



EMOTION-FOCUSED FAMILY THERAPY

Emotion-Focused Family Therapy (EFFT) was chosen as the foundation of our family therapy approach due to its belief that caregivers are the greatest agents of healing for their loved ones. We call these newer concepts Advanced Caregiver Skills because you already have many skills to support your loved ones. When supporting a loved one's recovery from mental health conditions, Advanced Caregiver Skills increase your effectiveness in interrupting symptoms, support health-focused behaviors and help your loved one process emotions and repair relational wounds.

Caregivers are in a unique position to have a significant impact on their loved one's recovery given that they are "wired" together. Regardless of your loved one's age or your relationship to them or your physical proximity to them, caregivers can be agents of change and healing. As you practice these Advanced Caregiver Skills, keep in mind:

- If what you are doing is working, keep doing it. If you feel that it's no longer working or you're getting stuck or it works in some instances and not others, put emotion coaching into practice.
- Your role is that of a copilot or a coregulator, offering emotional and behavioral support. Caregivers are "wired" to their loved ones. Neuroscience supports the healthy power of supportive caregiver efforts, even if imperfect.
- You don't necessarily need to "do more." Rather, the goal is to "do different" and build from there. The one-degree effect can make a huge difference. Even in the most complex, stressful times, one or two small shifts in your approach can ultimately effect change.



"Emotions go up like an elevator, but the door to reason is on the ground floor. Emotion coaching can get you there." - Dr. Adele Lafrance

EFFT EMOTION COACHING

STEP 1: VALIDATE

Convey understanding of their experience
(from their point of view):

- I could understand you...
- I could imagine you...
- No wonder you...
- It would make sense that you...

Demonstrate that you “get it” with sincerity and
in a way that reflects their positive intentions,
vulnerable feelings or attempts for relief
from pain:

Because 1: _____

Because 2: _____

Because 3: _____

STEP 2: SUPPORT (EMOTIONAL SUPPORT + PRACTICAL SUPPORT)

A. Emotional Need

Offer support, comfort, reassurance or space.

- Anxiety Help to challenge the anxiety.
- Sadness Soothe/comfort.
- Anger Help to assert boundaries.
- Shame Reassure.

Words of Support (Examples)

- It’s going to be okay.
- I understand you. I hear you.
- I believe in you. I believe you can do this.
- We’re in this together.
- Why don’t I give you some time?

B. Practical Need

Redirect, help problem-solve or set limits.

- Redirect to another thought or activity.
- Offer solutions to solve the problem or take over to solve the problem.
- Set a limit.

Offer a Helping Hand (Examples)

- Play a game or listen to music.
- Offer advice or solutions.
- Assist with problem solving.
- Teach them the skill.

HELPFUL TIPS

- Check in with yourself. Are you calm? Take three deep breaths.
- Monitor your own voice tone and volume.
- Match your energy with that of your loved one.

Additional Resources

- **Mental Health Foundations**

A non-profit organization that offers free education videos on each of the EFFT skills, as well as additional workshop opportunities to learn and practice.

To learn more, visit [mentalhealthfoundations.ca](https://www.mentalhealthfoundations.ca)

For additional resources, visit EatingRecovery.com/FamilyFriendsSeries

For more information on this topic or if you have questions about this topic, please email Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM