

Complete Transcript

VICTOR YALOM: Hello, I'm Victor Yalom, and I'm here with Dr. Rebecca Jorgensen in this third volume of the series, *Emotionally Focused Therapy Step by Step*. We're going to assume that you've watched the first two volumes of the series, or if not, you're familiar with the content we've covered, which is an overview of EFT, as well as Stage 1, which is assessment and de-escalation. In this volume, we're going to cover both Stages 2 and 3.

Rebecca, can you tell us what is covered in Stages 2 and 3?

REBECCA JORGENSEN: Stage 2 is about guiding partners into a process of becoming open and responsive to each other with a new depth and understanding so they can ask for their attachment needs to be met in a way that invites their partner to come and comfort them. When this is achieved, it changes their interactional position and redefines their relationship as a safe haven and a secure base, and they are securely attached.

YALOM: Okay, so in EFT, the goal is not just to reduce conflicts or provide skills and strategies, but it's rather to really provide lasting change.

JORGENSEN: Yes, we want to create a lasting change. And we talk about change events. In Stage 2, we have two of the three change events-- the withdrawer re-engagement and the pursuer softening. The third major change event is de-escalation. That happens in Stage 1.

YALOM: So Stage 2 has three steps-- 5, 6, and 7. And I understand you go through these with each partner.

JORGENSEN: Yeah, it's a sequence of Steps 5, 6 and 7. And we go first time through beginning Step 5 with the withdrawer. And then once the withdrawer is re-engaged, we go back and start Step 5 again with the pursuer.

YALOM: All right. And we've completed Stage 1 before we get to Step 5, which is-- so you can only really begin Step 5 after the couple is de-escalated.

JORGENSEN: Yeah, the therapist ensures that the couple is de-escalated so there is enough safety for the deepening of emotions to happen. And the clients respond differently, which moves them out of Stage 1 into Stage 2.

Step 5 is the most intrapsychic aspect of the work. The therapist first helps the withdrawer develop the capacity to explore his or her inner world, risk sharing it, and learn to tolerate stronger emotions without moving into the old triggered response of emotional suppression. Step 5 is an intense engagement with one's inner world. It's not an analysis or a discussion, but the person is connecting

with parts of self and experience that have been disowned or underdeveloped.

YALOM: And it's important to start this work with the withdrawer. Why is that?

JORGENSEN: It's important to begin this deeper work with the withdrawer so that they can be present and responsive to the more pursuing partner later in the work. So there's actually a corrective emotional experience.

YALOM: Now in some cases, the pursuer is kind of burned out. You call it a burned out pursuer. So what happens then?

JORGENSEN: If we are working with a couple, and the pursuer has burned out of that position in the negative cycle and is now withdrawing, we'll begin the process with the most withdrawn partner, who by the time of de-escalation is often the original, more natural withdrawer.

YALOM: So I understand that beginning therapists often get confused and mix up Step 3 and Step 5, because they are somewhat similar. In fact, I still get a bit confused by it myself. So can you explain the difference?

JORGENSEN: Yeah. In both Step 3 and Step 5, the therapist is doing the same thing-- working to access and expand the vulnerable emotion and reprocess it and bringing in those interpersonal aspects. In Stage 2, because the couple's de-escalated, there's more safety between them. Then the depth of emotional engagement is greater.

YALOM: Okay. Then in Step 6, the therapist supports the other partner to really hear the more vulnerable experience of their partner. Is that right?

JORGENSEN: The major work with the pursuer during the withdrawer re-engagement is Step 6-- promoting acceptance. But this can be difficult for the pursuer. We're essentially asking the pursuing partner to reconstruct their reality of their partner.

So it's important to remember that the pursuing partner's response in the face of threat is to have more emotion. So we're helping the pursuer in the face of uncertainty-- this new experience that the withdrawer is sharing with them-- to feel safe enough containing their own emotion that they can accept and tune in to the more subtle emotional level of their withdrawing partner.

YALOM: It makes me think, because I know when I've worked with couples, you can often see as one partner's talking, the other partner is thinking and already preparing their counterattack. Because they have that script inside them. So what you're saying is that kind of new reality is they really need to be able to hear the-- in this case, the withdrawer-- kind of really take it in anew so they're not just going back to their old script. Is that right?

JORGENSEN: Yeah. Remembering that they have de-escalated so they've already been able to get this equilibrium of slowing down, recognizing how to pull together. But when the withdrawer starts to share newness, there is an acceptance of longing. They've longed to hear this.

So it's good news. They're happy to hear it. And the old script also gets triggered because of the newness and the uncertainty.

YALOM: So what do you do as a therapist to navigate through Step 6 to make them-- not make them, but to help them be able to hear their partner in a new way?

JORGENSEN: So we're going to really work to stay attuned with them to validate and be accepting of the pursuer's response even the reactive part of it. And if the pursuer is accepting of the newness or the part of them that accepts it, we're going to explore it and try to amplify that acceptance.

YALOM: So 5 and 6 really go together. So 5 is accessing primary and vulnerable feelings of one partner, and 6 is promoting acceptance of those feelings with the other partner.

And with Step 5, it's not like a one-time event. There's a gradation-- gradually deepening into different levels of awareness, more vulnerable feelings, right?

JORGENSEN: Yes. And it's a little bit different for withdrawers and pursuers at Step 5. The withdrawer's work is to open the self to experience and to more emotion and that there is a real gradation to that-- a deepening of that, especially in the face of the partner's acceptance. They can then move into even deeper experiencing. So that's a more gradual opening that develops as that pursuing partner is accepting.

And as they deepen and distill their emotions, they begin to reprocess their models of self-- view of self and view of other. Their insecurities-- the things that have fostered their negative experience of self-- start to shift.

The negative view says things like, it's my fault. I'm bad. I'm wrong. I'm not enough. I'm unlovable.

While the negative view of other may say something like, it's your fault. This is because of you. You're not enough in some way.

Withdrawers often lead with a negative view of self while pursuers tend to lead with a negative view of others.

YALOM: But the view of self and the view of others are interconnected, right?

JORGENSEN: That's so much the attachment frame and totally they're connected. And at this deeper level, even as the withdrawer leads with the

negative view of self, he can also express the fears and the negative view of the other, which may sound like, I can't share. My partner will be too upset. I can never please them. If I let you see me, you won't like it.

So it's always interconnected in that way. And while a pursuer in reactivity will often lead with the negative view of other-- you won't be there. I can't count on you. Their negative view of self is closely connected and often sounds like, I'm too needy. I'm too much. I'm left alone and abandoned, because I'm not that important.

YALOM: It's one of the beauty and I think the power of couple's therapy-- and this model, particularly-- is people are working on themselves in the context of the relationship. And to me that's always seemed so important.

When I'm working with individuals, I really encourage them to get into couple's therapy so often. What more powerful event can take place? You can do a lot in individual therapy. The therapist's acceptance of them is powerful, but what can be more powerful than having the most important person in your life accept these things about you?

JORGENSEN: Yes that is the power of couple therapy-- that attachment need that we have with our romantic partner. So as I discover things about myself, and you are there witnessing it and can accept it, I can start to accept my own flaws and fears. And that pulls us closer then.

YALOM: Okay, so let's start by looking at some Step 5 work with Bill and Shelley, with Bill being the withdrawer.

JORGENSEN: So here we see Bill's negative view of self, his awareness of what he's doing, and his ability to connect his emotion to early experiences with his father, and how his experiences and relationship developed his identity construction as being a constant disappointment.

MARK KAUPP: For example, where are you at? How are you feeling, just in general? Just checking in with you. We spent a lot of time with Shelly today. I want to check in with you.

BILL: Oh. I don't know how I'm feeling. I'm certainly feeling very inadequate.

KAUPP: I was going to say, this looks hard. You're feeling inadequate.

BILL: Yeah. You know, I'd like to be that person for her that she's longed for all her life.

KAUPP: You're disappointing her.

BILL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I've been a disappointment for a long time. And--

KAUPP: What's happening for you right now, Bill?

BILL: I guess I'm trying to get back into my head--

KAUPP: I can see it in your eyes.

BILL: --so I can deal with it.

KAUPP: When you touch that disappointing her--

BILL: Well, it doesn't feel good. Doesn't feel good-- never has. This goes back to me disappointing my father. You know, I mean, it's--

KAUPP: Yeah, but this is--

BILL: --my life story.

KAUPP: --your wife.

BILL: Yep.

KAUPP: Yeah. It's even bigger.

BILL: Oh, yeah.

KAUPP: That's such a hard place for you. You touch that disappointment--

BILL: It is.

KAUPP: --and how you're letting her down.

BILL: It is. And I guess on some level, I feel like I'll never measure up. I'll never meet those expectations.

KAUPP: That's awful.

BILL: Yeah, it is.

KAUPP: You'll never measure up.

BILL: So I have to either accept that and move on and do the best I can and just accept the fact that I'm never going to be that. I mean, it doesn't mean that I wouldn't continue to try.

KAUPP: Do you ever talk to her about you disappointing her? And how that affects you?

BILL: I think we've talked about it before. But it's not something that I--

KAUPP: That it doesn't feel good. It doesn't feel good for you at all. Is that right?

BILL: It doesn't feel good at all. No, it doesn't.

KAUPP: Can you turn to her right now and tell her as best as you can what

you go through when you get the message that you're disappointing her?

BILL: Yeah. I feel like it doesn't matter what I've accomplished or what I've done in my life. When you boil it down to its essence, I haven't achieved anything. It's nothing, you know? It's nothing. All the money, all the degrees, all the honors, all the--

KAUPP: Nothing matters.

BILL: Doesn't mean anything. I've been a constant disappointment. And I don't like to be. It doesn't make me feel good.

SHELLEY: You know, I don't-- but that's not what I look at. The money or degrees-- that's not the disappointment--

BILL: I'm not saying you did.

KAUPP: Can I slow you guys down for a second real quick? Because what you're sharing right now is so big and so important. It's so intimate.

I so appreciate, because you don't typically share about this. So this is really big. And you're opening up. You're letting us really see this thought that you keep so protected. You touch it, and it feels horrible when you touch it. You keep it so protected.

And you did something amazing that you typically don't ever do if you ever have ever done it. You did turn to Shelley, and you let her know. Let her see into that a little bit. You really let her see into it just a little bit-- a lot actually.

YALOM: I think this is a great example of the therapist Mark helping Bill to access and express his negative view of self in a very vulnerable, open way. And now we're going to see Mark trying to do Step 6 with Shelley. And we'll see Shelley responding to the content of what he says in a logical way. But if we as therapists sense our own internal response, which just as we watch this clip, you can really feel that she's not taking it in emotionally.

JORGENSEN: Yeah, Mark is trying to help her slow down her own response to promote acceptance of Bill's experience. So we end up getting a two-part response from Shelley-- a bit of acceptance that she can't quite stay with. And then she goes back to her old experience which has the more blaming tone.

KAUPP: I want to just check in with you really quick. How is it for you to have Bill share with you in this way, open up, and really kind of let you know and see some of the vulnerability that he experiences?

SHELLEY: I'm confused by it. I'm confused because of what you shared-- that the vulnerability was all your degrees, your successes.

KAUPP: No, hold on. Hold on. Hold on, Shelley. Hold on.

SHELLEY: Did I miss that?

KAUPP: I was just looking at the piece of not what he said, but rather how he shared-- how he shared it. I'm not really too concerned about the content of it. Is it okay that he shows you his tears?

SHELLEY: Oh, absolutely.

KAUPP: Yeah.

SHELLEY: But I'm going to--

KAUPP: Help me to understand that piece right there.

SHELLEY: --really understand this. So you understand. When Bill shared, he was afraid of losing me. That felt extremely vulnerable.

KAUPP: Yeah.

SHELLEY: I saw your sadness. But what I felt there was some mistrust actually. Because you've said to me before, well, I've made money. You know, I did well in school. And those are all kind of things, like, you should be appreciative of that. And you said, I'll just never measure up. And that's not-- I feel like we're on a different page. Because that's not--

KAUPP: Yeah, I know.

SHELLEY: I tell Bill how-- you know, I'll say to him, you know, Bill, you're so much smarter than I am. I respect--

KAUPP: So can I slow you down for a second, Shelley?

SHELLEY: Do you kind of know where I'm coming from?

KAUPP: I'm hearing that--

SHELLEY: I want you to really get that this feels a little funny to me.

KAUPP: Oh, I bet it does. I bet it does. This isn't what you typically see from Bill. He's showing something for the first time that I've seen today in all the time I've worked with you. You took a huge risk. And you opened up and you shared that piece of how you get affected so deeply when you touch that place that you've disappointed her. Boy, that really strikes deep in you.

BILL: It does.

KAUPP: It's such a hard place for you every single time you touch it. And what I'm hearing is that you keep hearing that message, whether you're saying it or not. But that's the message you keep hearing over and over and over

again.

Whether Shelley's saying that or not, that's what you keep hearing. And that's what you keep playing. And it's there constantly, and it's coming up all the time. And you're very protective of that.

BILL: Yeah.

KAUPP: And you've walled off. And so every time anything comes up near it, whether you're a part of it or not--

BILL: That's so great about what you're saying, Mark. It's what I hear. It may not be said. It may not be there. I've got radar. I've got filters.

SHELLEY: But is it about--

KAUPP: You've got experiences. Absolutely.

SHELLEY: But is it about that you aren't respected for your degrees?

BILL: No. Not at all, it has nothing to do with any of that.

KAUPP: This is what he would do to try to maintain and say, why do I have this vulnerability? I have dot, dot, dot, dot, and none of it matters. When he touches that place that all this stuff that he's done that should matter-- it all goes out the window when it comes to him getting the sense that he is disappointing you. And that's so powerful. It's such a place that feels--

BILL: You missed that piece. I mean, like I say, you can have all the money in the world and every degree there is and know everybody that's anybody and be this and be that. But you know, I love you. I've told you that. lots of times.

SHELLEY: I know that. But when you--

BILL: I only love you.

SHELLEY: But when you say you'll never be enough.

BILL: And it's hard for me to feel like I disappoint you.

SHELLEY: I just want to understand when you say, you'll never be enough, is it tied to that criteria?

