must be real frustrating for you--

**Leslie:** It is very frustrating.

**Johnson:**--apart from anything else. And you try to get him to see, and that doesn't work somehow, right? And finally you get caught in that kind of argument. And you end up somehow feeling like what you're hearing from her is that you're a nasty guy, and you've blown it, and you're not making it with her, you're not... And you just end up feeling that way, right?

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** And then somehow you leave. And you'll try to come back and connect with her and then you feel rejected, which leaves you feeling raw and likely to blow up again, and leaves you feeling like there's no safety in the relationship.

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm. That's pretty much that the relationship is doomed, really. Yes.

**Johnson:** I'm getting it?

**Leslie:** You got it.

**Scott:** You had it straight on.

**Johnson:** That's a hard one, guys, because that kind of keeps itself

going there, doesn't it?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm. It's a circle.

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** And the thing that strikes me is that that's painful for both of you, right? That's sort of... Now I'm going to make some little guesses here, and you help me, okay?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** The thing that hits me about that that you've said to me so far is that that leaves you feeling frustrated and unsafe and like you can't really be close, like you've got to protect yourself. Right? And you can't kind of depend on him, yeah? That must be pretty lonely for one thing, I would imagine.

**Leslie:** It is.

**Johnson:** Is that all right? That word? Is that okay?

**Leslie:** Sort of.

**Johnson:** And it leaves you, I'm hearing it leaves you feeling like basically your wife's really somehow disappointed in you, and sees you as kind of a nasty guy, and doesn't really want to be close to you. So it sort of leaves both of you kind of alone and unhappy, yeah?

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

## 2—21

**Johnson:** That's a hard one, huh? That's what you're, that's what you're going to try to work on in therapy. That's what needs to change, because it really makes it impossible for the two of you to be close and be safe and learn how to trust each other, yeah? So am I, so I've got it, right?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Scott:** Oh, yeah.

**Johnson:** All right. Scott, do you think Leslie knows about what happens for you when you do feel rejected, and when you get the message that she basically believes that you're kind of a nasty guy

and...

**Scott:** When she does it, she don't care. She don't care what I feel. That's it. And she'll tell you. She don't care. If I've been acting the fool or however you want to put it, she don't care what it makes me feel like.

**Leslie:** That's not true. Because I wouldn't have been dealing with it for all these years if I didn't care.

**Johnson:** So what you're trying to do is, when this starts, we're talking about you're struggling to try and get him to shift, right? And you're saying, it's almost like you're saying, "I wouldn't be struggling if you didn't matter to me." Right?

**Leslie:** Yeah, that's very true. If he didn't matter, I wouldn't have been dealing with this for all these years, I would have just gone on.

**Johnson:** Right. So, in a way, you're sort of struggling... By giving him this feedback, it's almost like you're struggling to have the relationship, yeah?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** But he kind of hears it that you're, you're telling him what's wrong, yeah?

**Leslie:** Right, yeah. He doesn't, he definitely doesn't see it the way I'm trying to tell it.

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**Leslie:** He'll switch the words all around, and...

**Johnson:** He doesn't see you as struggling to be with him and to kind of get him to put his anger aside so there's a space for the two of you. He hears it that you're disappointed in him.

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Yeah. I want to go back, here, a minute. I asked you, "Do you think your wife knows what it's like for you when you feel like you're not measuring up?" And you said, "Well, I don't think she cares at that point." Right?

**Scott:** Oh, yeah.

**Johnson:** But I guess I want to know, do you feel like, maybe at that particular moment in time she doesn't care--that maybe in the heat of the argument, you feel like she doesn't care? Although she's saying she does care, right? But do you feel like she does really understand what it's like for you to get the message that you're disappointing her and that she just sees you as this nasty, angry guy? Do you feel like she does understand that, Scott?

**Scott:** I don't know. Sometimes. Sometimes. Most of the time, no, I don't think she knows. You know. Because I'm, I'm trying to get things straight between her and I. And that's just like, forget it.

**Johnson:** You somehow get the message that you're not going to make it, it's not going to work.

**Scott:** Right.

**Johnson:** So you're not sure whether she really knows what it's like for you to somehow get this message that... You know, what she's saying is, "I'm trying to tell you to stop the impact you're having on me, I'm trying to tell you that your anger's scary," but what you hear is that you're disappointing her, and you're not sure she really understands what's happening for you at that point.

