



2014 Conference

**Emotion-Focused Therapy:
Ten Years in Hong Kong**

Organizer



The Hong Kong Catholic Marriage Advisory Council

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2014 Conference on Emotional-Focused Therapy—

Ten years in Hong Kong

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Foreword

by Professor Leslie Greenberg

It is with great pleasure that I write this foreword to the first Hong Kong volume to commemorate 10 years of training in Hong Kong. The pleasure I feel involves joy and pride and feelings of appreciation for all the people involved in having made this happen. It is most appropriate to share my feelings as Emotion-Focused Therapy is based on the notion that I “I feel, therefore I am” and that emotions are an adaptive component of human functioning.

Training in Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) promoted by The Hong Kong Catholic Marriage Advisory Council has been going on in Hong Kong for more than a decade and is part of the burgeoning EFT training taking place in Asia and Europe as well as in North America. A group of EFT trainers and I have offered numerous workshops and training programmes in Hong Kong. A number of Hong Kong therapists have come to Canada to complete trainings there, the home base of EFT and brought it back to Hong Kong. All in all it seems like EFT has made a significant impact in Hong Kong.

I think EFT fits well with a need in Cantonese society to move to recognising emotion as an important aspect of wisdom and to becoming a more emotion friendly society. Trainees have approached training in EFT with enthusiasm and have adopted

this approach with a good intuitive understanding of the importance of emotion in human suffering and mental health. The Asian cultures, although traditionally being less facially emotionally expressive than some western cultures, have taken quite naturally to an approach which stresses that emotional awareness, experience and expression are critical aspects of human functioning and that they provide both colour and meaning to life. Emotions after all are the constant companions of our lives, and they govern much of what we do. As Vincent van Gogh (1889) wrote, “Don’t let’s forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives, and that we obey them without knowing it.”

Emotional suffering thus cannot be understood simply as being caused by cognitive or behavioural difficulties and therefore solved by these methods alone. Emotional pain comes from deep in the soul. The depth and subtlety of the psyche is well expressed in much Asian literature, art and theater and thus an approach which focuses on facing avoided pain and making meaning of this to change narratives fits into Asian culture as an alternative to rational thinking alone.

With the advent of a view of emotion as an adaptive resource and a meaning system, rather than as something that needs to be gotten rid of cathartically, modified, or corrected by reason, the understanding of emotion’s role in human relationships and psychotherapy has produced a sea change in psychotherapy. This “new look” has begun to set a new agenda for psychotherapy research—to determine how we can best facilitate change in emotions, treating emotions as independent variables that exist as such, rather than being secondary to cognition. Key issues for clinicians now are how best to promote access to and awareness of emotion and how to help the transformation of maladaptive emotion. I hope this approach helps you to improve your understanding of how to facilitate this kind of emotional change

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