AEDP for Couples:
A Somatically-Based Model
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The Seven Channels of Experience

energetic  imaginal
movement  sensation
witness  auditory
emotional  visual

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AEDP for Couples is Based on:

- AEDP (Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy) (Fosha)
- Attachment research
- Affective neuroscience
- Trauma treatment methods
- Process Oriented Psychology (Mindell)
- Authentic Movement (Adler)

The Focus of AEDP for Couples beginning in the first moments:

**For the Couple**

- Evoke and amplify the *transformance* strivings (Fosha, 2009) to love and be loved (Mars, 2011)
- “If this therapy is to be a success, what do you want to experience with each other?”
- Move from wronging to longing
- Build capacity to track somatic awareness
- Catch and amplify signals of love
AEDP for Couples from first session onward:
For the therapist

- Search for what you can genuinely welcome
- Affirm when you can and consciously set aside distaste
- Somatically track ourselves and each couple member
- Selectively deepen and amplify the felt experience of love
- Seek to establish a virtuous circle that leads to a secure base

AEDP for Couples is:
A SOMATIC HOLDING MODEL
Distinguishing features of AEDPfC

- Model and shape I-statements paired with channels of experience
- Create safety by standing against put-downs
- Help couple members find what is true in what the other says
- Couple members talk WITH EACH OTHER from the start
- Cultivate vulnerable-kind-firmness

Nutritive Moments

- Find, evoke and amplify the sound and feel of self-at-best moments and savor them
- Acknowledgement, recognition, seeing and being seen
- Up-regulating from shame through authentic relational affirmation
- Down regulating anger
Unresolved Trauma Triggers

Dorsal Vagal Response

- When the source of love is paired with danger and the shame of failure
- Going limp in the face of blaming and shaming: Learned helplessness
- The Dorsal Vagal Response is adaptive in all mammals, It reduces suffering during the trauma
- The Dorsal Vagal Response is maladaptive in intimate relating It is CENTRAL to stuckness and reactivity

Identifying the Dorsal Vagal Response

1) Sustained muscle tension, squirming, scratching, eye rubbing (histamine)
2) Loss of energy, spacing out, disembodied distancing, forgetting, yawning
3) “Sleepy torpor”, heaviness, slumping, entropy
4) Difficult to move, think or speak: a brain brown-out, if not outright blackout
What is coming through you…

◆ … that was done to you
◆ … that was neglected and thwarted
◆ … that was suppressed and is now needing to be welcomed
◆ … that you want to cultivate and amplify now in session and later between sessions

Couple members create healing and justice through bringing into the here-and-now what was needed in the there-and-then

SEVEN CHANNELS OF EXPERIENCE

energetic       imaginal
movement         sensation
witness           auditory
emotional        visual
Sensation:
The range of sensations in the nerves, muscles, organs and skin:
- Tension to relaxation in any part of the body
- Hotness to coolness
- Comfort to discomfort
- Light to burdened
- Aching to relief
- “Prickly” to pleasure

Emotion:
- Categorical emotions of anger, sadness, fear, joy, surprise and disgust
- “How do you know that you are sad?”
  “Feel into where the sadness is strongest.”
- “What does that anger/sadness/fear/joy/surprise/disgust want to do/say?”
Energetic:

- Energetic lightness to heaviness
- Eye brightness to dimness
- Vivid iris coloration to faded
- Energetic charge, fullness or depletion
- “Chills” or streaming up or down the torso, arms
- Flushing or rising heat

Movement:

- Breath rate, type and depth
- Bring focus to heart rate, pounding, palpitations
- Selectively amplify subtle and overt gesture, facial expression
- Bring awareness to stillness, frozenness, stiffness
- Opens the gateway to what “wants to happen” (neuroceptive ➔ interoceptive ➔ decisive adaptive actions)
Auditory:

- Resonance and pitch of voice tone, rhythmic patterns of speech and prosody
- Hear and feel into where in your body and in the patient’s body the voice emanates and resonates
- Feel into changes in the sound of the breath (sighing, yawning, friction in breathing, etc.)
- Listen for and organize key content and meaning of speech

Visual:

- See (rather than watch) facial micro-expressions
- See skin coloration changes in flushing or paleness
- Track for eye brightness, sparkle, iris clarity
- Express through eye contact our own supportive intention, sadness or delight
Imaginal:

- Evoke visual images (present, past or future)
- Amplify impulses toward imaginal adaptive actions (what to you want!)
- Amplify hearing in imagined or remembered sound (a little one within crying, a sub-part whispering)
- Inquire, evoke and expand upon imaginal olfactory, taste, sensation, energetic
- Each of the other six channels is in the imaginal

Polyvagal Theory: The Quest for Safety
Adapted from Steven Porges, 2010

Stimulus/Environment

Nervous System

Safety

Danger

Attachment

Threat

Ventral Vagal Response

Social engagement system
eye contact, voice tone and
prosody, supports optimal
arousal level: self-at best

Dorsal Vagal Response: Immobilization

Defensive strategies:
sleepy torpor, collapse,
dissociation: self-at-worst

Defensive Mobilization Strategies:
Sympathetic/Adrenal system
(Arming/Escaping)

Fight or Flight
Updrafting

- Finding and intensifying moments of micro-celebration and affirmation
- Harnessing joy and uplifting moments of love that feels good
- Practicing somatic and relational undoing of aloneness
- Converting merged “we statements” and “you statements” into “I statements” to reduce merger, inflammation and to increase individuation

Resources for AEDP for Couples


Both papers available by request at davidmarsphd@gmail.com

- Four 3-DVD sets of professional training programs are also available complete with theory and practice and clinical video showing completed AEDP for Couples treatment processes available at https://www.aedpinstitute.org/publications/dvds/
For Further Training

- [http://www.cfttsite.com/aedp-therapy-events](http://www.cfttsite.com/aedp-therapy-events)


- [http://www.cfttsite.com/videos](http://www.cfttsite.com/videos)