**Scott:** She has nothing to be afraid of by my anger. I would never hurt her or the kids.

**Leslie:** But you have. And...

**Johnson:** Sounds like you do hurt her by, by being so big and scary, huh?

**Leslie:** And it's not, you don't have to be physically hurting somebody to hurt somebody.

**Johnson:** Mm-hmm.

**Scott:** Yeah. But the...

**Johnson:** Do you hear her saying she's, she gets scared of you then? Can you hear that?

**Scott:** I don't think she's afraid of it, afraid of me. I think she's more afraid of the temper and what could be said verbally.

**Johnson:** Okay, maybe we go back to that in a minute, okay. I just want to stay here for a minute. Have you ever actually tried to explain to Leslie, at a point when you're not in the heat of the moment, what happens for you, why it's so hard for you to hear that feedback, what happens for you when you're hearing from her that she sees you as this sort of big, nasty guy, and you feel real rejected, and you get the message you're not going to make it with her? Have you ever really tried to sort of explain, talk to her about that?

**Scott:** No, because usually before we ever get to that we're arguing again. Correct?

**Leslie:** Not always.

**Johnson:** But what you're telling me here is, "Sue, I get really... All I start to hear after a while is that she doesn't want to be with me and I'm just this big nasty guy and I'm not going to make it with her." That's what I'm hearing you telling me.

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** That's what you... Yeah?

**Scott:** Oh yeah.

**Johnson:** But you don't get, you're not used to talking to Leslie about that.

**Scott:** No, because I don't matter. It's what I'm feeling, and what I feel about it is, you know, I've got to work it out, and...

**Johnson:** Is that right?

**Scott:** Yeah. It's something that I've got to do--not necessarily what she needs to do. And that's why I'm doing what I'm doing now.

**Johnson:** Do you think that you could... You're talking to me here, right? But actually what's important is between the two of you. Do you think that you could help her understand a little bit right now what that feels like, when you start, when she's trying to get you to see that she's experiencing you as scary, and she's trying to get you to look at how the anger takes over the relationship and gets in between the two of you, and what you hear is, "Oh, Leslie just sees me as this big nasty guy, I'm never going to make it with her," and you just end up feeling

rejected?

**Scott:** Well right, now...

**Johnson:** Can you help her understand a little bit of what that feels like?

**Scott:** Right now, I don't... It's, it's beyond that now. You're fed up with me already. You don't want to be around me.

**Leslie:** It's not you. I told you that I can't live with your temper anymore. It's your temper. It's not you.

**Scott:** How am I, what am I supposed to do with my temper--just leave it on the front porch?

**Leslie:** If that's what you have to do.

**Scott:** That's kind of hard.

## 2—27

**Johnson:** You're saying, "I really want to be with you, but I can't... Your temper is too much for me."

**Leslie:** Yeah, I can't do it anymore. It...

**Johnson:** "It pushes me away," right?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm. Yep.

**Johnson:** "It pushes me away, and it scares me and it hurts me." That's what I'm hearing you say.

**Scott:** At the same time, I don't know that she wants... You know, there's no, there's no way to know that she wants to be with me, you know, because everything, everything that we've been doing so far has been so negative.

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**Scott:** You know. And even if I did leave it out of this, if I did just say... I wouldn't. And couldn't. And if I could just take it and go pfft, leave it over on the porch and come in, it's still going to be negative. It's only just today. And, and--

**Johnson:** Scott, we're going to...

**Scott:** --if it doesn't work out, why...

**Johnson:** I'm going to stop you. I want you to let me stop you, okay? I'm going to slow it down a minute, all right? Because this feels really important, okay? Can you help her understand a little bit of what that feeling of kind of, "I've blown it, she's rejecting me, she just sees me as a nasty guy, she doesn't want to be with me anyway"--can you help her understand what a little bit of that feels like right now?

**Scott:** I don't know how.

**Johnson:** You don't know how. You don't know how to tell her that.

**Scott:** No. I am... Other than just telling her, straight out, and telling you that you make me feel like I'm some monster and you don't want to be around me.

**Johnson:** Okay.

**Scott:** That's, that's...

**Johnson:** I'm going to, I'm going to change that a little. You see if it works. I don't know if she makes you feel that way, but you do, you end up somehow getting the message from her that you're a monster and that she doesn't want to be with you, yeah?

