



The emWave® Approach to Better Relationships

Use in your relationship practice to help couples:

- self-soothe by learning to detect when they are stressed and to calm themselves
- address the over-arousal that many couples display when they get into conflict
- value the power of their emotions to facilitate communication and connection
- create positive feelings and positive affective interactions





A Guide for Couples Therapists

Welcome to an easy, practical approach to utilizing a promising technology, that helps you in assisting your couples with their relationship goals. This booklet will provide you with the necessary information to begin your use of the emWave2® monitor in your relationship practice. The emWave Approach will enable you to (1) learn how to use the emWave2 monitor, (2) acquire the basic skills to teach physiological coherence (a physiological state associated with a sine wave-like pattern in the heart rhythms, and increased heart rate variability), and (3) integrate the emWave2 technology into your couples sessions.

The emWave Approach

The emWave Approach to Better Relationships will provide you with the knowledge to help couples to (1) self-soothe by learning to detect when they are stressed, and to calm themselves, (2) value the power of their emotions, and (3) create positive feelings and positive affective interactions. This system can help your couples create new mental and emotional rhythms to reduce the stress they accumulate during the day that they bring into their relationship. It addresses the over-arousal that many couples display when they get into conflict with each other. The emWave Approach emphasizes the importance of emotions and their effects on the heart and mind. It encourages couples to listen to their feelings and to shift into a neutral or positive feeling as soon as possible in order to facilitate communication and connection.

The emWave Approach facilitates a mind- body state that is akin to being “in the zone” or “peak performance”state. In this way it is different from meditation and relaxation training which are associated with primarily an inactive state of calmness and quiet of going within. The emWave Approach utilizes emWave2 technology and “physiological coherence” to encourage an active participatory, calm, focused, and connected state of being.

The emWave2 technology and the scientifically validated techniques that you will be able to use with your couples have been developed by HeartMath, a respected company in improving relationships, health and performance, while reducing stress, and Drs. John and Julie Gottman, leaders in relationship research and the creators of the highly effective Gottman Method for couples. A combination of the emWave2 technology, HeartMath techniques, and the Gottman-Rapport communication exercise can help your couples improve their communication and problem solving skills, deepen their connection and friendship with each other, while also helping them to feel more heartfelt within themselves and about their partner. It can be a useful tool for down- regulating both anger and anxiety.

The research on the stress response and its effects on the human body and performance suggest that as the stress response intensifies, the body may enter into the fight or flight mode with eventual reduction in performance. Dr. John Gottman’s research into DPA (diffused physiological arousal) with couples in conflict, suggests significant changes in the body and brain



that inhibited the couples' ability to listen, take in new information and change old thinking, responding and behaving patterns. Over-arousal supports attack, defend, and withdraw reactions when couples hold different positions that lead to conflict. Repeated failure to communicate effectively about important issues in the relationship, coupled with active or passive hostility, leads to disconnection and a negative view of the partner and the relationship. Continual negative feelings and beliefs undermine the health, happiness and stability of the couple and opens the door to verbal, emotional and physical abuse. In such an environment, affairs and divorce are likely.

The ability to calm down when in DPA is absolutely critical for couples. Healthy, happy and stable relationships are created in a field of positive emotions and interactions. The leading research in marriage and relationship supports this important reality in couple interactions. The Institute of HeartMath's nineteen years of thorough research into the power of positive emotions not only supports the work of Dr. John Gottman, Dr. Sue Johnson, Dr. Harville Hendrix and other leading researchers in this field, it delivers to you and your couples a promising technology for achieving inner calm and positive affect.

The emWave Approach to Better Relationships can help you teach your couples to manage their destructive psychophysiological over-arousal during times of conflict, use their negative emotions as information, shift from a negative emotional state to a positive one and open their hearts and minds to their partner. Integrating the emWave Approach within the relationship model that you use in your practice, can assist you in helping your couples achieve a more loving, appreciative, compassionate and fun relationship.

Using Your emWave2 Technology

The emWave Approach to Better Relationships guides you quickly through what you need to know to begin using this technology with your couples. The emWave2 gives real-time feedback on the coherence or incoherence of the heart rhythm pattern which has direct influence on most of the body's functions. The emWave2 unit is both a small portable HRV office and home heart rhythm monitor capable of recording up to eighteen hours of downloadable data and also is a computer training and assessment instrument.