BILL: No. It's that I feel I'm always going to disappoint you. I'm never going to be-- I'm never going to measure up. I'm never going to be that connected--

SHELLEY: I see.

BILL: --spiritual, perfect whatever.

SHELLEY: Do you think that's what I want?

BILL: I don't know exactly what you want.

KAUPP: That's right. That's right.

BILL: I just know that I'm not it a lot of the time-- a lot more of the time.

KAUPP: Mhm. Mhm.

BILL: But I know there have been a couple times when I--

KAUPP: But you just said again-- you just said it again. I don't feel like I'm it a lot of the time.

BILL: No. I'm not. I'm not.

KAUPP: That looks so painful when you touch that spot.

BILL: Yeah, well, it's something I'd really like to be with the person I love.

KAUPP: That's right.

BILL: And it comes out sideways with me.

KAUPP: I get that.

BILL: I get frustrated. I get angry. I get avoidant.

KAUPP: So if there's anything that can come up that could interfere with you being that perfect person for her--

BILL: Well, perfection is probably a little hard.

KAUPP: Yeah, but you watch it that close. You watch it that close and your radar is that tuned. So whether she says it or not, you're already thinking it.

So you couldn't go to her with the mistakes, the fears, the questions, the vulnerabilities. You can't go to her with those, because she's just going to see it as, okay, you're failing her. You're supposed to have the answers. You're supposed to have it together. You're not supposed to be in this place here.

BILL: Well, sometimes that's it. She doesn't always expect the answers.

KAUPP: I know it, but you expect it-- that you have the answers.

BILL: I try.

KAUPP: That's what I'm saying.

BILL: Sometimes it isn't even an answer, Mark. It's just a way of being. It's just saying the right thing.

KAUPP: That's exactly right.

BILL: But I manage to screw that up all the time, too. I'm really good at that. I'm really good at it. I leave a word out, or I don't say it with the right inflection. I mean, that's just how I feel.

KAUPP: And it sends you to this place right here.

BILL: Well, no, very rarely. Very rarely does it send me here.

SHELLEY: No, he tells--he criticizes me.

BILL: I go right to my head.

SHELLEY: Yeah.

KAUPP: But this is what's going on in your stomach, and this is what's going on in your body.

SHELLEY: Right.

KAUPP: This is what's going inside you--

BILL: If I let it go there. That's why I skip over these things so quickly.

KAUPP: If you allow yourself to experience it-- it's going. You just learned to not pay attention to it. Oh, it's there, and it's running the show. Absolutely. And so it makes perfect sense, Shelley, that you're going, what is this? I don't know quite what to respond to this. I don't what-- it's confusing. Is it about this? Is it about that? Absolutely. Because this is a place that still needs some unpacking and some understanding and some empathy and some space. Yeah.

YALOM: Now we're going to look at some clips which include more of Step 6. So what should we be looking for here as we watch these?

JORGENSEN: You'll see two different ways of doing Step 6 with two different partners.

YALOM: Okay, so the first example is with Steven and Cassandra. And you're the therapist here.

JORGENSEN: So we'll notice how slow it is working with Steven because of his over-intellectualization and his defensiveness. We can also notice that Cassandra can stay present and open to Steven's process. His exploring calms her down, and I don't have to work to contain her. She is accepting of him, and what I do is expand her acceptance of Steven.

What do you see, Steven? What do you see when you look at her now?

STEVEN: Right now, you mean?

JORGENSEN: Mhm.

STEVEN: Like in the moment? Well, I just see just a beautiful, young woman that's amazing and dynamic and just brilliant and really funny-- was, like, literally one of the nicest people I ever met in the whole world.

JORGENSEN: Sounds like your heart starts to swell.

STEVEN: Yeah, no, I get happy that I've known her the way I've gotten to know her.

JORGENSEN: And how does that feel on the inside when you look at her and you connect all those appreciations that you have about her?

STEVEN: I'm happy that she's here and I'm happy that she's healthy and stuff like that.

JORGENSEN: What happens to that spot in your stomach where your air is kind of knocked out of you?

STEVEN: Oh, it's still like that.

JORGENSEN: Yeah. So here she is, right here where you want her so close to you. And you admire her and you feel so much gratitude and still a sense like I'm not sure if she really wants me.

STEVEN: No, it's more like-- no. It's more selfish than that. It's more a-- I mean, right now anyway, it's selfish. It's, like, I don't have her the way I want her. It's more that.

JORGENSEN: I don't have her the way I want her. I don't have her the way I want her and the way that she would really be with me, reassuring me. She would just move towards me so naturally. I don't have her the way I want her? Help me with that.

STEVEN: Yeah, I don't have her the way I want her.

JORGENSEN: That feels kind of selfish in some way.

STEVEN: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: So that bad feeling-- that kind of having your air knocked out of you-- on one hand, I kind of feel like it comes from you guys being disconnected. But it's also really connected somehow to this feeling, like, you're selfish. Or it's about something you want. Help me.

STEVEN: No. No. It's more like I don't have the connection that I want from her.

JORGENSEN: Right.

STEVEN: So I was thinking-- I was just thinking more of myself, so that selfishly I was just thinking internally.

JORGENSEN: When I'm really aware of who she is and how wonderful she is and how much gratitude I have for her, I'm also aware of I really want more of

her. I really want her with me. And it kind of aches if we're still disconnected. It aches to be unsure about how we are.

STEVEN: It's the feeling that you get when there's a really good love song. You know those really good love songs?

JORGENSEN: Painful.

STEVEN: Yeah, you know, like the teenage angst. You're just, like, oh, you had it. It's right there, but you can't have it. It's that.

JORGENSEN: Like you're everything I want right here, and it feels kind of untouchable.

STEVEN: But I don't get you. Why don't I get you like I used to get you? Why? Why? It's that same kind of feeling.

JORGENSEN: Right. How did I end up here? Why are we disconnected? I'm so lonely and alone. And what I need would be you loving me again. That would take that away.

STEVEN: So easy.

JORGENSEN: Like I'd just be putty in your hands. I just want-- I love and admire you so much.

STEVEN: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: Can you help her know it's that disconnection that you're describing from her that leaves you with that pain, really? That angst, that pain that knocks you out, leaves you under water? Because she is-- you just want her so close, right?

STEVEN: Yeah. I want you. Not getting you and not having you is the way that I want and I envision the way I've had you is really hard. It's painful. It hurts.

JORGENSEN: How was that right now to share that with her and to see her respond with that? Her tears coming up?

STEVEN: I don't know. I don't know yet.

JORGENSEN: You don't know, because you don't know how she is responding when you put yourself out there. It's a little bit like in that pattern. You put yourself out there and you don't know. Is it moving her closer to me or not?

STEVEN: I'm kind of used to that.

JORGENSEN: It's kind of scary.

STEVEN: Well, I'm used to that space, too.

JORGENSEN: You're used to that space. It's not a space you like.

STEVEN: I mean, I'd rather know but--

JORGENSEN: Right. I'd rather know, but I'm used to putting myself on hold.

STEVEN: Yeah. Well, and I'm used to knowing, too.

JORGENSEN: So I can be there. I can be there, but it doesn't relieve-- it doesn't give me the relief that I'm really hoping for. The pain that's there. If I'm not knowing, there's not that reassurance there that I'm really hoping for.

STEVEN: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: Something like that? So what was that happening for you when he shared with you how much it hurts him? How much he really wants the closeness with you, too? How much he loves you?

CASSANDRA: It felt good to hear. Felt good to hear.

JORGENSEN: Sometimes you're not sure about it, so it's reassuring. It helps you to hear.

CASSANDRA: Yes. It was nice.

JORGENSEN: You believe it. There's no hesitation right now.

CASSANDRA: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: You can accept that.

CASSANDRA: I believed it.

JORGENSEN: And what happens inside for you when you believe it and you know how much you're loved and wanted and how painful it is for him to feel rejected by you?

CASSANDRA: I mean, it just made me-- yeah, it made me tear up a little. But it's more good tears, I guess?

JORGENSEN: Good tears to know. And when you see his face right now, what do you see on him?

CASSANDRA: I see that he loves me, that he's being sincere.

JORGENSEN: You see the sincerity, the warmth.

CASSANDRA: Yeah. Looked like some sadness there for a moment, actually, too. I don't know what you were feeling, but it looked sad as well as you were waiting.

STEVEN: No. More like gratitude.

JORGENSEN: More like gratitude. Tears of gratitude. And you were reading that. That's what you were feeling-- the warmth and the love.

CASSANDRA: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: Yeah.

YALOM: The next clip focuses on Step 6 with our pursuer, Sandra, who is not quite as accepting as Cassandra. Carl has just done some Step 5 work and he's shown some real vulnerability.

JORGENSEN: Often people mistake effusive, positive emotion for acceptance. In this case, her positive emotions are not acceptance. They're not the same as, I get you. I take in your experience.

So you will see me actively working with her not to explore her fears but to validate her fears and then continue to go for the little part that can accept Carl's feelings and amplify and promote it until she can make vulnerable contact with him, which pulls him closer. There is enough safety that both are shifting views of self and other as they feel connected.

In that little moment, when he reached out and took your hand while he was sharing his sadness, that what comes into you is, oh, yay. We're on an adventure. We're creating something new. You're letting me see your heart, and I'm in. It excites me to see you. Can you share that with him? Sandra, can you tell him that in your own words?

SANDRA: I'm not too good at this part.

CARL: I mean, I get it.

JORGENSEN: I think it's important for her to find the words.

SANDRA: You are a brilliant person. You're a wonderful writer. You're kind and sweet, and you're just a beautiful person. And I-- you know, it hurts me when I was seeing you tiptoeing around and everything. Because I would think, that's not Carl. That's a foreigner in here. So I'm really glad-- I would love to see you come on your own. Stamp your foot down and say, off to Alaska.

CARL: Yeah.

SANDRA: It makes me happy.

CARL: I get it.

SANDRA: You won't be holding yourself back. You're so capable of so much.

JORGENSEN: So what do you feel inside, Sandra? It's, like, I see you. You're not a foreigner. I can go on adventures with you, because I feel safe. I'm excited. Is that what you're saying?

SANDRA: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: It's hard for you to say. You said, this part is hard for me. I don't know I do this well. Help me with that.

SANDRA: I don't know what-- how to tell those kind of feelings, I guess. I don't know how to express that.

CARL: In a way, you just did. I mean--

JORGENSEN: So she's learning. This is something new to create. Right? So you don't--

SANDRA: Oh, I think it all goes back to the part, uh oh, I better be careful. Because if I let him know how I really feel, he's going to hurt me.

JORGENSEN: It brings a bit of a danger signal.

SANDRA: That first marriage, way back. Yeah.

JORGENSEN: If I let him know I love seeing him--

SANDRA: Yeah, right.

JORGENSEN: --and I feel safe--

SANDRA: He's going to turn into a meanie and hurt me.

JORGENSEN: It's a bit of a risk for me.

SANDRA: But that isn't fact. That's just--

JORGENSEN: It's just another piece that happens.

SANDRA: --trapped in the back.

JORGENSEN: It's another emotion that comes up.

SANDRA: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: One emotion says, cool. I'm excited we're on a journey. And right with that emotion comes--

SANDRA: I have to be careful.

JORGENSEN: --danger. Danger.

CARL: It's a danger adventure.

SANDRA: No. They call it the other shoe dropping.

JORGENSEN: That's right.

SANDRA: When is the other shoe gonna drop?

JORGENSEN: How do I stay in gratitude about this moment? Because the past can come in and take me away and bring in danger. And that's, of course, right? That's normal. When you're creating something new, it's risky. Right? It's risky. And so it feels a little bit dangerous. And you come from places that you have good reason to have a danger signal.

CARL: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: Yeah?

CARL: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: You have a good reason to have a danger signal.

CARL: Oh, yeah.

JORGENSEN: You both have good reasons to have danger signals. But you're saying the bigger part of your heart-- and why you don't know how to express it-- is you feel encouraged and relieved and loved, really. I'm hearing admiration. You see all of these things about Carl that you cherish. And you don't quite know how to share it because it brings with it this little sense of, I feel vulnerable and I feel this much warmth towards you. It feels a little scary. It's new.

SANDRA: Part of it also has to do with the upbringing, you know? How the British are-- very staunch.

JORGENSEN: We're not used to--

SANDRA: We never share our feelings.

JORGENSEN: Right.

SANDRA: And that's how I was brought up. My mother was from Scotland. You know, you don't share your feelings.

JORGENSEN: Right.

SANDRA: So that's part of it. I've never been a big expressor of feelings.

JORGENSEN: Right. It's a new feeling to have, but it's also just out of my repertoire. I'm not sure that I do it well or right, because it's a new thing to share. So you're sharing something really new with Carl from inside of you. Right? "Carl, I feel this-- I don't know what the word is-- tenderness, excitement, and awkwardness. Because I don't really-- I'm not really confident in expressing these feelings towards you." Yeah? Can you help him with that?

What it feels like inside-- like you have a couple of different emotions going on that you're not used to talking about.

SANDRA: I'm really-- like I said-- it would be really nice if this all works out.

CARL: I know.

SANDRA: Cause we could have fun. We'd have fun. We have similar values and all that.

CARL: Yeah.

SANDRA: And I know you've always told me you're not going to hurt me. I don't know if words-- the whatever-- the dark side will always sort of reject the words. Yeah, sure. You know. So anyway I'm tired of having the dark side occupy a lot of my time. I want to get back into the light. And I think if we work on this together, we can both be in the light.

CARL: Yeah. I'd agree.

JORGENSEN: It brings up all this longing for you, Sandra, doesn't it? To be out of the dark? It's hard to talk about these feelings of admiration and feeling connected and seeing him-- how that moves you. That's hard to talk about it. But it brings up this longing about being together, being in the light together.

SANDRA: Yeah. Yeah.

YALOM: So we're now going to look at a sequence of clips that demonstrate Steps 5 and 6 with Carl and Sandra. And it shows the gradual development of Sandra's acceptance of Carl's re-engaged position.