**Scott:** Yeah, pretty much.

**Johnson:** And what's that like for you to feel that way?

**Scott:** It's no good. It's no good at all. Why, why even hang around if she don't want to be around me, there ain't no need for me to be around.

**Johnson:** What's it like for you to tell her right now that that's how you feel in the relationship?

**Scott:** I pretty much just did.

**Johnson:** What's it like for you to tell her that? You said, "I don't know how," but you just did it. You did it fine. What's it like for you to tell her that right now?

**Scott:** I don't know. Kind of numb.

**Johnson:** Kind of numb?



**Scott:** Yeah, I don't know what to expect and, you know...

**Johnson:** That's not the way you usually talk. You don't usually talk to her about those feelings of rejection.

**Scott:** No, usually we're arguing across the table.

**Johnson:** So it's kind of strange and kind of... You feel sort of numb, right, when you say to her, "I just get this message that I'm a monster," right? "I somehow, when we get caught in this dance I get the message that I'm a monster." You end up feeling kind of numb, yeah?

**Scott:** Yeah. And when my temper is going, yes I am just that, I am a monster. You know? And I don't, I don't like it.

**Johnson:** You don't want to be caught in that rage--

**Scott:** Right--

**Johnson:** --and you know that it pushes her away from you.

**Scott:** --and at the same time, I've said it... There's times where you have to be able to have somewhat of a temper.

**Leslie:** No, you don't. I disagree.

**Scott:** And I, I...

**Johnson:** I'm, I'm going to butt in again. What's it like for your to hear that he, that it's sort of strange for him to talk about his softer feelings and about how he's scared that you see him as some sort of monster?

**Scott:** We don't talk about my softer feelings.

**Johnson:** You don't talk about your softer feelings.

**Leslie:** No, he don't, but I don't see why he does. I feel anybody should be able to.

**Johnson:** Is that right?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm. I feel anybody should be able to reveal their softer side and their real emotions.

**Johnson:** Well, I hear you. I think it's helpful if people can, because then they can soothe and comfort each other and support each other. My sense of it is actually that we've taught men in our society that

that's not okay to do that.

**Scott:** You're not supposed to be soft and weak.

**Leslie:** Right.

**Johnson:** In fact, it's almost like you're sort of a wimp if you do that, so...

**Leslie:** I feel that's very damaging, though.

**Johnson:** Yeah. And so, actually it takes a lot of courage for most men to be able to tell their wives, say, "I'm really worried now that you're telling me that I'm disappointing you and I'm not making it with you, and I feel really rejected." Takes a lot of courage, right? And you just did it here, which I think took a lot of courage. But what you said when I say "What's happening for you," you said, "Well, I sort of, I numb out when I do it," right?

**Scott:** Yeah, because I don't know what kind of a response I'm going to get, and usually the same response...

**Johnson:** You're worried about what she's going to...

**Scott:** Yeah, probably going to get the same no-response.

**Johnson:** So can you tell her?

**Scott:** Same old no-response.

**Johnson:** That's really important, what you just said, Scott. That's really important, what you just said. Because if I'm hearing you right, what you just said to your wife is, "I don't tell you my softer feelings 'cause I don't know if you're going to respond. I don't know what response I'm going to get."

**Scott:** That's true.

**Johnson:** Is that what you're telling her?

**Scott:** I am.

**Johnson:** Yeah?

**Scott:** And, and, and I don't, I don't tell anybody anything.

**Johnson:** You don't tell anybody your softer feelings?

**Scott:** Nope. I don't have soft feelings.

**Johnson:** The only thing that you let yourself show is anger, then.

**Scott:** I don't have any soft feelings.

**Johnson:** Is that right? So when you get hurt...

**Scott:** Soft feelings are for girls.

**Johnson:** Soft feelings are for girls. So when you get hurt and you feel raw, I guess the only thing for you to do is to be angry, then, right? It's not possible for you to go to your wife and talk about your soft feelings. You don't know what she's going to say. What was the worst thing that could happen? What would happen if you went and talked about your softer feelings to your wife?

**Scott:** I don't know.

**Johnson:** Talked about how worried you are that she sees you as a monster? What would happen?

**Scott:** She could tell me, "Yeah, you are a monster."

**Johnson:** Ah. So if you, if you...

**Scott:** And she would. She would do that.

**Johnson:** If you went and told her your softer feelings--how difficult it was for you to be worried that you've blown it with her and that she doesn't want to be with you--you're worried that what she'd say to you is, "Yeah, that's right. You are a monster." That's what you're scared you'd hear?