In *The emWave Approach to Better Relationships* you have the opportunity to learn HeartMath techniques along with the emWave2 technology to improve the quality and coherence of the heart rhythm of your couples. Improving heart coherence can reduce stress and reset the physiology of your clients for better communication and problem solving. As the heart rhythms become more coherent (smooth and ordered), the brain and nervous system may synchronize to the heart's coherent rhythm, and this can help release the emotional stress, which often results in DPA.



The emWave2 technology can help in calming the minds and emotions of your couples and help them deal more effectively with achieving their relationship goals.

The emWave Approach Basic Four Step Program

You may find that the following steps in the Basic Four Step Program are all you will need to begin integrating the emWave2 technology into your relationship practice.

Step 1 – Obtaining and Learning to Operate the emWave2

In order to use this program, it is recommended that you first purchase two of the emWave2s. You may also want to purchase additional emWave2 units for your couples to train and monitor their home practice. The emWave2 units will be the instrument you will use during couples therapy, for education, initial training, monitoring during couple exercises and for the couples home practice. Secondly, you need to become familiar with how to operate the emWave2 unit.

Quick Start Guide: After removing the contents from the box, follow steps 1, 2 & 3 of the *Quick Start Guide*

Next review and follow the *8 easy steps to using your emWave2 unit on the go* which will show you how to operate the emWave2 unit in its most basic mode. However, in order to really understand how it works, the various features it offers, and the science behind it, you will need to review the enclosed written material and CD. You may also watch the online training videos at <http://www.heartmath.com/personal-use/emwave-training-videos.html> and listen to the free telephone training every Tuesday at noon PT. The phone number and pin code is on the box that your emWave2 unit came in.

Using the *Quick Start Guide*, experiment with the emWave2 unit and get comfortable using it by itself and with the emWave2 computer software. Become familiar with adjusting the brightness and sound levels and using both the ear sensor and the thumb sensor. The ear sensor is recommended for use with your couples during the therapy sessions.

Step 2 – Learn the Quick Coherence® Technique

The first technique you will learn and teach to your couples with the emWave2 is the Quick Coherence Technique. You can learn this simple and highly effective technique in three ways:

1. Read about it in the *Quick Start Guide*.
2. Within the emWave2 computer software, click on the air balloon icon at the top middle of the main screen and then click on the Coherence Coach®.
3. Go to the emWave Library and click on the “open book icon” at the top left corner of the



main screen in the emWave2 computer software and then click on, *What is Coherence* and *Quick Coherence Tutorial*.

Step 3 – Practice the Quick Coherence technique while using the emWave2 technology

Once you have learned the technique, you are ready to use it along with the emWave2 unit. The goal in using the Quick Coherence technique with the emWave2 unit is to get the light at the top of the emWave2 unit to turn from red (low coherence) which is normal, to blue (medium coherence) which is much improved, to green (high coherence) which is the optimal state. The emWave2 computer software has a heart rhythm pattern and three coherence bars instead of lights with percent time in red, blue and green.

Turn on the emWave2 and make sure you are in Challenge Level 1

Heart Focus and Heart breathing: Focus your attention in the area of your heart and then breathe deeply. Breathe silently in and slowly out. Synchronize your breathing, either with the moving blue lights on the emWave2, or with the moving ball on the Coherence Coach in the emWave2 computer software. Inhale as the lights or ball rise and exhale as they fall.

Heart Feeling: Once you have found a smooth easy breathing rhythm, attempt to feel a positive emotion, like appreciation for the good things in your life, or the love and care you feel for someone (child, spouse, pet) or something (a beautiful sunset, a fun vacation, a hobby etc.).

Watch the top light on the emWave2 unit change from red to blue to green, or watch the heart rhythm pattern on the emWave2 computer software in the top part of the screen and the three coherence bars in the lower right hand corner of the screen. Sustain blue or green for as long as you can. Make it a gentle process and feel the appreciation.

If you practice the technique with your eyes closed, which can be helpful when you are first learning, you will be able to tell when you have shifted into medium or high coherence through listening to the change in the tones.