JORGENSEN: In the case of Carl and Sandra, once they're de-escalated, Carl is open and emotionally accessible and assertive. So most of Step 5 with him is to help him stay present when Sandra has difficult time trusting his presence.

So I focus on Step 6 with Sandra promoting her acceptance of his new position. There is a lot more Step 6 work with this couple than there is Step 5 work. Because Sandra's feelings are taking a lot of space, I worked to contain her reactive part, amplifying her feelings of relatedness and see if she can reply with acceptance. She works hard to do it even though it's really unnatural to her.

YALOM: Okay. So let's see an example of this.

JORGENSEN: That actually kind of feeds into it, though, Carl, doesn't it-- that sense of when I'm stressed and anxious, my behavior historically has failed. I haven't known how to handle my anxiety or my stress. There's ways

that-- coming from that background where I wasn't seen or appreciated, where I was never enough-- that I've had to kind of emotionally try to shut down or go away from the distress. Because it was so painful. It was so painful. Right? To want to be seen and be enough and not ever have it be enough.

CARL: Right.

JORGENSEN: Yeah? Can you help Sandra understand that? Because she sees you as strong and capable and doesn't really see this hurt part that you've carried around that says, I'm afraid I'm never enough.

CARL: Yeah, I think that we've talked about that. That's always in the back of my mind, and particularly in my--

JORGENSEN: In close relationships.

CARL: --with close relationships, particularly with you.

JORGENSEN: With her. When you want to get it with her, right.

CARL: I want to get it right, you know. I want to be your-- I want to support you. And I want to-- I want to be your companion. But--

JORGENSEN: So I'm already feeling shaky.

CARL: I really want it to be right. It's just I'm not-- I still feel, you know, that sometimes that I'm going to fail at it. And that's, you know, that's discouraging sometimes.

JORGENSEN: It's discouraging. It's kind of scary. It leaves you feeling kind of weak and vulnerable.

CARL: Yeah, it does leave me feel weak and vulnerable and like I'm not doing you any favors. And that's--

JORGENSEN: Right. If you have this kind of-- I'm thinking of the Jaws movie, you know that shark? The shark music? Dun, dun, dun, dun.

CARL: Dun, dun, dun, dun, dun, dun, dun, dun.

JORGENSEN: Like you have that feeling already-- yeah, that's it.

CARL: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: You had that feeling already, like I could just fail you. I'm feeling kind of weak. I want it so much.

CARL: Right.

JORGENSEN: What if I fail when I've really wanted and needed to be seen

and like the only-- I could just perform and try to get it right. It was never, ever enough.

CARL: Right.

JORGENSEN: What if it's not enough for you?

CARL: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: Right?

CARL: Right.

JORGENSEN: That's scary then. That's painful. That's that emotional painful spot, Carl.

CARL: I don't want to be the next person in your life who lets you down.

JORGENSEN: Right. I want to be there for you. I want to make it with you.

CARL: It's hard sometimes.

JORGENSEN: Yeah.

CARL: Don't always know how to do that.

JORGENSEN: He doesn't-- you don't always know how to do it.

CARL: Right.

JORGENSEN: How is it that he so wants to? Like, that he really wants to be your companion and kind of have you guys beat this negative pattern, right, of both of your history where you don't know how to-- where it hasn't been safe to kind of rely on someone or be seen in some sort of a way. Be seen as enough, right? How is that for you that you inspire him that way?

SANDRA: Well, I'm always jumping ahead to try and find a solution. I'm not going to ask him to do these things.

JORGENSEN: That's so great that you noticed that. Right? It's great that you notice. Like it feels a little dangerous, so I'm going to go solve the problem.

SANDRA: Right.

JORGENSEN: Right? Like, emotionally it feels a little dangerous to hear this from him or to know how much I matter to him.

SANDRA: Right. And I don't want him to be hurting and feeling frustrated and less than. Because I know what that feels like-- to feel less than and not enough and never doing it right. You did it this way. You should have done it that way.

JORGENSEN: Right.

SANDRA: I know how that feels.

JORGENSEN: You know what it's like to beat yourself up.

SANDRA: And I don't want him to feel that. So I'm thinking--

JORGENSEN: So let's go. Because you don't want him to feel that, so you want to try to solve the problem.

SANDRA: Yeah, right.

JORGENSEN: Because it's awful. And yet you also know that you felt that at times.

SANDRA: Oh, yeah.

JORGENSEN: And it's a natural thing to feel where you've come from. Right? It's a natural fear to face where you've come from.

SANDRA: Because if I hadn't felt that, I wouldn't recognize it or understand it at all in him.

JORGENSEN: That's right.

SANDRA: It would be like a foreign language. But I know what that is.

JORGENSEN: So what is it like?

SANDRA: And I don't want him to have--

JORGENSEN: And you know that it's a hard feeling to share. Right?

SANDRA: With somebody else?

JORGENSEN: With someone. You know it's a hard-- it's risky to open it up-- to share it.

SANDRA: Yeah, right.

JORGENSEN: So how is it for you that he regards you enough that he's letting you see inside of his heart this vulnerable place that he carries?

SANDRA: [INAUDIBLE]

JORGENSEN: Because you know that place-- how hard it is to share it, right? How is that for you that he does-- he can get caught feeling that way? You know that feeling, too.

SANDRA: It makes me feel bad because I don't want him to feel-- I don't want to be the cause of him feeling those things.

JORGENSEN: Right. You don't want to be the cause of that. So part of you really understands the feeling of not getting it right--

SANDRA: Oh, I know what that feels like.

JORGENSEN: --and being afraid if you're enough. Yes. You can appreciate that he's sharing it with you, because my one guess is that it helps you feel a little safer in some ways, like you can relate to each other. Right? It's connected. You can relate.

And then another part of you starts to feel bad, like I don't want to cause that. I don't want to cause that in him. I don't want him-- I don't want to do things that if I'm triggered make him feel worse. Yeah? Right.

So can you talk to him about the part of him-- about the part that understands and looks at him and feels connected? Because you know what it feels like to feel bad and not enough. Can you share? Because I think you can accept he has those feelings, because you have those feelings, too.

SANDRA: Oh, gosh, yeah. I totally know how-- I mean, you can't totally know how somebody else is feeling because you're not inside them.

CARL: Right.

JORGENSEN: But you're taking the feeling in, actually.

SANDRA: But I know what it feels-- I understand those feelings. I've had-- I battle those feelings. I try and do things so I don't get those feelings-- so I don't have that problem anymore. That's why I went off sailing alone in the Pacific so I could tell myself, look, you're good enough. You can do stuff right. You've got it.

It was like an empowering thing. I strive to keep doing things so that I feel good about myself instead of bad about myself. So that's why I feel sorry that I'm causing you to feel bad about yourself when you are-- I think you're on the path where you want to-- you know, it says in our program, happy, joyous, and free.

CARL: That's right. Searching the path of happy destiny.

JORGENSEN: So you can relate to him. And you can also relate to him that when I feel those feelings, that's when I went off to the boat. And actually I think you did that in a little mini way. You went off to the yogurt. Right?

CARL: I went off to the yogurt. Yeah. My little sustenance, my little--

JORGENSEN: I'll get a little comfort. Get away from this scary feeling. I don't want to make it worse by approaching her. And I'm feeling a little shaky already. So you can understand that.

YALOM: So as we see when the withdrawer re-engages, the pursuer's

perceptions shift.

JORGENSEN: Yes, now that Sandra sees Carl as capable now that he's there and present, and as these changes happen, the therapist really needs to amplify them.

YALOM: Okay. So let's take a look at that.

JORGENSEN: Where do you feel that when there's a sense like I'm not alone in the world here? We're partnering. We're creating something new together.

SANDRA: Well, you know how images-- I'm a graphic person, so images come instantly.

JORGENSEN: I love your images.

SANDRA: So this is what I saw just now when you were asking me that. I saw myself younger in a sinkhole, like in a quicksand situation, desperately trying to get out of the sinkhole but going more down. Oh, no. I'm not going to ever get out of here. And then this arm comes out and reaches up.

JORGENSEN: Oh, Sandra. That's a very deep expression of relief and gratitude. That's Carl there with you.

CARL: I'm here.

SANDRA: He must've been doing his exercises because he's real strong.

JORGENSEN: That emotional connection means so much to you-- that you guys are creating something new together and you're not alone, feeling like you're sinking, like you're drowning.

CARL: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: So that's a big relief along with gratefulness. Like you can relax. Ah, I'm out of the hole. I'm on the side and your arm's around me.

SANDRA: I don't see me out of the hole quite yet.

JORGENSEN: Not quite out of the hole.

SANDRA: No, I just see the long arm pulling me. Yeah, I'm not--

JORGENSEN: The arm's there.

SANDRA: Knowing, oh good, I'm not going to go down more.

JORGENSEN: I'm at least not being sucked down.

SANDRA: Yeah, right.

JORGENSEN: I'm not out but at least I'm stable.

SANDRA: Right.

JORGENSEN: Right. Could you share that with Carl, Sandra, how it's scary? It's scary but to feel his arm-- his presence with you, his arm around you-- helps you at least not be drowning, not being sucked down further.

SANDRA: I don't know how to tell you that stuff.

CARL: Well, I know.

JORGENSEN: So maybe we just talk about that part, Sandra.

CARL: It's okay.

JORGENSEN: That's new to be able to even have someone there with their arm around you while you're in the hole. So of course you wouldn't know how, right? Of course you wouldn't have the words for that. Because it's so new to even let someone know you were in the hole and then to have them--

SANDRA: Sshh. Don't tell Carl.

JORGENSEN: --to have their arm around you. Right? That's so new, isn't it?

CARL: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: It's new, what you're going, to let him in to that spot.

SANDRA: Yeah. Whether you want to be in the sand or not.

CARL: Yeah.

SANDRA: We did like Lawrence of Arabia.

CARL: That's true. This is true.

JORGENSEN: So there's a part of you that's kind of recognizing that it's holding you up, right? His presence there is with you. And even if he doesn't like being in the sand, here you are. Right? That's part of the gratitude. You may not even like sand, but--

SANDRA: Yeah, right.

JORGENSEN: --you like me. And so you're here because I need you.

SANDRA: Yeah, because he could have walked off. When he saw me going into the hole, he could've just walked off.

JORGENSEN: Right. That was your worst fear.

SANDRA: In fact, I would have said, get out of here. I don't need your help.

JORGENSEN: The old emotion. The old you emotionally would have done that. And in quite a few ways, when you guys were caught in those negative

places together, that's what you would do-- is you would send him off, right?

YALOM: And now finally towards the ends of Step 5 and 6, we see Sandra being a lot more accepting.

JORGENSEN: Sandra is now the most accepting she has ever been. Carl is talking more about his vulnerable feelings. He's helping her understand what goes on inside of him. And as she accepts his feelings, it challenges her negative view of self and re-establishes a positive view of other.

All right. Because you want her to know that she is important. And you know he's important, too. But you both get afraid. Can I be enough? Can I get it right? Yeah?

CARL: You just need to know it's important that you are important to me.

SANDRA: You're important to me, too, Carl, even though that's really hard for me to say. I didn't say that at all.

CARL: I know. I know. I know it is. I know it's hard.

JORGENSEN: Because you see her face light up. Right? You know how you make her light up.

CARL: Yeah. Well, she does with me, too.

JORGENSEN: You're the one she lights up for, right?

CARL: Yeah. It's wonderful.

JORGENSEN: It's wonderful.

CARL: I still think it's a wonderful relationship. I still think you're the best thing that could have happened to me. And I've said that to you.

JORGENSEN: You guys are creating a new path that you've never been able to create--

SANDRA: See, that scares me, because I might-- see, it's the same thing. That scares me, because oh, God. What if I disappoint him? Oh no, I'm going to have to be on my best behavior and put both of my bridges in and wear bras.

JORGENSEN: You know what's so cool right now? It's that you're both able to talk about your fears instead of just acting on them in a triggered way. You're sharing what they are so you can help each other with them. Right?

CARL: Yeah. Those are the things we have to work on. I have to, too.

SANDRA: I don't know how to work on them, though. I don't know--

JORGENSEN: I'll help you with that part.

SANDRA: Oh, okay.

CARL: Good.

JORGENSEN: Because you're creating something new. And it's new and different. And so what you're doing here is really important because you've never had anyone be emotionally present with you and saying, you really matter to me. And I get afraid because I don't want to disappoint you.

CARL: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: Right? That's brand new for you to hear.

SANDRA: Yeah, it is.

JORGENSEN: That's brand new.

SANDRA: It isn't brand new to hear that. It's brand new to open a little hole--

JORGENSEN: To feel it.

SANDRA: --here to let it in and say, gee, maybe that's true.

JORGENSEN: Maybe it's true.

SANDRA: Maybe he really means that.

JORGENSEN: Right.

SANDRA: Oh no, close down. It's not true. He's lying. He wants something.

JORGENSEN: Right.

CARL: No.

JORGENSEN: That's right. It's really new that you can open up your heart, because he matters so much to you that you're risking opening up your heart to let it in. Maybe it's true. You really can create something new together.

SANDRA: Do you think we can?

CARL: I think so. I really do genuinely think so.

JORGENSEN: I think you guys are already doing it.

CARL: Yeah, I do. I really do because we've been able to talk about so many new things.

SANDRA: It's fearful.

JORGENSEN: It's fearful. Of course it's fearful.

SANDRA: Because then it means I don't have to be that strong person a lot.

JORGENSEN: That's right.

SANDRA: It's [INAUDIBLE] but it's scary.

JORGENSEN: It is scary.

SANDRA: I feel like I'm a little kid now and I'm allowed to cry.

JORGENSEN: Yes, it's such a relief. It's such a relief if you let that in that you don't have to be alone. Yeah.

SANDRA: I don't always have to be the warrior.

JORGENSEN: I don't have to be the warrior --

SANDRA: I don't always have to have the sword sharp.

JORGENSEN: --all by myself. Right.

CARL: I know. I know. You really don't, Sandra.

JORGENSEN: Right. It's amazing when he stays right with you and says, I'm here. I do need you. You're important. And you let it in a little bit and it's like, wow, really? I'm not alone? That's so scary. I can let down my guard? Really? I can do that? A little bit at a time. Right? A little bit at a time. And how is it for you? When she opens her heart, she sees a little hope there for this.