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Yeah? Then it must be real hard to talk to her about those things, right?

**Scott:** I don't talk to anybody about any of it. I don't.

**Johnson:** Would you like to be able to trust your wife and to talk about those feelings?

**Scott:** I trust my wife. You know? But I just, it's this...

**Johnson:** You trust her with your anger. Would you like to be able to

trust her enough to talk about these softer feelings too?

**Scott:** There's no need to talk about them.

**Johnson:** No?

**Scott:** No. Why talk to her about that?

**Johnson:** Why don't you ask... What's it like for you to hear him talk about these softer feelings? Maybe you could tell him...

## **2—33**

**Leslie:** It's a very, it's very frustrating because everything in life isn't about having a temper and being angry. And no, I don't see you as a monster.

**Johnson:** Mm-hmm.

**Leslie:** Okay? But it is important that you express your, your feelings.

**Johnson:** What happens--

**Leslie:** Why does everything have to be so hardcore?

**Johnson:** What happens for you when Scott is able--even in this strange setting here, with, this is all real artificial, right--he has the courage to talk to you about his softer feelings when I ask him, right? What happens for you when he does that? What happens for you when he tells you, "I'm scared that if you, I do tell you those softer feelings, that you'll tell me, 'Yeah, that's right, you are a monster, you are...'" What happens for you?

**Leslie:** It's a little upsetting, because he's never given me the opportunity to respond to that, so how would he, how would you know how I would respond? You wouldn't know. And you're just, you're afraid of rejection and...

**Johnson:** Would you like him to be able to talk to you about those softer feelings?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** You would?

**Leslie:** Yeah. I would like him to be able to talk about his softer feelings rather than revealing the angry side.

**Johnson:** Yeah. Forgive me, but--it seems sort of artificial, but could you tell him that? I think it's important. Could you tell him what you just told me?

**Leslie:** I would you like you to show your softer side rather than always showing your anger, and your rage, and your temper.

**Johnson:** What would, what do you feel, what would happen for you if he... Do you... What would it be like for you if Scott could share... Because there's all kinds of feelings he has, and he just gets caught in the rage, right? And if he can't talk about hurt or disappointment or upset or his needs, then, you know, I guess if he gets frustrated, it's just going to be anger that's kind of sitting there waiting for him. That's the one, right? Sort of--

**Leslie:** Yep. Yep.

**Johnson:** --the one that he goes to, yeah? So you feel like it would help a lot if he could talk about his softer...

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Then you'd feel closer to him?

**Leslie:** And then maybe... Mm-hmm. And then maybe he'd be willing to listen about everybody else's softer side also. See, he gets in the anger and the rage, but then...

**Johnson:** Then you can't talk to him about your softer feelings.

**Leslie:** No. Even, even the kids. He doesn't hear what you're saying when you start talking about the softer side, and people's emotions and feelings, and how they feel in certain situations.

**Johnson:** So if he could talk about those softer feelings, then maybe there'd be space for you to talk to him about your softer feelings?

**Leslie:** If he could set the anger aside, yeah.

**Johnson:** Uh-huh. Then you could--and I'm going back to what you said before--then maybe you could talk to him about the fact that you do get scared, right?

**Leslie:** Well, possibly. Yeah. He knows I'm not happy about his temper and his anger. I have expressed that. I am not afraid to say that.

**Scott:** No. She... She's little but she's wiry. She'll come back...

**Johnson:** She's wiry? She's a strong lady, right? She can take you on.

**Scott:** Yeah, she's got... She's got her own little attitude going on. She don't take, she don't take much out of me.

**Leslie:** My fear with his temper ain't necessarily for myself, it's for the kids, because they can, they're going to grow up with this.

**Johnson:** Yeah.

**Leslie:** Whatever damage is being done, they're going to carry this into their adult life.

**Johnson:** You don't want them to be hurt.

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** And you don't want...

**Scott:** And I don't want to be the one that hurts them.

**Johnson:** You don't want to hurt your kids.

**Scott:** I don't want to be the one that hurts them physically, mentally...

**Johnson:** You don't want to hurt your wife.

**Scott:** Emotionally.

**Johnson:** You just get, you guys get caught in this cycle and you get caught in this dance, right? And so it's sort of like, anger comes between the two of you. Right? And you can't share these feelings that you've talked about here.