Step 4 – Integrating the emWave Approach into your relationship practice

You are now ready to introduce the emWave Approach into your relationship practice. The following *Four Session Protocol* provides an easy and effective model.



Session 1 - Introducing the emWave2 technology to your couples

The emWave Approach is an adjunct to couples therapy and it is recommended that it is introduced to your couples in their first session with you. An effective way to do that is by adding a paragraph or two in your consent form about the negative effects of stress and over-arousal and their harmful effects on relationship, along with a brief description of the emWave2 technology. In your office, you can display the two emWave2 monitors that you will be using with your couples, by placing them on a table near your couple, attaching them to the couch or chairs, attaching them to microphone stands or attaching them to a wall. By doing this, you are making the emWave2 monitor visible to your couple when they first come into your office since you will be using them in your first session. In this way the couple has an opportunity to ask you about the emWave2 monitors, and if they do not, than you can bring their attention to them later in the session.

About two-thirds into the session is an opportune time to direct your couple to the emWave2 monitors and explain how you use them within couples' therapy. With their consent, attach the ear clips to each of them and activate the emWave2 monitors. Make sure that the instruments are in Basic Node, set at level one and that the tone feedback is on. Have the couple focus their attention on the blue breathing lights on their emWave2 monitor, while you coach them to inhale as the lights move up and exhale as the lights move down. As they watch the top light go from red to blue to green and receive tone feedback, validate their success. Positive reinforcement through giving encouraging comments when your couple produces blue or green lights, not only makes the experience pleasant, it increases their success.

Briefly introduce the Quick Coherence technique by guiding them through the exercise. Ask them to focus on their relationship goals and the feeling that they would have when they have achieved the goals. Give positive reinforcement when you see or hear them move into coherence.

End the session by disconnecting the ear clips, turning off the emWave2 monitors and getting feedback from your couple. Inform them that at the beginning of the next session, you will provide them with an experience of working with the emWave2 computer software. Tell them that this will provide them with more interesting information about themselves and answer some of the questions that they may have about their heart rate variability (HRV).

You may want to provide them with the HeartMath Coherence Coach CD with written instructions for installing it on their computer (just print the read me file from the CD). Ask them to practice the Quick Coherence technique with the Coherence Coach CD if you have provided them one, or without the CD, once a day until their next session. Encourage them to use the technique whenever they become stressed or need to take a time out when their conflicts become heated. Offer them the HeartMath brochure called *The emWave Approach to Creating Relationships That Work*.

Session 2 - Introducing the emWave2 computer program to your couples

Early in the second session, ask your couple about their daily practice with the Quick Coherence technique or the Coherence Coach CD if you provided them one. Were they able to utilize the Heart-Focus Breathing and Heart Feeling when stressed or during a conflict? Would they like to continue learning more about their heart and nervous system behavior with the emWave2 computer training?

Before you begin the emWave2 computer training with your couple, you can briefly discuss with them the importance and role of negative, distressing emotions. Share with them how negative emotions are valuable for the information they contain about what is taking place in our lives. Negative emotions give information about what is not wanted and can be used to know where to place our focus and energy. Going from what we do not want, to what we want is an important step in creating success in our life and relationships. Negative emotions are highly effective in getting our attention, and can be destructive when they are acted out or repressed. Once we receive the information, it is important to calm ourselves and release the negative emotions. Directing our attention to what we want and empowering this with a positive feeling not only feels better, it supports getting what we want and need.

Now attach the ear clip sensor of the emWave2 monitor to the partner that shows the most enthusiasm and volunteers to go first while the other observes. If you are providing a emWave2 monitor for each of your couples, this is the time to set up the file name on their emWave2 monitor for their home practice. If you are only using the emWave2 monitors for in office training, you will need to change their file name, delete previous sessions from other couples and print the session results for their records.

Begin by entering their name (or code if pricing is an issue) into their file and clicking on the air balloon icon at the top middle of the screen. Next take a two-minute baseline reading with them in a resting state. Be sure to check the accuracy of the HRV waveform pattern for a poor connection or artifact. Stop the session. The session data will automatically be saved to their file. Now click on the air balloon icon and then the Coherence Coach icon.