CARL: I know how emotionally hard that is, because I know how hard it is for me to say--

JORGENSEN: I'm scared.

CARL: --certain things to you. But that's amazing. I really think that-- if you can realize how much I want to be there for you, that may help some. I don't know.

SANDRA: You have to be there for yourself, too, though.

CARL: I understand that. I understand that, but I've got-- I do that fairly well when I'm not fighting too many demons and dragons. Okay?

JORGENSEN: You're kind of doing it right now, right? You're putting your heart out there right now.

CARL: I'm saying to you--

JORGENSEN: You're saying, this is me.

CARL: Yeah. I do care. I want to support you. I want to be what you can trust.

JORGENSEN: And part of what you did today towards that was you said, when I get afraid, I feel weak and afraid. I know I go eat yogurt. Right? And you can relate to that.

CARL: Or cookies. One or the other.

JORGENSEN: Right? I may get away from the task, because I'm so afraid I'm going to get it wrong. And so don't see me not as wanting to be there for you. Know that I've wanted for you to see that it's been hard for me, because I could really get wiped out in those moments.

CARL: I really can. It is hard.

JORGENSEN: But he's standing up right now to let you know that. It takes a lot of strength for him to do that. Just like it takes a lot of strength for you to open that heart and let it in.

CARL: That is amazing, because I know how hard that is for you. I mean, I know you that well at least. And I know that's a tough process. Because I know how deep my feelings of going back to childhood-- you don't get over those inadequacies easily or the rejection or not feeling loved enough. I know. I get that.

JORGENSEN: You both can relate to that.

CARL: I really get that. Because I hadn't thought about it for years, but since we've talked about it in here, I get it. I just didn't realize how much of that crap I was still carrying around. And it's not going to go away. It just isn't going to go away.

JORGENSEN: How does it feel in your heart right now? How does it feel in your heart right now?

CARL: I feel much warmer in my heart. You know, I know you love me. I love you. It's just we don't always express it in the best ways perhaps to each other. But I know it's there. And I feel like you've let me in some. That's really a major thing to me.

YALOM: This sequence of segments with Carl and Sandra which we just saw-- they're a really moving and very visible example of how couples get stuck, how their deep fears usually from wounds which preceded their relationship prevent them from being open and vulnerable and being able to give and receive the love they have for each other, and how with the help of a skilled therapist-- in this case, you, Rebecca-- that they can work through these blocks and start to re-experience the love that brought them together in the first place. So nice work. Kudos to you and to them. We see the hard work they did to move through those steps.

Okay, so now we're going to move on to Step 5 with the pursuer. How is that different from Step 5 with the withdrawer?

JORGENSEN: Typically, pursuers' emotions expand into reactivity. Or they'll start to get emotionally flooded. When either of those happen, you need to

help them regulate and establish an engaged working distance with their affect.

YALOM: What does that mean-- an engaged working distance?

JORGENSEN: That they can feel and describe what they're feeling while they're feeling it without being either too much flooded or so much that they get reactive and move away from it.

YALOM: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: So the example we're going to see is a little atypical. It's hard for Shelley to stay in her vulnerability. So she goes cognitive. She guards her sadness and she flips back into blaming.

KAUPP: You just keep getting this message from everyone around you--

SHELLEY: That it's not okay to just not be okay.

KAUPP: It's not okay to not be okay. So you have to have it all together, wrapped up, not be affected too much by things, be able to deal with it, present things in well-organized ways.

SHELLEY: Mhm.

KAUPP: Yeah. Don't freak anybody out.

SHELLEY: Keep it to yourself--

KAUPP: Keep it to yourself.

SHELLEY: --until it's too much. And then I'm told when I do bring it up, it's too much.

PALMER-OLSEN: Just reinforces when you don't reach out.

SHELLEY: And think of all the times that I haven't made a big deal of stuff because I know it will cause ruffles. I mean, just ruffles and petty little nit picking and arguments.

PALMER-OLSEN: And what I'm hearing, Shelley, is in that place where you kind of keep it to yourself, it's like you've gone real quickly past the devastation that you start to feel especially if Bill's kind of pulling away from you. You go past that. And mostly you keep that to yourself because it's predictable in your mind. Like, he's not going to show up there and be with you in that devastation. You've gotten the message, right, historically that--

KAUPP: Nobody will.

PALMER-OLSEN: --nobody is going to be there. Right? And that to me feels like another kind of level where you end up going and you can turn it on

yourself. Right? Are those things-- those messages I've been getting all along-- is that true?

SHELLEY: Or how about is there such a thing as somebody that--

PALMER-OLSEN: Comforting me.

SHELLEY: --can be comforting?

PALMER-OLSEN: Yeah.

SHELLEY: Is there such a person?

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

SHELLEY: Maybe I'm Cinderella living in a fantasy that I'm expecting too much.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

SHELLEY: And people--

KAUPP: It's like you are too much.

SHELLEY: Yeah.

KAUPP: You are too much. That's the message you keep getting.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

KAUPP: Your emotions are too much.

SHELLEY: And Bill has even said to me--

KAUPP: You're too sensitive.

SHELLEY: --yeah, has even said to me, you know, I don't want to go there. You know? Because then it will consume me and I don't think that your emotions are always--

KAUPP: Just one more message.

SHELLEY: --in your best interest or our best interest. And so it's just one more message.

KAUPP: So there's something wrong with you feeling the way that you are. It's too much. You're too much. You shouldn't be feeling that.

SHELLEY: And then it turns into anger over time because I think, oh my god. I'm not a needy woman. I'm not bothering you. I'm alone all day long. And then if something upsets me, you're telling me, it's too much?

KAUPP: Absolutely.

SHELLEY: You know? And some of this stuff is, in my opinion, ridiculous.

Absolutely, insane, ridiculous.

KAUPP: I'm feeling so sad, though, when I hear this.

SHELLEY: I know.

KAUPP: It's like--

SHELLEY: I know.

KAUPP: When I ask you if anybody ever-- nope. Nobody's ever stayed and been with you when you've been in that devastation. You've always been abandoned. You've always been given the message that it's too much. You're too much. Your feelings are too much.

SHELLEY: The worst thing that happened was when my son came down with type 1 diabetes and was raised to the ICU. And I flew back east. And Bill said he'd come the next day. And then he was a complete jerk to me and wouldn't come and blamed me for not coming. Because he said he wanted me to call this accountant who had a son with diabetes-- that he'd be fine. And I said, I'm too overwhelmed. I'm in the hospital with him-- the learning curve.

"When are you coming?" "I'm not coming." And then he was angry at me because I didn't want to call this other person and get fixed by this other person. Okay, that was a long time ago.

KAUPP: But the message is the same.

SHELLEY: But I want you to know what my experience was. I called my therapist at the time. I had my son up-- got him out of the hospital after a few days and had him up at a medical center. The closest one to where his college was was an hour and a half drive in Springfield, Massachusetts. And he went up to meet with the endocrinologist there to start learning how to give himself injections. And I called my therapist and I sobbed. I just was sobbing.

KAUPP: Absolutely.

SHELLEY: My son got out of the appointment, didn't know where I was, called me on the phone. I was obviously crying. And I said, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I went outside to make the phone call. And he got so mad at me and said, well, if you can't handle this-- because I was crying-- I'll call my dad. So you know, this is-- I was devastated. And Bill never did come for 10 days. And when he showed up at the airport, it was, oh, it's nice to see you. And we'll get reacquainted. And he'd been out with other people-- it was--

KAUPP: Always this message.

SHELLEY: --horrible.

KAUPP: But it's this message from everywhere that your emotions are too much.

SHELLEY: And I need to be very strong. And if I'm just--

PALMER-OLSEN: Unraveling.

SHELLEY: --sad or unraveling, you know--

PALMER-OLSEN: Keep it to yourself. It's too much.

KAUPP: I couldn't possibly turn to--

SHELLEY: My kids have learned that.

KAUPP: --somebody with this devastation. I can't possibly turn to somebody with all this fear, all this pain that I'm experiencing, and have them be okay with it and loving and accepting of it and empathetic. No. Not a chance. The message that I've always got is, tone it down. Don't be too much. Organize it. Don't overwhelm.

SHELLEY: Get it together.

KAUPP: Get it together. Get it together. That's right.

That's the message.

SHELLEY: You worry about everything. That's what Bill says to shut me up.

PALMER-OLSEN: Let's let Bill pause that or turn the ringer off.

SHELLEY: And there's just so much irritability and agitation and snappiness.

PALMER-OLSEN: Can I ask you something real quick? Because I know we-- I just want to check in. As you were hearing Mark kind of echo what your experience has been like, I saw something kind of happening for you. And I don't want to just pass by that. So could you help put some words to that-- what you were experiencing as he was kind of walking into what it's been like for you to not have anybody see you in that place?

SHELLEY: Well, it's really sad.

PALMER-OLSEN: Yeah.

SHELLEY: I don't know how else to-- it's so sad to think that I'm 62 and I've raised two really nice kids who are kindhearted, good kids. And even they don't want to see anything too much below the surface.

YALOM: So let's continue to watch Shelley with a deeper Step 5 in a later session.

JORGENSEN: Shelley is starting to link her unmet needs with her fear. When

she's alone in the pit, she's starting to realize how much she needs him. But notice how strong her negative view of others still is and how challenged she is at accepting Bill's understanding and his response to her fear.

Step 6 with Bill is fairly easy as he's engaged, so it's not necessary to promote acceptance. He's understanding and able to put her blame aside and understand the fear that's driving her. Shelley has a hard time accepting Bill's Step 6 response as you can see in the fidgeting that she does.

KAUPP: You also need for him to be able to see you open enough to be able to see what's happening for you--

SHELLEY: Yes.

KAUPP: --and to be there. And it looks like that confidence that you have in being able to just stop in those moments and say, Bill, I'm getting scared. You seem so far away. I need for you to come because I'm getting scared.

SHELLEY: So when--

KAUPP: Come and be with me.

SHELLEY: I say that, and he says, so what do you mean?

KAUPP: Mhm. Yeah. I get that. I get that.

SHELLEY: Cold. What do you mean? He's waiting for--

KAUPP: And I guess--

SHELLEY: My feeling is--

KAUPP: I guess I'm looking to see if you could kind of try to tell Bill a little bit about that right now. That in those moments when he seems like he's 10,000 miles or 10 miles down the road, that you start to get scared. And that what you need at that moment is for him to just come and be with you. Could you just tell him about that fear that comes up for you in that moment-- that you're getting scared?

SHELLEY: I think I have. Haven't I, Bill, told you about my fear when you're 10 miles down the road and how scared I get?

PALMER-OLSEN: Can we do that a little bit differently, Shelley? Can you just tell him today--

SHELLEY: What it is?

PALMER-OLSEN: --that terror that comes up for you when you experience him 10 miles down the road? Because it's different to ask him a question--

SHELLEY: Okay.

PALMER-OLSEN: --from that vulnerable place you just said.

SHELLEY: Okay. The terror-- when I feel you 10 miles down the road, I get really frightened. I get really, really frightened that you're going to do something-- commit us, make a decision, that you're going to not run it by me. You're not going to be with me.

KAUPP: That he's not with you.

SHELLEY: That you're not with me. That you're not walking through-- it's like I'm down in the pit with you now. A lot of dominoes have fallen. And we're in the pit. And we have these things looming over us-- debts, different things. Okay? We're down in the pit.

And you're out there running things and I see you running towards something. This is just an analogy, but you're running out of the pit somewhere. And I'm down there and I'm wanting you to come down there and just be with me and methodically just take care of me and say, okay, this is what's come into our little pit and there are some steps over here.

You know, I don't know whether they are the right steps to take or this is the right way out. But we need to sit down and just be together in it. I'll tell you what I know. You tell me what you think. I want to be included. You know? And then I want to be able to get out of that pit with you. And I want to feel like I'm part of that. I don't want to be down there just-- oh, yeah, when you're up there and if it's all better, holler and I'll come.

PALMER-OLSEN: And Shelley, in that--

SHELLEY: If it isn't better, I'm buried. You know, there's fear.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

SHELLEY: It's about survival.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right. So that's the part that comes up for you when you feel like Bill's not in the pit. Right? There's this terror that comes up. You're not going to be able to get his attention.

SHELLEY: Right.

PALMER-OLSEN: He's not going to come back for you. Right?

SHELLEY: Or that he's going to take a dangerous route out and, you know,

KAUPP: I hear that--

SHELLEY: --the dirt's going to fall. And--

KAUPP: I hear that that's the secondary piece for your fear, though.

SHELLEY: I'm on my own.

KAUPP: But that almost comes later.

PALMER-OLSEN: Yeah.

KAUPP: What initially hits you is that he just climbed out of the pit to begin with. That's the first piece. Who knows where he's going to go and what he's going to do. That's secondary.

PALMER-OLSEN: He's left her.

KAUPP: What I'm hearing in the first piece is that he's left you.

SHELLEY: Yeah, it's like he's gone. And he already has information or he's out of the pit.

KAUPP: He's away from you.

SHELLEY: And I'm, like, where are you? And he goes, oh, I'm up here. And I'm, like, but you didn't tell me you left.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right. And you don't even know it's happening--

SHELLEY: No.

PALMER-OLSEN: --initially.

SHELLEY: No.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

SHELLEY: No.

PALMER-OLSEN: Of course, it would be scary.

KAUPP: Yeah.

SHELLEY: And then if I have said anything to you about it and kind of said, you're talking to--

KAUPP: So I want to slow you down. Sorry. I want to go back to this piece, though. Because you just shared about how scary it does get for you.

PALMER-OLSEN: Yeah.

SHELLEY: Yeah where I don't sleep all night.

KAUPP: When you feel like he's not with you. That that initial piece when you realize he's 10 miles down the road-- that what hits you at that point is that's when it gets terrifying for you. And you just shared that that gets scary for you when you lose him in those moments.