**Scott:** No, because that's just, I never have. I never have. I never have. You know, people before her, no, just, there was no need. There's no need for it. I don't know, maybe there is a need now because I'm going to lose my, my marriage.

**Johnson:** Right.

**Scott:** I'm going to lose ten years of--

**Johnson:** Right.

**Scott:** --trying to make it work. And...

**Johnson:** So maybe there's a need for you to be able to talk to your wife on a different kind of level and create some safety. And then maybe you can create a whole level where the two of you can talk about feelings, and you can also hear her softer feelings, which is that you're a big guy and when you get mad she gets scared, huh? For her kids and for her. And also we, we... What we haven't touched on is something else that you said earlier—actually, it was my word I think, but you picked up on it—which is, it leaves you feeling alone in the relationship. Yeah?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm. Yes, it does. You know, I, it's very hard being close to, or wanting to be close to somebody who acts a certain way, with the anger. It's not an easy thing.

**Johnson:** So you end up wanting to be close.

**Scott:** No, she does, she ends up not wanting to be close.

**Johnson:** Hang on, hang on just a second, Scott. You end up wanting to be close, feeling alone, like you can't be close because somehow you feel like you have to walk through all this fire. You have to walk through, you have to risk Scott's anger to be close, and that's too hard, right? That leaves you feeling frustrated and lonely and like you can't get close to him.

**Leslie:** Yeah, well, it's not that I can't. I probably could. It's a want. The want isn't there. You know, if he, if he...

**Johnson:** It's too hard if you have to deal with anger.

**Leslie:** Right.

**Scott:** Like I said, she don't want to be there.

**Leslie:** Right, right. Because...

**Johnson:** But you hear her say she doesn't want you. I'm hearing her say she doesn't, she can't deal with the anger, right?

**Scott:** Right.

**Johnson:** The anger's sort of defeating both of you, right? It's robbing both of you of what you want.

**Scott:** Yeah. That's why I'm trying to get my anger under control.

**Johnson:** What happens for you when your wife says that she does want to be close to you? Did you hear her?

**2—39**

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Does that...

**Scott:** I think actions sort of speak louder than words.

**Johnson:** Okay, I don't know what that means. I want to know what happens...

**Scott:** Show me.

**Johnson:** So...

**Scott:** She should show me that she wants to be around me or be close to me or...

**Johnson:** Prove it? Is that what you're saying?

**Scott:** Pretty much. You know, if I wanted to...

**Johnson:** So does it touch you at all... You had started off this whole session with me by telling me, "Sue, I want this relationship. I do want this relationship." Right? "I don't want to lose this relationship to my anger and this—"

**Scott:** Right.

**Johnson:** "--pattern we get caught in." Does it touch you at all that your wife's sitting here saying that actually she feels alone and frustrated, and that she does actually want to be with you--it's just the anger that gets in the way? Does that, do you let that touch you at all, Scott?

**Scott:** I'm trying to get the anger under control. It touches me enough to try to get it under control.

**Johnson:** Do you hear her saying that...

**Leslie:** I don't think he does. It's like that all the time. He doesn't hear me.

**Scott:** I heard exactly what you said.



**Leslie:** But, you may be listening but you're not hearing it.

**Johnson:** You're telling him, "I don't think you hear me when I say that it's, that I would, if it was up to me, I would choose to be close to you. I do want to be with you. I don't think you hear me." That's what you're telling him?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Yeah. Can you tell him that again, please?

**Leslie:** I do want to be close to you, but you don't hear me saying it. And it's not you that I don't want to be with. It's the anger. So therefore, I can't. It's hard to explain, but I can't.

**Johnson:** Can you hear her?

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** Can you really hear her?

**Scott:** I think so. It went right in.

**Johnson:** Did it?

**Scott:** Yeah. Well, I'm trying to get my anger under control.

**Johnson:** I think what I'm saying is, did you, when you... Is it comforting for you? Did you let it in when... Because the basic message you're giving me, Scott, is, if I'm hearing you right, is that you don't want to lose this lady.

**Scott:** No, I don't.

**Johnson:** Right. And you're telling me, which is something pretty huge, considering, you know, especially considering we've never met before, you're telling me, "Sue, sometimes I get scared that my wife sees me as a monster." Right?