Instruct them to breathe with the ball moving on the Coherence Coach like they have been doing at home as they follow the Quick Coherence auditory instructions. You can switch from the Coherence Coach to the screen with the HRV waveform by clicking on the heart icon just to the left of the air balloon to view their HRV pattern and then back to the Coherence Coach. When they are finished with the Quick Coherence exercise, give positive feedback for any and all patterns of coherence that they produce. This is also a good time to briefly explain how their slow rhythmic breathing and positive emotions balances their autonomic nervous system and creates a coherent heart pattern.

Now switch to the other partner and repeat the above protocol.



Take a few minutes to discuss the saved data with your couple. Be sure to point out the patterns of coherence that each displayed during this training. Emphasize that they need to continue their practice of the Quick Coherence technique in order to train their heart and nervous system to go into coherence when they are experiencing the stress response. Ask them to practice this skill for ten to fifteen minutes, twice a day for the next week and to especially use it when a conflict begins to heat up.

Session -3- Using the emWave2 technology to facilitate effective communication

Check in with your couple about their week and their use of the Quick Coherence technique. Briefly answer any question that they may have. If you are having them use the emWave2 monitor at home, be sure to download their data and validate their progress.

Inform them that today they will have an opportunity to use their skills of self calming while engaged in a discussion about one of their areas of disagreement. The purpose of this activity is to effectively communicate their positions about a topic that they perceive differently, while they experience being heard and understood, and while they stay calm. Assure them that you will assist them and that they will have the emWave2 monitor for feedback.

Once a mildly charged topic has been selected, attach the ear clips to each of them and turn the sound off on the emWave2 monitors. Have them each begin by practicing the Quick Coherence technique and focusing on the positive feeling that they have when they imagine themselves being heard and understood by their partner. Remind them that the communication exercise that they are engaged in is an effective way of connecting with their partner and keeping their hearts open.

The couple will take turns being both the Speaker and the Listener. The Speaker's goal is to present what they have to say in a way that the Listener can receive it. The use of "I" statements, their own feelings, a description of what happened from their point of view, and asking for what they want, are to be used during the exercise. The Listener's goal is to stay calm, open and receptive to the information that the Speaker is giving and regulate their breathing to produce a blue or green light on their emWave2 monitor.

The following four steps are important when listening: (1) listen closely to the words, needs, and perspective being said, (2) listen to the feelings that are behind the words and name them, (3) validate the Speaker by saying, "It makes sense to me that you would feel this way and have these needs, because..." and (4) It is OK to ask questions The Listener periodically can express understanding of the speaker's position by nodding.

Both of the emWave2 monitors are positioned so that you and your couple can view them



simultaneously and use their feedback to modify over-arousal. With this setup, you can coach your couple in learning this valuable communication skill with the information that you receive from their interactions and from their emWave2 monitors. By keeping your feedback statements to them short, clear and concise, you will keep the focus on their process and not on you. In this way, your feedback is a lot like that of the emWave2 monitor. It assists your couple in developing effective communication skills without being overly invasive.

Allow each partner about 10 to 15 minutes to be both the Speaker and the Listener.

Ask your couple to practice this communication exercise at least two times at home to facilitate each of them being heard and understood while staying calm. Remind them to take a break should either of them become over aroused.

Session -4- Using the emWave2 technology at the beginning of each session and during therapy

Check in with the home progress that your couple has experienced using the emWave Approach skills. Evaluate their in session activities, their self reports and the data from their emWave2 home practice (if they have used the emWave2 monitor at home) to determine how you will move forward with your couple's therapeutic goals and if you will continue working with their self calming and listening skills.

You may want to begin each session by attaching each of them to the emWave2 monitor and guiding them into coherence by using their breathing as the primary driver for achieving this optimal psychophysiological state. Once this initial coherence is attained, you can have them imagine themselves successfully experiencing the skill you will engage them in and the feelings that go with this image. Alternative images that they may focus on are: characteristics that they appreciate in their partner, what they enjoy about their relationship, realization of the goals that they have for their relationship, being able to hold onto themselves in conflict, and reaching win/win solutions etc.

The emWave Approach can help connect your couples to their hearts and the power that positive emotions play in their lives and relationships. It helps you integrate into your relationship practice the scientific research of eminent psychologists, cardiologists, universities, research institutes, and knowledge from past. Your couples will have the direct experience of learning to calm themselves when in the stress response, and getting accurate feedback when they have created coherence. They may be able to significantly reduce the toxic effects of conflicts in their relationship and be in a more receptive state for benefiting from the relationship therapy that you offer them.