It's a big deal. That's a real big deal. You don't have a whole lot of confidence

and experience in this relationship that by reaching to Bill and letting him know that that's what's happening-- that he's going to turn and he's going to come. And he's going to be with you in that fear and make it safe for you in that moment because he's with you. You don't have a lot of confidence that he's going to do that. So you added after that a bunch of information-- a bunch of examples, a bunch of what happens, a bunch of what he does, a bunch of how you lose him.

SHELLEY: Trying to convince him that it's important that he takes me with him.

KAUPP: That's right.

SHELLEY: And he just--

KAUPP: And what I'm watching with that is I'm just wondering if that isn't what helps to contribute to perhaps confusing and overwhelming and then getting him to get the message that he starts to feel like, I can't get it right. I'm just not good enough. He's failing you-- what we talked about a couple of sessions ago that gets you to get locked up and kind of go away.

SHELLEY: No because I can--

KAUPP: And then he misses you and he drops you hard. When you're reaching to him and you're letting him know there's vulnerability, and you're putting it out there and you're letting him know-- I don't want this to sound like it's your fault. That's not what I'm getting at.

SHELLEY: Mark, it does. It sounds like if I did it differently, I'd be able to engage this man.

BILL: I think I understand it in a very different way for the first time.

PALMER-OLSEN: Today?

BILL: Today.

PALMER-OLSEN: Okay.

BILL: Because there are two, completely different and separate fears.

PALMER-OLSEN: Shelley's, you mean, that she's talking about?

BILL: Yes.

PALMER-OLSEN: Yes.

KAUPP: Absolutely.

BILL: And if we could stop this with the initial core fear-- if we could concentrate on that and be there and stay there--

SHELLEY: I know. I've asked you. I don't want to get off on the content.

BILL: Sweetheart, just hear me out for a minute. If we could stay in just the core feeling of it, I mean, I would like to address-- I want to be there for you. And I want to address that core fear that I'm here and I'm there and I'm everywhere and I'm away from you. The second fear is--

PALMER-OLSEN: Well, hold on. Stay with that one. Let's do one at a time. Because I understand where you're going, and I think that's important.

KAUPP: Absolutely. It's really important what you're saying.

PALMER-OLSEN: When you heard today Shelley kind of part them out-- right-- with this initial terror that comes up for her when she notices you 10 miles down the road. Right? It gets very, very scary for her.

BILL: Right.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

BILL: That doesn't make me feel defensive. That doesn't make me feel like I'm being criticized. That doesn't bring up stuff for me.

PALMER-OLSEN: You find yourself wanting to respond to that fear.

BILL: Yes.

PALMER-OLSEN: Is that what you're saying?

BILL: That's what I'm saying.

PALMER-OLSEN: Like even right now today?

BILL: Yes.

PALMER-OLSEN: What were you feeling as you heard her say that? And she was very vulnerable and she said, I feel so scared in those moments, Bill, when you're 10 miles--

BILL: How I'm feeling is that I've completely sort of missed that.

PALMER-OLSEN: Oh.

BILL: I heard the fear that was coming from her more because she was afraid of me and what I was doing and that I was out of control or delusional or this, that, or the other thing instead of just--

PALMER-OLSEN: Hearing that she's afraid and she needs you.

KAUPP: Hearing that she's afraid that she's losing you.

BILL: That part of it-- because that part of it-- yeah, I was taking it in. Instead of just feeling it in her eyes if that makes any sense.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

KAUPP: Absolutely.

PALMER-OLSEN: So, I mean, I think this is really important, because what you're saying, Bill, is really validating Shelley's experience of how she reported.

BILL: Sure it is.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right? She's saying, I tell him I'm afraid. And he comes back at me with factual information. He comes back in a defensive kind of cold response.

BILL: I wasn't understanding what she was afraid of.

PALMER-OLSEN: You weren't really hearing.

BILL: Not really. I wasn't hearing it.

PALMER-OLSEN: You weren't hearing Shelley say, I'm afraid I've lost you. I'm afraid you're so far away from me. I just need you to come back with me. You're not here with me. You weren't hearing that piece. Right?

SHELLEY: But--

BILL: I've heard it, but I didn't-- I didn't hear it.

PALMER-OLSEN: I understand. We're on the same page.

KAUPP: And you may not have gotten that that was what was so scary for her.

BILL: No.

KAUPP: Yeah.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

BILL: No.

KAUPP: I hear what you're saying, Bill.

BILL: We have such a-- you know, I have a history, too. We've only talked about her history. But I have a history of being criticized and feeling like I was being picked on and that I could always do things better, too.

KAUPP: Sure. And when you get that message--

BILL: When I get that message, it's even the way the discussion started about this whole thing. I thought I had sort of a pleasant thing to discuss with her. I thought it was going to be-- and as it turned out, we sat down at the table. And I was kind of--

SHELLEY: Let's not get into content.

KAUPP: Before we go off from this, I want to go back to this. I want to check in with Shelley with this, because--

PALMER-OLSEN: I think this piece is important.

KAUPP: That's why I want to highlight this. That's right. I want to highlight this. I mean, I'm watching you. You're just shaking your head and saying, how could he not get this-- is almost like what I'm hearing you say. What is he saying right now?

SHELLEY: Because I've heard this. I've heard Bill do this in therapy before where he'll say, oh, well that isn't what I thought you meant. And this is the first time I've heard it this way. And nothing evolves differently. And I really believe in my heart that I've been very articulate about the fear of him not being with me, not being a we, taking this journey together. And it does come--

KAUPP: But that's deep. Even with what you just said right there is still different from what you talked about earlier. What you just said is still different. Because what you were talking about earlier is when he's down that road 10 miles, what you get hit with in that moment is your fear that he's not with you and that you're all alone.

SHELLEY: But it's bigger than that, Mark. I think Bill and I are both products of families where we were comfortable being alone. So it's not like I'm just terrified that I'm alone. It's alone in--

KAUPP: I hear that you got comfortable being alone in those challenges because you didn't have any other options.

SHELLEY: And I'd like to talk about Bill's family and being alone.

KAUPP: I get that. But I want to go back to this piece here that you've shared so beautifully and that was so important. And that I think he did hear differently for the first time, separating these pieces out-- this piece about before you can discuss any kind of content issues-- before you can deal with any kind of issues, the two of you need to be on a strong foundation with each other.

SHELLEY: I know.

KAUPP: And that he's hearing that-- and I'm hearing it-- that in that moment for you, when he's down that road, you're alone. And in those moments before you can proceed to anything else with any kind of success or comfort, you need to have him by your side seeing you and being with you in that pit

together.

That that's what you need. That's right. And as you've tried thousands of different ways to get him engaged to know that that's what you need at that time-- thousand different times, thousand different ways-- It's never given you the comfort that you needed. It's never brought him around.

And I'm not saying that that's you. I'm not saying it's him. I'm saying that that's the dance between the two of you. He didn't understand it. Maybe he gets in his place where his stuff hijacks him, or he gets afraid that it's not good enough. He just hears this blame and criticism-- not that you're saying it.

That's just how he hears it. And then his defenses come up and he drops you. And he starts frenetically going around in a million different directions. But what you shared today was this piece where we're kind of pulling them apart. It's profound how scary it gets for you. Because there's all kinds of consequences when he's not with you.

SHELLEY: Yeah. That's for sure.

KAUPP: Absolutely.

SHELLEY: In many areas of our life.

KAUPP: Absolutely.

YALOM: Let's watch another Step 5 and 6 with Bill and Shelley a few moments later in the session.

JORGENSEN: Lisa does a really wonderful job validating Shelley's fears and her reactivity, which shows up as negative view of other. Because of Lisa's validation, she's able to go into her deeper fears, which is her negative view of self and how acceptable she is as a woman. And Shelly is a lot less reactive. The blame is more subtle than previously because she is intellectualizing it.

PALMER-OLSEN: What I'm hearing as I sit with you as a woman is I'm not so sure Bill wants all of me.

SHELLEY: Yeah.

PALMER-OLSEN: And that's been such an awful place for you to be in for so long. And it just recycles up your old survival mechanisms of trying to get people to respond to you--

SHELLEY: Or not being good enough.

PALMER-OLSEN: --to give you a mirror back that you're good enough, that you're worth coming back for. Right? And this part about not knowing the man that you've committed your life to-- not knowing if he wants all of you,

down to the core of who you are, right, is just an awful, awful place to be if I'm hearing you.

SHELLEY: Won't appreciate your input or anything else, really.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right. And have you told Bill that that's a place you can go that you're not so sure he wants all of you as a woman? Have you shared that with him?

SHELLEY: I haven't said all of me as a woman. But I've said I'm not so sure you want to be--

PALMER-OLSEN: In the pit.

SHELLEY: --in the puddle close to me.

PALMER-OLSEN: But this is different. Shelley, you're talking about you and how you experience you. Right? Are you lovable? Are you worthy, right, of somebody showing up there for you and coming back?

SHELLEY: And do you think I just interpret-- because I do have an issue about just-- I know I've said to you, Bill, about not wanting you to value me when I have something to say, to just listen, to think it's important.

PALMER-OLSEN: Of course that gets tripped, though. But Shelley, that's what's supposed to happen. Your body's signaling to you this is dangerous. This is another example of me not being important enough or good enough.

Right? It's protecting you when it picks up on those signals. Right?

But this part I've never heard you speak so clearly about before, which is inside when you can't get a response from Bill, when you're in your biggest place of terror-- right? Where you go is this place of I've been here before. Right? I don't know if he wants all of me. And that's an awful, terrible feeling if I'm with you on this-- that you carry around, to not know for sure.

SHELLEY: It's either that or I carry this other thing around of-- and you may not want to hear this. But I carry this other thing around of Bill just not being capable of that, meaning--

PALMER-OLSEN: Of course, but that's--

SHELLEY: --he's--

PALMER-OLSEN: But that's where you would go, Shelley.

SHELLEY: --got something else going on.

PALMER-OLSEN: Of course, that's where you would go. Right? Even when you said to Mark, I'm not so sure I even deserve someone to come back for

me. Right?

Your brain is going to come in and help you if you're feeling in that awful space. Right? It's going to organize it for you. Of course, you would go there. That's a logical flow, right? But I want to know if you can tell Bill about this part-- the part of you that feels like it gets into that awful space where you don't know if he wants you. And he becomes like everybody else in your life that didn't come back for you and didn't show up in those moments. Because that's a really tender, vulnerable space. I wonder if you could let him in on just a little bit of that. It feels so important. I've never seen you kind of articulate it in such a way.

SHELLEY: Well, I-- do you mean examples of my past or just--

PALMER-OLSEN: What it feels like. Where you can go.

SHELLEY: --what that feels like?

BILL: Try it.

SHELLEY: I don't know, Bill. I just disappear. It's like disappearing because I feel so useless and hopeless and invaluable. I don't feel like a real woman with you. I feel like my value is only as good as what I'm offering and working for all the time. And it's exhausting. I'd like to just fall into your arms. I'd like to just fall into you and know that it was safe.

PALMER-OLSEN: Because Shelley, you've never had that before. You've never had--

SHELLEY: I've had to survive on my own.

PALMER-OLSEN: You've had to survive your whole life being on your own. You couldn't reach to anybody from this space ever. You've never known for sure that you mattered.

SHELLEY: Everything has been about performance and appearance and nobody's seen my soul.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

SHELLEY: Nobody's seen my-- I think some dear girl friends have seen my soul. But I've never had a husband who's really seen my soul. My parents certainly didn't.

PALMER-OLSEN: And Shelley, you've never had somebody see it and show up and come be with you in that space and comfort you. And the messages that you've gotten in this relationship is that he doesn't want that. Right?

SHELLEY: And I would add to that that I'm at the top of the list in terms

of importance. That when there's a crisis and I'm in great distress or an emergency that that's the most important thing in the moment.

YALOM: Now let's watch Step 6 with Bill. And notice his responsiveness to Shelley.

JORGENSEN: Yeah, see how Bill reaches over and he takes her hands and stays present with her when she goes deeper. He's in touch with his longing for more closeness and relates to her fear. Lisa shores him up when he starts thinking and imagining what they can do, which takes him away from the present moment.

YALOM: What do you mean by shoring him up?

JORGENSEN: She comes in behind him to help him hold his engaged position. So she shores him up emotionally. She kind of backs up his ability to be present. And then she slows him down. She organizes his experience and validates his efforts and what he's trying to do in the present process. So he becomes aware of how he leaves her and why.

PALMER-OLSEN: And Bill, when you hear this other piece, when Shelley talks about this place that she can go in those moments when she's not experiencing you kind of coming back for her, right? She can go to a place where she's just crushed. It feels awful, like she doesn't know that you want to see her soul-- that you want all of her.

KAUPP: That's right.

PALMER-OLSEN: How does that land for you when you hear that? Because that's a new piece.

BILL: I do want all of you. It lands a little differently on me, because I want you to want all of me, too. But I guess I'm afraid nobody would have all of me. And I always have been. When you've been disappointed and let down, it's really hard to trust. I think we can do a lot if we just stay at the core level. I really do. I think I can do a lot.

PALMER-OLSEN: You can do-- you're testing something now, Bill. And I can feel you kind of trying to feel your way into Shelley's world. Right? It's like I know that you're touched by something she said.

BILL: Yeah, and I'm afraid, too.

PALMER-OLSEN: At the same time. Well, of course, you would be. Because this is the exact thing. This is the place where the two of you would lose each other-- right here in this moment. And so we're going to help you with that. Right? This is the moment where Shelley is reaching out to you, and she's

sharing something in a very vulnerable and tender way. And there's a lot on the line here.

BILL: Yep.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right? And I want to help you organize and feel like you have a sense of being able to reach back to her. I know this is the place where it feels like you get caught.

BILL: Yeah, I just don't go here.

PALMER-OLSEN: Yeah. Right-- which is why she feels like she's left. Right? Because you're coming back for her right now, Bill. You're doing that right now.

BILL: I guess that means I can do it. And I want to do it. I get trapped in process, content, defensiveness.

PALMER-OLSEN: So you end up kind of losing her. She loses you, right, in that moment when she needs you the most, when all of her own--

BILL: All it takes is a little look or a tone of voice or anything from me.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

BILL: And it's just like, whew. Pushback.