**Scott:** She sees me as a monster more, more often than not.

**Johnson:** But here, what she's sitting here... I'm hearing her say....

**Scott:** She sees my temper as a monster.

**Johnson:** Yeah. And your temper gets in the way, right, and defeats both of you. But what I'm hearing her say is that actually she does

want to be with you. It's the temper that gets in the way, and the fact that she doesn't see these softer parts of you, all these other parts of you. She just sees the person who's going to go off into a temper, right? But what she just told you is that she does want to be with you. Did you hear her?

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** And do you find that comforting?

**Scott:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** You do. What's that like to hear that?

**Scott:** It feels good.

**Johnson:** Does it?

**Scott:** Yeah. It means I've gotta work a little bit harder in getting my stuff straightened out, so.

**Johnson:** You feel more hopeful when you hear that.

**Scott:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** Because in fact it's incredibly important for you--

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** --that, that she is still fighting for the relationship and she still wants to be with you. Yeah? Because you don't want to lose her. Yeah?

**Scott:** Right. I don't want to lose her. Got too much time invested, and I still, I love her, I love the kids, and I don't want to lose it all.

**Johnson:** You don't want to lose it all to this anger, right?

**Scott:** Right. And I don't know what I'll, I don't know what I'd do if I ended up losing her because that was a, I was a monster. So.

**Johnson:** You don't want to be a monster.

**Scott:** The monster's going to check out.

**Johnson:** You don't want to... You want to learn other ways to be with your wife besides getting caught in all this anger, right? And maybe one way is to be able to talk in some of the ways that we've been

talking here, which is... There's all kinds of other parts of you besides the angry part, yeah?

**Scott:** Oh, yeah.

**Johnson:** There's the part that gets touched when she says, "I do want to be with you," yeah? I mean, I'm looking at your face right now and it feels like...

**Scott:** What?

**Leslie:** Nothing.

**Scott:** You looked at my face and what?

**Johnson:** I guess I really had the sense that it was really moving for you to hear that she does want to be with you.

**Scott:** Oh, yeah. I'm glad that she...

**Johnson:** And you get real scared that that's not going to happen. Yeah?

**Scott:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** And the more scared you get, I'd imagine, the easier it is for you to be, have a short fuse, yeah?

**Scott:** Oh, yeah.

**Johnson:** Right.

**Scott:** If she doesn't want to be around, there's no, no need to not have it.

**Leslie:** Yes, there is, because there are children that you would like to be in their lives, right?

**Scott:** Yeah.

**Leslie:** Okay, then there is a need to not have it.

**Johnson:** You really need to know that he sees that he has to change this, right? You really need to know that he's seriously going to take on not letting his anger get between the two of you, right?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm. I need to see it.

**Johnson:** You need to be reassured that he's really going to take this

on. Yeah?

**Leslie:** Yes, I do. He's told me he likes the way he is.

**Johnson:** Oh.

**Leslie:** And that he won't change the way he is and that he can't change the way he is, so that's all... He's definitely going to have to show it.

**Johnson:** Yeah. Well, what do you think about what he did just here today?

**Leslie:** Very impressive. Really. You know? So, it's a start.

## **2—45**

**Johnson:** I hear you, though, when you say, "I have to be able to see that you really do see that your anger is a problem and that it really is important, and that you are going to take it on," right? "I need to know that that's important." But in fact, what he did here today was to talk about a whole bunch of other things besides his anger, right?

**Leslie:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** Right. Right. And that was impressive for you?

**Leslie:** Yeah, I'm glad that he came and talked, really, and at least you got a little bit of his softer side out--

**Johnson:** That's important for you.

**Leslie:** --that he never shows.

**Johnson:** He never shows that softer side. You want that softer part of him, yeah?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Johnson:** Did you hear that, Scott?

**Scott:** Uh-huh. I don't know how to do it, though.

**Johnson:** You did it right here, with someone that you never met before. I'm some strange lady from Canada--you did it right here. Didn't you?

**Scott:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** But I hear that it's hard and strange for you, yeah?

**Scott:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** It's kind of strange for you to think about that she wants those softer feelings, those parts of you, right, and that this sort of big, angry part of you, which is the part of you that you were always taught was the thing, the way men should be, is actually the thing that gets in the way of her coming close. That's hard for you to hear?

**Scott:** Mm-hmm. I was brought up one way, and she was brought up another. But we don't mix in the way we were brought up.