Summary of the emWave Approach to Better Relationships Easy Plan

This booklet provides you with simple, easy to implement, cost effective HRV biofeedback instrument and protocols for teaching your couples to move from the over-arousal of the stress response to the inner peace, clarity and openness of self calming. Your couples can learn to effectively manage their physiological and emotional reactions when they are in conflict and learn to connect to their hearts and each other. The emWave Approach provides you with the tools you need to manage the anger, hostility and disconnection that distressed couples bring to your office.

Basic Four Step Program

1. Learn how to operate your emWave2 monitor. Read the Quick Start Guide, watch the online training videos or telephone training program to become familiar with the devices.
2. Learn the Quick Coherence technique and practice it with the emWave2 monitor. Study the steps found in the Quick Start Guide, the emWave Library and use the Coherence Coach to master this simple technique.
3. Practice the Quick Coherence technique while using your emWave2 monitor until you can get the light at the top on the monitor to turn green and the green coherence bar graph on the emWave2 computer program to increase, indicating you are in high coherence.
4. Integrate the emWave Approach into your relationship practice by following the four session protocol:

Session -1- Introduce the emWave2 monitor to your couples.

Session -2- Introduce the emWave2 monitor computer program to your couples.

Session -3- Use the emWave2 monitor to facilitate effective communication.

Session -4- Use the emWave2 monitor at the beginning of each session and during therapy

Brief cases of couples who benefited from the emWave Approach

The case of the angry professionals

This case involves a professional couple who were separated, angry, hostile and defensive. One of them wanted to get back together and the other was relieved to be separated. They had a great deal of pain between them resulting from numerous betrayals. Guilt and children brought them into therapy. Introducing them to the emWave2 at the end of the first session was necessary to calm them down, let them know that their anger and stress would be effectively addressed, and teach them the skills of self-soothing. The second session on the emWave2 computer program revealed a significantly incoherent HRV pattern in one of them, moderately improved with coaching. This was also the partner with the acting out behavior in the relationship and who was the most distressed about the separation.

The result of using the emWave Approach during many of the subsequent sessions provided enough calming and heart connection for both of them to reach an agreement about the separation that they could accept and live with.

The case of the disconnected couple

This couple presented themselves as calm, agreeable and with no overt fighting in their relationship. They came to therapy because they found it extremely hard to talk about the many issues that they personally encountered in their marriage but did not talk about. Their stress appeared in the form of anxiety in one of them and physical illness in the other.

Using the emWave Approach with emotional coaching helped each of them achieve enough inner calm and personal courage to risk letting the other know what was happening within them. This level of trust and connection enabled them to move forward on their relationship journey.

The case of sexual performance anxiety

This is a married couple experiencing sexual problems due to his fear of initiating sex and her feeling depressed and angry. His anxiety of not being able to perform consistently when they engage in sexual activity, resulted in his avoidance of all sexual contact with his wife. She became depressed and hopeless about their sex life and was considering leaving the relationship.

Integrating the emWave Approach into the therapy sessions assisted them in being able to talk about their issues openly and honestly by reducing their anxiety and helping them to access their heartfelt emotions. The skills that they learned in the sessions were transferred to their bedroom.



For additional information and purchasing of the emWave2 monitor, please go to www.gottman.com.

Ray Varlinsky is a licensed California Marriage and Family Therapist with over 14 years experience working with couples and individuals in his private practice. Ray is a certified Gottman Method Therapist and Gottman Couples ASL Workshop Leader and a frequent presenter at the Annual Gottman Conferences. He is BCIA biofeedback and neurofeedback certified with 28 years of experience using biofeedback in medical institutions. Ray has taught for 26 year in the psychology department at Butte College. He has been using HeartMath's technologies and HRV instruments in his private practice, workshops and conferences for the last 12 years. He has facilitated the emWave technologies into the Gottman Institute and recently successfully introduced the emWave into the Boystown and Girlstown orphanages in South Korea. Ray has developed the emWave Approach to Better Relationships and continues his work with couples in his private practice and teaching and presenting at workshops and conferences.

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