PALMER-OLSEN: That's how she's experienced you, right? She's experienced that. In my moments when I need him the most, even if I package it up just so, right? It's a tone. It's a look. I'll lose him, and he goes cold. Right? And where that sends your wife is into this confirming spot-- right-- that no one's going to come back.

BILL: That's what I thought.

PALMER-OLSEN: No one's going to come back for me.

BILL: This is what I've always experienced. Sure.

PALMER-OLSEN: He's not even capable. Look, there he goes again. Right? So it gets harder and harder for her to keep trying. Right? Because no one's ever been there for her in that space.

KAUPP: That's right.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right?

YALOM: These are some really compelling examples of Step 5 and 6 work. And we see the therapist really takes as much time as necessary in Step 5 to access the primary emotion and similarly in Step 6 to really get the partner to accept, validate, take in that new expression of vulnerable feeling from their

partner. And there is what appears to be a lot of internal, intrapsychic work in both of these steps. But of course, it's always in the context of the couple.

And one thing I know that we talked about before that students often confuse Step 3 and Step 5. But it seems that after watching this, you can see Step 5 goes more slowly and really goes into more depth.

JORGENSEN: Yeah, from the safety of de-escalation, this depth of experiencing expands. And we begin to link not only the emotion-- access the emotion-- but link it to their unmet needs. We're promoting acceptance in Step 6 with the partner of the feeling and of the partner's needs so they can start to understand what the antidote to these bad feelings and the fears and the insecurities are going to be.

This also starts to transform-- as we've seen in some of the clips-- the view of self, the experience of self. When I thought that my bad feelings meant I was bad, for example, and you can accept my feelings, then I can start to also think, well, maybe this need for reassurance or acceptance isn't bad, either. So I can start to see myself and experiencing more of myself and differently from the acceptance of the partner.

So it's 5, 6, exploring more with the partner that we're working with and then promoting acceptance, going back and exploring some more, and so there really is a lot of intrapsychic work. But it's facilitated by the partner's responsiveness.

YALOM: Compared to Stage 1 work, which we saw in the prior video, this goes slower. You're less in a war zone. So in some ways it seems easier. You're not in a minefield. But it takes a certain steadiness and patience, I think, on the part of the therapist. I mean, I would think it would utilize basic good therapy skills that you have if you're learning this and you have prior therapy experience-- empathy, tracking.

Where do therapists get tripped up in this work?

JORGENSEN: Experienced therapists especially who have those good skills from doing individual therapy find it a challenge then to not over-focus on the partner that they're working with and to keep the couple context.

YALOM: Okay.

JORGENSEN: So keeping the other partner in view while they're working with one, watching for their response, and keeping that attachment frame alive is really important.

YALOM: Yeah, I noticed in the clips you could be doing intense work with one. But you'll see the therapist keep the other person involved-- whether

it's just making eye contact, whether it's checking in with them. That's important.

JORGENSEN: Yeah, the therapist is kind of always reassuring non-verbally the other partner that they know they're there-- that they keep them in mind by tracking them and their response, even in just a nonverbal way. And if you're really used to working deep intrapsychically, experientially, that kind of hyper-focus can come in and block the other partner instead of include them.

YALOM: Yes. That's really important that they feel included in that. Okay, so how do you know when you're-- I don't know if you ultimately, ever finally complete anything. But how do you know when you've done a good enough job with Step 5 and 6 that you're ready to move on to Step 7?

JORGENSEN: Well, it's such a good point to revisit about the steps of EFT-- that it's cumulative or circular additive in some way, that if we're really changing objectives. So when my objective is Step 5 to deepen and develop disowned aspects and have the partner be able to accept the shift that's happening, then being aware of when am I shifting that objective to Step 7 is important. Because I'm interweaving Step 5.

I'm going back and forth from Step 5-- deepening with one to promoting acceptance-- back to deepening and promoting acceptance. So I'm doing that repeatedly. And then I'm really watching for when am I going to shift the objective, which is Step 7, to ask for the need to be met. So we're looking for how this partner you're working with at Step 5-- how deep they're going. Are they shifting? That negative view of self is beginning to shift. Or what would they need for that to shift?

What did they need from their partner? They become more aware of that. And the partner's acceptance to that then allows that deeper expression, which then is a marker for us that-- okay, both people are ready for the need to be requested, which would move us into Step 7.

YALOM: All right. So it's having a sense that there's some depth, vulnerability, softening in Step 5 and having a sense that their partner is able to really accept--

JORGENSEN: And be present.

YALOM: --and be present with that.

JORGENSEN: Yeah.

YALOM: And it's not a clear marker. I mean, that takes some judgment, obviously.

JORGENSEN: And one of the really nice things about working from attunement is that there's room to correct. We self-correct, because in a secure attachment that's what we do. We make repair. It's not that we get it right all the time. But when we get off, we can make repair.

So the therapist does that as well. We're going to try promoting something. We're going to try going deeper. Sometimes we get it wrong. That's all just feedback about the process. And we can make repair and shift.

YALOM: Let's turn to Step 7 which is the last Step in Stage two. What goes on there?

JORGENSEN: Step 7 is about facilitating the change event, which changes the interactional position and restructures the couple's interaction.

YALOM: That sounds good, but what exactly does that mean?

JORGENSEN: Well, in the face of fear the partner will have an opposite reaction of what they had in the negative cycle. They'll learn what's driving them. Instead of going into reactivity, they do something different. So in the case of the withdrawers, in the face of the fear of rejection, for example, instead of shutting down emotionally and moving away from the partner, they will remain emotionally engaged and open up and move towards their partner.

YALOM: Hm. Okay. So that's what you call withdrawer re-engagement.

JORGENSEN: Yeah, that would be an example of the withdrawer re-engagement.

YALOM: All right. So then what happens with pursuers?

JORGENSEN: So with the pursuers, the opposite action is to stay slow, stay vulnerable, and request the comfort that they want, which is different. Because what they would typically do is get full of intense emotion and make a demand or a complaint or a criticism. So they'll recognize the fear-- the aloneness-- and slow down and stay vulnerable and call for their partner to come be with them.

YALOM: So that's what you call pursuer softening.

JORGENSEN: Yes. So there is a withdrawer re-engagement and a pursuer softening that are part of Stage 2. Both of them do their Step 7 independently in that sequence of 5, 6, 7. So we want to go back and we're going to show a clip about withdrawer re-engagement. And so let me talk just a little bit about what that withdrawer re-engagement looks like.

So at Step 7, usually for the withdrawers there is a series of enactments of

disclosing their attachment fears, usually related to the fears of rejection and inadequacy. And this enables the withdrawer to feel more connected to his or her inner world, his experience, and to the partner, and therefore be able to express the unmet need for acceptance and validation.

YALOM: So what's an example of how that unmet need is expressed?

JORGENSEN: Well, it often looks a bit what we refer to as taking a stand. It's a bit of assertion. The engaging withdrawer faces the fear of rejection, and rather than withdrawing or suppressing his or her needs and fears, owns them. And from this position of vulnerability-- of owning sense of self and experience-- the potential rejection of sharing it requests for his or her needs to be met.

YALOM: So what does it look like when withdrawers are ready to do this-- to do Step 7?

JORGENSEN: You will often hear them share their awareness of their internal process. For example, they may say something like, I'm feeling like shutting down right now, like maybe this is a bit too much for me.

YALOM: It's a bit confusing, because that sounds like they're just saying what they normally do, which is to shut down. So that doesn't sound quite ready to step up to the plate.

JORGENSEN: Yeah, if you pay attention to the content, then we could get thrown off. But what the withdrawer is doing is disclosing the inner world. In the present moment I'm feeling really scared right now and like shutting down, which is really opposite than shutting down and not sharing what's happening.

YALOM: I see. Rather than just shutting down, they're able to in the moment be aware of what's happening internally and to give voice to it.

JORGENSEN: Yes, to share it while it's happening, which is really very different than what withdrawers would do in the old and the negative cycle where they'd get triggered and just go away, not even have awareness of what they were experiencing.

So we're really looking for this growing capacity within the withdrawer to stay curious about their internal experience and to have recovered previously disowned aspects of their experience and of their self-identity and to be able to stay present at these deeper levels of emotional experiencing. So along with that, the partner is accepting. We've done that 5 and 6 work so the partner is accepting of these newly discovered aspects and shared experience and really are understanding more of their partner's internal landscape. The research

shows that this often happens with the withdrawer through a series of incrementally intense interactions with the partner.

YALOM: Okay. So ultimately withdrawers are able to express their needs from a position of vulnerability, not a demand. But they don't get there without the attachment fears being intensely felt by them and shared and then accepted by the partner.

JORGENSEN: Yes. Once the experiencing of the attachment fears is deep enough, the unmet needs can be brought to life because they're seeking the antidote to the attachment fears. And the unmet needs-- if they're met-- is the antidote. So it's through the vulnerability-- that intense emotion-- that the needs come to life enough to be identified by the re-engaging withdrawer.

YALOM: So Step 7, which is this culminating step-- expressing your needs from a place of vulnerability-- sounds good, but can you give me a sense of what that looks like? Because I'm sure partners feel like when they first come to therapy they're expressing their needs. So, like, for withdrawers what are examples? What are some of the most common needs that they express in Step 7?

JORGENSEN: It's not just an expression. It's an asking, really, for the need to be met from this position of vulnerability. So the most common needs that are expressed by withdrawers are needs for feeling close, for being accepted, being affirmed by their partner as adequate, having enough safety to have self-expression within the relationship. For example, a withdrawer might say, I want the same thing you want-- to feel close. But I think what I really need is your acceptance that I'm enough for you, to have your support, even if it's hard.

YALOM: Okay. So we're now going to take a look at Step 7 with Steven.

JORGENSEN: So in this clip I prompt Steven to share his feelings of inadequacy and his needs for closeness with Cassandra from his vulnerability. He has a difficult time staying emotionally engaged, so I work with him to hold his sadness and validate his responses. He sends a more simple and a clear message to her about his constant need for her love. And while his affective range is still quite limited, there's enough emotional expression to settle Cassandra and for her to respond with understanding. But there's still more work to do with Steven before he's fully engaged.

But really you're talking about, I don't really know how to even ask for my comfort for myself.

STEVEN: Other than sex.

JORGENSEN: Totally foreign. Other than sex.

STEVEN: Yep.

JORGENSEN: Emotionally to just put that out in a vulnerable way and say, I'm tired, or could you hold me, or I'm so sad. I'm fighting feeling unworthy here. That's a whole new language, really.

STEVEN: Yeah, it is.

JORGENSEN: How is that for you that he's sharing all of that? That's really deep putting it together, huh?

CASSANDRA: Yeah. No, it's really--

JORGENSEN: Does it feel risky to share it?

STEVEN: No. I mean, I feel like in many archaic ways--

JORGENSEN: You've been trying to do that.

STEVEN: I've been communicating over and over and over and over and over these things. I don't feel like-- I say over and over I'm so simple. I'm really simple.

JORGENSEN: When you're not triggered.

STEVEN: Even when I'm triggered, I'm pretty simple.

JORGENSEN: Well, no, because when you're triggered, you come up with analogies that are 50 miles long.

STEVEN: That's my articulation. But the analogy is like a basic, you know, Hansel and Gretel. I mean, the underlying theme is, like, straight forward. It's like really clear. My message-- how I'm delivering it--

JORGENSEN: I get it. I get it. Your message is really simple.

STEVEN: Yeah, it's all--

CASSANDRA: The message is simple, but the way--

STEVEN: Communication's jumbled.

CASSANDRA: --it gets translated is--

JORGENSEN: Yeah, because when we are triggered, it's very hard to send a clear message, right?

STEVEN: I'm not good at articulating it.

JORGENSEN: Oh, you're so good at articulating that the message gets lost, actually. Right? Because fear does that. I mean, that's part of the wall.

Part of the wall is keeping some of this unaware. That's how we're kind of wired to do it when we're in danger. That's part of the survival, right? You learned to do that.

It's survival. If I'm vulnerable in this environment and I think somebody is going to love me, I get smashed. Right? I can't even be aware or let other people be aware of when I'm fighting that feeling. I've got it all the time, but it's kind of in the background. And when I'm aware of it, it feels like a good thing. It's been a comfort, actually. Right? It's been a comfort-- the only one you had from being built up, being built up, then smashing down.

That is sad, right? Because there's some sense of, if I start to let my guard down, I'm going to be crushed here. It's been survival, really. What's important for her to know right now? Because there's this really nice space here between the two of you right now, feeling connected and understanding. What's important for her to know?

STEVEN: I believe, honestly-- heart of hearts-- that she knows everything. I mean, the logic model, really, is clear.

CASSANDRA: What's important that I know?

JORGENSEN: What's important for you to share with her? It's a hard thing for you to share.

STEVEN: Remember when.

JORGENSEN: Remember when. Remember when we were like this against the world?

STEVEN: That's it. That's all she needs to remember. That's all that she needs to know. That's all that she needs to do.

JORGENSEN: Okay. So when--

STEVEN: And vice versa. That's all I need to do.

JORGENSEN: When I'm the most afraid, that's what I need in the way of comfort-- is to know that you see me and you can remember the time when we-- like right here, when we feel close.

STEVEN: Yeah, that's all. That's it.

JORGENSEN: And this is what I really need-- is to feel this. I can't always articulate it. Sometimes I demand or I over-perform or I blame.

STEVEN: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: Because I don't really know how to talk to you about this comfort and this fear that I'm not enough. Yeah? It doesn't occur to me to

tell you those things. Does that make sense to you? Why he would say your driver's license picture?

CASSANDRA: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: Simple.

CASSANDRA: Yeah.

JORGENSEN: I just need love-- your love. Does that make sense to you?

CASSANDRA: Yeah. It does. I hear it as that, and I also hear it as, just remember what really matters and my intentions and remember when we were like that.

JORGENSEN: Because that's what you want now. You want to have that connected, reassured space, yeah? Going deep with each other and feeling really connected.

STEVEN: Yeah. I want that for the next 80 years.

YALOM: Step 7, as many of the steps, take a number of passes. What should we look for to know that we've completed Step 7 with the withdrawer?