**Johnson:** But if that's...

**Scott:** I was brought up to be the enforcer.

**Johnson:** The enforcer. Oh, wow. Okay.

**Scott:** You know. I guess that's what you'd say. You know. The...

**Johnson:** Right, I hear you.

**Scott:** I don't know.

**Johnson:** And that's... So now it must be pretty strange and hard to hear from your wife that actually she...

**Scott:** She don't want an enforcer.

**Johnson:** She doesn't want an enforcer. What she wants is a man who can turn and talk to her about his feelings and is willing to look at...

**Scott:** She wants someone to cry to her. I'm not that person to cry to her.

**Johnson:** Is that right?

**Scott:** How many times you ever seen me cry in 10 years?

**Leslie:** That's not what I'm asking for.

**Johnson:** It's hard, it would hard for you to cry, right? You wouldn't let yourself cry.

**Scott:** I don't. I refuse.

**Johnson:** Do you?

**Scott:** Yeah.

**Johnson:** That would somehow be too hard for you.

**Scott:** It's the showing of weakness.

**Johnson:** Is that right?

**Scott:** That's the way I look at it sometimes.

**Johnson:** Well, actually, my experience of you in this session is that you did talk to me about some of your softer feelings, and I didn't experience it as you being weak. I actually experienced it as you having a lot of courage. I wonder if you want to ask your wife if she's experiencing it as you being weak when you get to talk to her about your fears about how she sees you.

**Scott:** Do you see me as being weak, as a sissy?

**Leslie:** No.

**Scott:** What do you see?

**Leslie:** I see, I see you being a man. But you want to know something? When you have your anger and your temper, that's the way I see you being weak. So what you might think is cool, ain't...

**Scott:** I didn't say it was cool.

**Leslie:** No. You, you like it. But you know, that's a weak individual. Somebody who cannot control their own emotions to the effect they go and take it out on everybody else.

**Johnson:** So somehow when you see him as being taken over by his anger, then he doesn't seem strong to you, right?

**Leslie:** That's a major weakness, yes.

**Johnson:** Right. And that leaves you feeling alone and scared and unable to come close to him, right? It gets in the way. But when you see him--even though it's strange and the opposite of what he's been taught--as having the courage to talk about his softer feelings, how difficult it is for him to feel that he's not measuring up and how maybe he's scared of losing you, you see that as strong.

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm.

**Johnson:** And that pulls you closer to him, yeah?

**Leslie:** Yeah. It would, yeah.

**Johnson:** It would?

**Leslie:** It would. If the anger wasn't there. If the anger's still there, no.

**Johnson:** I know. Because that's so difficult, right--

**Scott:** But the anger...

**Johnson:** --to stand in front of that flame, but that would pull you closer to him if Scott could share those parts of himself.

**Scott:** As long as the anger was, had checked out.

**Johnson:** Well, you know, short fuses... There's a lot of feelings in a short fuse. And sometimes I think we just focus on the anger part of it because we feel more in control there. But you've talked about a lot of other things besides anger here, right now in these last few minutes, right? Maybe if you could talk about some of those things, maybe you wouldn't get so caught in the anger. And what I'm hearing... And what I'm seeing today is you can do that. It's just that it hasn't really been part of what you're used to. And what I'm hearing you say, Leslie, if I'm getting it right, is that that would pull you towards Scott, right? If he could share some of those feelings, yeah? And I see you still fighting for the relationship. I see you both fighting for the relationship, actually.

**Scott:** I hope she's fighting.

**Johnson:** You... And what I'm hearing is that you did hear for a moment that she is still fighting to be with you. And what I'm hearing from you is that some part of you knows that you have got a problem with your anger and is willing to fight your anger to be close, yeah?

**Scott:** Oh, I know I got a problem. There's no doubt in my mind about it.

**Johnson:** Right, right. So guys, I'm hearing that there's all kinds of hope for this relationship, and that you're fighting for it, and that you're, with me already here, you were doing some totally new things.

**Scott:** Yeah.

**2—50**

**Johnson:** So I want to thank you for being so open. I'm honored that you were so open with me. I think maybe we have to end, I'm getting the sense that we do, we're out of time.

**Scott:** I think they'd let them cameras just roll, just to listen.

**Johnson:** I want to thank you two, thank you for sharing so openly with me. Okay?

**Leslie:** Mm-hmm. Thank you.

**Scott:** Thank you for--

**Johnson:** You're welcome.

**Scott:** --listening.

**Johnson:** You're welcome.



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