JORGENSEN: That increased awareness and an ability to both express their experience and continue to make the request and also that they can stay with their partner's intensity of experience.

YALOM: Let's switch now to Step 7 with the pursuer. We've already gone through the 5, 6, 7 sequence with the withdrawer to get them re-engaged. And then we do 5 and 6 with the pursuer. Now we want to transition to Step 7 with the pursuer.

JORGENSEN: Now that the withdrawer is engaged, we can work towards the pursuer softening. The therapist uses the pursuer's attachment, fears, and needs to help him or her reach beyond the automatic or habitual way of dealing with the vulnerable emotion and elicit a new response from the partner that provides comfort and emotional contact.

YALOM: So here again it's about the pursuer asking for his or her needs to be met. Right?

JORGENSEN: Yes. And it is the responsiveness of the partner that is the antidote to the negative cycle of interaction. It redefines their model of self and other and provides a new way to deal with the attachment needs.

YALOM: So what does that look like?

JORGENSEN: For example, the person may say, I'm terrified to show you this part of me that needs your love. It's so hard for me to feel deserving. Will you

hug me? Reassure me? I do need you.

YALOM: Okay. So let's watch an example of Step 7 with the pursuer. And in this case it's with Shelley. What you'll see follows an enactment about Shelley's fears, particularly fear of not being important.

JORGENSEN: She says, I'm afraid you're going to walk out and go into super power, and I'll be left alone with all these feelings.

YALOM: Okay, so then the therapist Mark starts what you call seeding her needs. He tries to get Shelley in touch with her needs so she can put them into words.

JORGENSEN: Yes, he's preparing for Step 7 and starts to link the fear with the needs. But Shelley is a very blaming pursuer. She's been rigidly stuck in that position for a long time. And instead of doing the enactment, she brings the negative cycle back into the room, which then Lisa tries to dial back from.

YALOM: I mean, it's a good example of just how attuned the therapist needs to be. You may have an idea in mind. I'm going to do Step 7 now or whatever you're trying to do. But you are always monitoring. If you're working with someone, how's that going? What's happening with the partner-- and make adjustments rather than just plowing ahead.

JORGENSEN: Yeah, it's a really good example of using the attunement to go back and be with her and then try to reignite or re-engage back into the vulnerability.

YALOM: Okay. So previous to the clip that we're about to see, Bill had in fact been quite present and had reached over and put his arm around her. And then he started to problem solve. And Shelley kind of got triggered and she jumped on that and went back to blaming him.

KAUPP: I guess the piece that I want to follow up, though, on for you, Shelley-- you're taking a huge risk by just kind of trying to keep your head out of things-- rather than trying to organize and make sense of it, just trying to stay right here. That takes such guts to do that and to stay there. So risky.

Do you have any sense of what you might need to see from Bill or hear from Bill that would help you feel like it's safe enough for you to kind of stay in that place, that vulnerable place that he says makes him feel closer, kind of makes him want to protect you? Find strategies and ways of being there with you in that moment? Kind of pulls him closer to you? Do you have any sense?

SHELLEY: Well, I had this strong sense the minute I felt myself leaving him again, because he was talking about-- I think. This is what I do. Now I know why the Petersons are-- it's all intellectual to me. That's what it feels like to

me.

KAUPP: Yeah. And as soon as that started to happen--

SHELLEY: I just felt myself going, here we go. Here we go. He's not really with me. He can say he feels for me. But that's a statement. I think I need--

PALMER-OLSEN: So that piece we kind of fleshed out earlier, which is where he can feel you in that moment-- he skipped over that so quickly that you couldn't really connect in with him.

SHELLEY: I didn't feel him really connected. I felt more like you were thinking about what to say to be sincere and supportive.

PALMER-OLSEN: So right before that, right before that when he reached out and put his hand around you and had tears in his eyes, as you kind of looked down and you were tearful yourself-- right before that, what was that like to have him respond with some comfort in that moment when he was reaching out to you, trying to let you know that he was there? Could you feel that?

SHELLEY: Yes, but it was so tiny.

YALOM: So now let's jump a few minutes later in the session as Mark and Lisa work very hard to get Shelley to express her needs. She says, I need you to be present but later adds that she doesn't really know if she's able to ask for that.

JORGENSEN: Shelley tucks her vulnerability away to a large degree and reaches softly, letting Bill know that she needs his presence and a bit about her fear. And then she asks for a hug from everybody, indicating she's not quite ready to fully risk with Bill.

YALOM: So it's a little safer to ask for a hug with everybody than just asking for it.

JORGENSEN: Yeah, it's a little less direct. So the hug is comforting. And the need for soothing touch is something that many pursuers request.

PALMER-OLSEN: And I think Mark's trying to also honor that and give Bill some vision of what you would need-- how we can be tender with you today.

KAUPP: That's right. What you need.

PALMER-OLSEN: It's unlikely that Bill will go home and stay connected to you the rest of the evening. But everything in your body is going to be calling for that. Because you're in a very vulnerable place. So what we want to do is as a team look at how can we be tender with what you did today? How can we give you something that feels concrete, that you can rely on, since you took

such a big risk today-- that Bill knows and he can show up for and he feels capable of doing? To be sensitive and tender with you this evening? Right? I think that's what you were wanting to know, right?

BILL: Yeah.

PALMER-OLSEN: Can you help us with that?

SHELLEY: With what to give to Bill or for you to give to me?

BILL: What you need from me.

PALMER-OLSEN: From all of us just to kind of lay it out there.

SHELLEY: Okay. What you have done by sharing-- I feel very connected to you. I know you appreciate it. I know you know it.

I know you know that I am here to go the distance with you.

PALMER-OLSEN: Yeah.

SHELLEY: And there's no holds barred.

PALMER-OLSEN: Yeah.

SHELLEY: And I know you know that. And I know you appreciate that. So I really feel it. I don't think I need any more from you, because I feel heard. And I feel understood.

PALMER-OLSEN: Okay.

SHELLEY: I need you, Bill, probably to just be with me and not really say much.

PALMER-OLSEN: Be present with me?

SHELLEY: Just be present.

PALMER-OLSEN: Because you feel really fragile right now.

SHELLEY: Yeah. And part of me wants to get away from it now. I want to run away. I want to get away from the feelings. I want to get on with my day, because sometimes I have things to do. I would leave sessions and just want to go to bed. You know, it's hard.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right.

SHELLEY: So I hopefully-- maybe-- this afternoon could have a little time to just go out and play with you. You know? I just want you when you come down to pay attention to me-- to just pay 100% of attention to me. And I don't know. I feel uncomfortable. I feel like I'm asking for too much right now. That's just-- because I'm always thinking how busy Bill is. He's just so

busy.

PALMER-OLSEN: So the history comes in and says that's too much.

SHELLEY: Yep.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right? I'm hearing you say that you want Bill to notice you, to notice that you're in a fragile space today, to be tender with you.

KAUPP: And to really see you.

PALMER-OLSEN: Right. To really see you today. That's what you need.

SHELLEY: Yeah. I just-- yeah. You don't have to come up with anything. I just want you to stay out of your head with me. I don't want to do that today. You know?

BILL: I promise to do my very best.

KAUPP: Yeah.

SHELLEY: And I want a hug from everybody. Is that okay?

KAUPP: Of course.

SHELLEY: I haven't done that. But I think I'd like that.

PALMER-OLSEN: Okay. Can you ask your husband for that?

SHELLEY: Yeah. I know you'll give me a hug.

BILL: She never has to worry about that.

YALOM: It appears to me that this is really the beginning of a Step 7 with Shelley, but more work needs to be done. As we've seen, she easily falls back into the cycle and starts blaming Bill. Is it typical that you need to do multiple attempts at pursuer softening?

JORGENSEN: Oftentimes for many pursuers, Step 7 is one big enactment where they ask for their needs to be met. But if the pursuer has been in this rigid position for a while, a few enactments may be necessary. And this is what we see here with Shelley.

It's also worth noting that they are currently in the middle of a legal and financial crisis, so that adds to their stress, which can increase the likelihood of them falling right back into their negative cycle.

YALOM: So what would we expect to see then? I mean, what's missing from what we just saw for the change event to be considered complete?

JORGENSEN: We would expect for Shelley to be softer. She's not totally softened yet. We would also expect to see more mutual accessibility.

Because this is the end of the session, there's no time to process what just happened. And Bill has not been able to be fully responsive to her request and be engaged with her to support her.

YALOM: Okay. So then what would you suggest the therapist do in the following session?

JORGENSEN: To come back and revisit this again-- to access her fears again and her unmet attachment needs and do another pass at the enactment.

YALOM: Okay, so now let's look at an example with Carl and Sandra. This is the beginning of Step 7. Previously you worked with Sandra to access her fears, which she's been quite able to do. And now we'll see you linking her fears with her needs.

JORGENSEN: It's hard for her to put her needs into words. And even though I give her a lot of support and encouragement, it's difficult because of her trauma. So her Step 7 looks a little bit like withdrawer re-engagement Step 7 might look. It's a little more incremental. She first asks for physical support and comfort.

YALOM: Although not directly.

JORGENSEN: Not totally directly but it was enough for Carl. Then she states that she does not want to be the strong one all the time, which is another of her needs in the relationship.

YALOM: Yeah. She uses the image of the white horse.

JORGENSEN: She comes back to this image we've used earlier in therapy. And then she states her desire for a reciprocity from him.

YALOM: Yeah. Yeah. Her need-- her desire is that they're walking side by side-- that she doesn't always have to be strong one.

JORGENSEN: That they're really closely connected. There's also an implied request of him being patient with her while she learns to trust and to lean on him. Carl stays engaged and responsive through this whole process. And then he turns and affirms her.

YALOM: All right. So let's take a look.

CARL: Trying to build this with you is just remarkable, because I've never been with anyone who saw the world the way you do. And it's such fun. And I think you forget how much-- I don't think you realize how much fun you are. I don't think you realize that.

SANDRA: [INAUDIBLE] German. Hard-working.

CARL: I know. I know.

SANDRA: Nose to the ground.

CARL: But we have to-- but when we stop and take pictures of flowers, I love that. It's just you have a perception of nature that's just remarkable.

JORGENSEN: What's that like for you, Carl, that your acceptance feels like this magical dream that she--

CARL: It's joyous. It's just joyous. It's just wonderful.

It's warm. It's comforting. It's what I want-- what I would like to have happen, which is happening-- it's not downstream. It's happening. It's happening for us. It's just a remarkable feeling.

SANDRA: I hope that you can see how wonderful you are, Carl. You overlook that.

CARL: Yeah, I know.

SANDRA: You're a wonderful person, Carl, and you're brilliant also.

JORGENSEN: That's really this-- I mean, part of why his acceptance matters so much to you is because of the way you do see him. It really matters-- his acceptance. Because you see him as special as he is.

SANDRA: You are. And you have the patience of Job tenfold over.

CARL: No, no.

SANDRA: Yes, you do.

CARL: Okay. But it's--

JORGENSEN: Can you let that in, Carl?

CARL: Yeah. I'm letting-- I'm learning to let that in. I'm learning to let that in. I'm learning that I'm developing a better self image, thanks to her. Emotional self image. And a better emotional image of myself. That I'm not so needy. And in being not so needy or feeling not so needy, I feel more giving. So that's very cool. Because I even just retracted into my myself. Okay, I'm not as needy, but it was--

JORGENSEN: Right.

CARL: I feel like there's more to--

JORGENSEN: More of you to give.

CARL: --to give, to share.

JORGENSEN: Guys, it's that new space you guys are creating that-- you start

to feel better. You feel better about your relationship, about yourself. You're not a monster anymore, right? You don't feel needy. Not performing right. Getting it wrong all the time.

CARL: Right. I don't feel that as nearly the way I did when we started. A lot of that is gone.

YALOM: So now we're going to move on to Stage 3-- the final stage of EFT. What happens here?

JORGENSEN: This is consolidation of the work that's been done in the previous two stages. So the objective of this final stage is to help the couple formulate their story-- their shared experience of how they created security within their relationship. We're going to help them create a narrative about how they came into secure connection and identify their patterns of interactions so that they can maintain their relational help. We want them to be able to see their new pattern of interaction.

YALOM: Why is it important that they have a narrative?

JORGENSEN: It's like wars fought, wars won. Here we are together. We came out of these difficult times together. And this is how we did it.

In the knowing how and consolidating that work, then the couple is able to go forward with more confidence that when troubles come up, they'll be able to stay and regain their connection. In Stage 3, we're also going to support them to inter-problem solving conversations about any remaining perpetual problems and keep an eye on any emergence of the old negative cycle.

YALOM: So how do we know? Are there markers that we look for to know that they get it?

JORGENSEN: The couple narrative is really strongest when we help them to develop five distinct markers. The first one is awareness about their ability to handle negative affect and then to express the value that they place on the relationship so that this becomes a norm in their relationship-- to be able to enter into that expression. We want them to be able to build in this minimal defensiveness when they're discussing negative aspects of their relationship so it's not so personalized-- and an ability to reflect on how they each contributed to the changes in the relationship.

YALOM: That's part of the narrative?

JORGENSEN: Mhm. And finally that they can reflect on the personal growth that has resulted from their work together and from being in the relationship together.

YALOM: So it sounds like-- well, I think the name consolidation kind of says it all. So the therapist reinforces their sense of accomplishment and their understanding of how they got through the tough times.

JORGENSEN: Yes. And it can help when the therapist is really focusing on guiding the couple to review the changes in their relationship, like encouraging them to include emotional experiences that are associated with certain behaviors of the past and also of the present. Before you felt afraid and you got angry, and now when you get afraid, you can call me close.

We can also help them focus on the ways that they've found to get out of the negative cycle-- to call the cycle, for example. Oh, I think we're getting into that negative cycle. Or here we go, let's stop that. We'll help them really focus on the ways that they've learned to avoid and prevent that negative cycle.

And fourthly, we want to emphasize the couple's courage to take risks and focus on the process-- that they connect first before they go into problem solving. Because problem solving conversations are much easier when they feel safe that they want to come out of this discussion together. And this narrative highlights the potential that these changes have brought into protecting and supporting each other going forward into the future.

YALOM: The assumption is they're going to be-- like any couple, they're going to have differences. They're going to have challenges. They're going to have crises in their life. And you want to reinforce the skills they've developed so they'll be able to face this with this new model of closeness and openness and vulnerability.

JORGENSEN: Yes, so that over time the security of their relationship-- their secure attachment-- develops even more. Because all couples will have moments where they go back into negative cycles. But they can come back, repair it, recognize where they are, and have a lot fewer of them, and stay really well connected to each other.

YALOM: That's important to know and recognize that all couples will fall into the negative cycle at times. The question is, can they recognize it quickly and get out of it before they do any real damage?

JORGENSEN: Yeah and that they're really aware of those internal sensitivities that they have and come back to each other sharing them so that the bonds become stronger and stronger.

YALOM: Okay. So now we're going to see a clip with John and Nydia. And it's going to show how Scott emphasizes their newer ways of interacting with each other.

JORGENSEN: Yes, Scott is also emphasizing the “we” of their team to solidify their more secure bond. And you can notice how they respond to each other. And they can describe how they feel and respond differently now with each other.

YALOM: And both of them draw on examples of how things are different emotionally and behaviorally between them.

SCOTT WOOLLEY: So, yes, this is huge. And then I think I just heard you saying, I’m feeling safer with him.

NYDIA: Yes.

WOOLLEY: My own fears are going down.

NYDIA: Yeah, I’m not so defensive and like I have to fight him to be with him.

WOOLLEY: You know it can be different. You don’t have to fight.

NYDIA: I don’t have to be on guard, like I’m going to be attacked or I’m going to be left alone. I don’t feel like that anymore.

WOOLLEY: Good. That’s huge.

JOHN: I know how she feels now about my work project. I’m thinking I’m getting her approval. Not really. She wants priority. She needs to be my priority. So I need to stop. Slow down at times. Check in. Everything’s good, yeah? Spend some time.

WOOLLEY: And that’s feeling Okay?

JOHN: Mhm. If she’s not happy, I’m not going to be happy. Right?

WOOLLEY: Right. It’s an us thing, right? It’s an us. And that’s the way all good marriages work.

NYDIA: Yes.

WOOLLEY: It’s an us.

NYDIA: It’s an us. Both of us-- now we’re both working on these projects. And now it’s not only his projects. It’s mine.

WOOLLEY: Ours.

JOHN: Last night I had to do a lot of work. And she was out there with me late--

NYDIA: Late.

JOHN: --pulling nails.

WOOLLEY: How'd that feel?

JOHN: It felt great. It felt wonderful. It was still work, still hard work.

WOOLLEY: I know. It's still hard work.

JOHN: Felt great. I couldn't have did it without her. I would have been miserable and burnt out.

NYDIA: I'm good at organizing.

JOHN: Yeah.

NYDIA: Saving the nails that would be re-used and putting away all the nails that are not and plucking them out.

WOOLLEY: Good. Right. And you're just together.

NYDIA: Together.

JOHN: Yeah.

WOOLLEY: Right?

NYDIA: And I wouldn't like to be anywhere else.

WOOLLEY: Do you hear that?

JOHN: Yeah.

WOOLLEY: Yeah? That's great. That's wonderful. And you've really made some big changes. Because instead of going into kind of fighting back or blaming him or saying, what's wrong, or what he's doing wrong, you're not doing that anymore. Right?

NYDIA: No. I just accept him as he is and let him be.

WOOLLEY: Yeah.

JOHN: [INAUDIBLE] She even went with me. I took a risk. It was hard. I said, honey? You know, because the Jehovah's Witnesses came by and gave me a flyer to the big assemblies at the [INAUDIBLE]. Can we go one day just to [INAUDIBLE]? Right away, yeah. What? So we went down there and had a good time.

WOOLLEY: How was that for you?

NYDIA: Well, it's teaching.

WOOLLEY: Yeah.

NYDIA: So I learned. We read the Book of Esther once. And they were doing the--

JOHN: Ruth, right? Ruth? I thought you said-- we went to the Spanish side. So I didn't understand.

WOOLLEY: Okay.

NYDIA: And so they did like a little theater, kind of interpretive--

JOHN: Drama.

NYDIA: --drama.

JOHN: Full costume drama.

WOOLLEY: Okay, cool. Yeah. And that was nice.

NYDIA: Went back to the book and remembered something that I already forgot about.

WOOLLEY: Right.

NYDIA: So yeah, it was good.

WOOLLEY: I guess part of me, you know, before any kind of time when people from the Jehovah's Witnesses would come by, it would be so scary for you. And you would go into that fear place, right? They're going to take over my life. They're going to disrespect me. They're going to see me as less than. And I'm going to lose him--

NYDIA: Yeah to them.

WOOLLEY: --to them. I'm going to lose him to them. I guess I can't help but wonder, now that this is feeling better, like you're feeling his love more, and it's feeling more secure, if that makes it a little easier to look into or go to something occasionally with him or whatever.

NYDIA: Right.

WOOLLEY: Is that right?

NYDIA: Yeah, because I don't feel threatened. We talk about not to-- to respect each other's religion, which was one of the big issues in our relationship since the beginning.

WOOLLEY: Yeah.

NYDIA: That I told him that I didn't want to be his girlfriend because he was a Jehovah Witness and I was Catholic. And I said, as long as our religions don't collide, I'll give you an opportunity. We'll see. But I felt threatened since the beginning.

WOOLLEY: Yeah, you felt threatened.

NYDIA: Because they're so persistent.

WOOLLEY: Yeah.

NYDIA: But he assures me now.

WOOLLEY: That what?

NYDIA: That I'm a priority.

WOOLLEY: Yeah. And that he's not going to abandon you for them.

NYDIA: Right.

WOOLLEY: It's almost like another woman in some ways, right? I'm not going to let-- and we're going to go into this together, or we're not going to go. Right? That's kind of been the-- has that kind of been the attitude more?

JOHN: Yeah.

WOOLLEY: Yeah. I'm not saying that has to happen. People work out differences in faith in lots of different ways. Right?

NYDIA: Right.

WOOLLEY: But what they do do-- they always have respect. Right? And when they get scared, like you got scared-- you felt threatened. The other person, rather than getting into power battles about it, the other person is empathic and understanding and tries to alleviate fear, right, by reaching out and connecting.

NYDIA: Right. It happened to us because he knows the Bible, the scriptures. There's a lot of denominations around our neighborhood. A lot of denominations pass through, passing the word of God. But he would always address them and go back and forth with the Bible and the verses and everything. And I felt like he was just showing off.

JOHN: I was just having a conversation.

NYDIA: Having the conversation--

WOOLLEY: And it feels different now?

NYDIA: Now it feels different. I don't--

WOOLLEY: You don't sense him wanting to get into that. You know, show them how much he knows-- any of that kind of thing.

NYDIA: Exactly.

WOOLLEY: Maybe that wasn't what it was like for you. But whatever it was like for you not engaging that way has raised safety levels for you, which

makes it a lot easier for you to go off to some kind of an event. Right?

NYDIA: Right.

WOOLLEY: And not be terrified of losing this guy.

NYDIA: He didn't used to listen to me when I said something. Like, for example, the other day he put a chair out on the sidewalk with a little pillow.

WOOLLEY: Yeah?

NYDIA: And I said, you know what? You're going to attract people there. And they're going to sit down. That's what it's for. If some old lady gets tired-- I said, I don't like it. Please bring it inside. And he did.

WOOLLEY: Oh.

JOHN: And the umbrella. I took off the tether ball.

WOOLLEY: Wow.

JOHN: But I still think it's a good idea. Because it's a shaded tree and there's a lot of people.

NYDIA: He still wants to decorate the sidewalk, too. But I appreciate you listening to me.

WOOLLEY: Do you hear that? Do you hear that?

JOHN: It's got to be 50-50.

WOOLLEY: Yeah.

JOHN: She said something the other day. She knows how much spirituality means to me that's missing-- that I'm the way I am the way I am. But she says she'll even attend the meetings with me. So if I wanted to go back, I can just-- [INAUDIBLE] she'll just sit next to me and support me.

WOOLLEY: Yeah.

JOHN: She won't convert or nothing. But she'll be there and be my mate.

WOOLLEY: Yeah.

JOHN: That's cool. That's all I wanted. I don't want to be alone.

WOOLLEY: Right.

NYDIA: And that means a lot to him. His eyes just went watery. And I said, I feel your heart. You can't be thirsting the word of God. So it just moved me so much--

WOOLLEY: Yeah.

NYDIA: --that I said, no, I'll support you definitely.

YALOM: Now we're going to see another clip with John and Nydia. It's taken them a long time to get there. As we've noted previously, both of them have pretty severe trauma histories. And so they had a lot to navigate to get this place. But we'll see how they're handling disagreement from a more secure position.

JORGENSEN: Yes, and even after couples have this bond that is defined as secure, they will still have hurts that come up between them. Because there is more security, though, they can move into that repair and resolve the hurts much more quickly. Secure couples also don't tolerate staying disconnected. So they generally have less incidents of disconnection, less intensity, and they repair more quickly. There is a lot of positive affect here while they talk about what's different.

WOOLLEY: Did you guys have a good time in Las Vegas?

NYDIA: Yes, we did. After-- yesterday when we were driving, we started jabbing each other.

WOOLLEY: You did?

NYDIA: Yeah. Then I said, do you like the jab? He says, yeah. You want another one? He says, okay. So we started joking about it.

WOOLLEY: Good. And you exited the negative cycle by joking. Huh?

NYDIA: Yes.

WOOLLEY: Yes.

JOHN: I acknowledged if I feel hurt, you just say it. It hurt.

NYDIA: Ouch.

WOOLLEY: Good.

JOHN: Instead of holding it in.

WOOLLEY: Yeah. That's great.

JOHN: Yeah You've got to be honest. The reason that you can be honest is you feel safe.

WOOLLEY: Exactly.

JOHN: But I was a little bit scared of saying it.

WOOLLEY: But you said it. And she responded.

NYDIA: She responded-- yes.

WOOLLEY: What did she do?

JOHN: She didn't fight. You know, she didn't throw one back. She said, okay.

WOOLLEY: And it stopped it.

NYDIA: We stopped it. And then we were laughing.

JOHN: But later on in the car, I made you laugh. I said the exact same thing. Because she knocked me on my energy drink.

NYDIA: I hate those, right? He's so hyper. The energy drink gets him more hyper. And he did that in Las Vegas. He drank an energy drink. Imagine that. [INAUDIBLE] There was no stopping him. And then his sister-- she's still trying to protect him and telling him what to do. And I said, I just gave up. It gets worse. I just go away. Let him have his fun. She's over there. She goes after him. No, no, no, John. You can't be doing that. Get off of the stage.

WOOLLEY: You've learned that you don't do that with him.

NYDIA: No, I don't. Because I'm not his mother.

WOOLLEY: You're not his mother, and he hates it when that happens. Because he doesn't feel respected. Right? He doesn't feel respected at all.

JOHN: I feel like you're stifling my fun. I'm just having fun.

WOOLLEY: Well, it's really hard. You guys get into this cycle. You get back into the cycle if you get upset. Right?

NYDIA: Yeah.

WOOLLEY: Because he ends up feeling controlled--

NYDIA: And disrespected.

WOOLLEY: --and disrespected. It's been hard for him to say anything about it, although he's learning how to now to kind of get it stopped. But it's easy for him to just get defiant. Right? Push back.

NYDIA: Push back.

WOOLLEY: Get mad and then you get hurt. You pull away. And then he's hurt.

NYDIA: But then he has too much fun. Honey, you don't have to do that anymore. You can just relax. Be crazy like that, going away and then trying to be funny or trying to cheer up. Get the crowd going. It's not his job.

WOOLLEY: He likes that, huh?

YALOM: We have covered a lot of ground in the first three volumes of the

series. And EFT really does give a great roadmap. So the therapist is not just responding to the fight of the day, the fight of the week. And I think that's really helpful to keep the therapy on track as much as possible.

We're always going to be thrown off guard. And some couples are really good at that. They practice keeping each other off guard in a sense. And you know they're going to pull you into that inevitably.

So it takes a lot of skill and finesse for therapists to do this well. Mastery of Emotionally Focused Therapy requires the therapist to be fully engaged and present. And even though the steps and stages guide us, it's in no way a cookbook or a cookie cutter type of approach.

JORGENSEN: Yeah the roadmap is really wonderful to have. And being able to use attunement, attachment, and have the steps to guide us is so helpful when we're working with couples. Because it's really very different work than working with individuals. And being able to master that so we can help couples go forward together is such an important thing.

YALOM: As I said, I think back in the first volume, I felt that couple's therapy is really the hardest skill for therapists to master. And I still think so. I think this is a great model to help therapists develop mastery and become much more effective.

But there are always some particular circumstances as well as client characteristics that make it even tougher. In the next and final volume of this series, we'll take a look at some of these challenges and impasses that EFT therapists can face and how to best deal with them.

JORGENSEN: Yes. Being able to be aware that some couples are more challenging than others is important when we're learning couple therapy. Because many therapists will think, I'm just not doing this very well and take it on as kind of their problem instead of recognizing the differences across couples. So it's important to know that different couples will require different skill levels. And some couples are going to take longer than other couples and be very challenging. And then also what to do with those impasses when they do come up?

YALOM: I hope that this video series will provide a lot of help and support. And what else is important for therapists getting support to continue to develop mastery?

JORGENSEN: Getting support is really key for therapists who are working with couples because of the complexity of it. So supervision or support groups, feedback groups, places that you can review your own therapy tapes

and get feedback-- we find very, very helpful for our therapists in training. Also when therapists are aware of their own triggers to kind of be aware of our own internal vulnerabilities so we can recognize that when we're in attunement, we're going to feel things.

And in Emotionally Focused Therapy, the therapist is the tool through attunement that helps move through that process. So it's really helpful for us to know when am I feeling in empathy versus when is this my stuff here? And that's one of the things that comes along with supervision and the development of mastery.

YALOM: Okay. Well, we hope you'll continue with us on the final stage of our journey in volume four-- dealing with challenges and impasses in Emotionally Focused Therapy.