

## AEDP for Couples

### Transforming Potential Divorce into Falling Freshly in Love in the Thirtieth Year of Marriage

By David Mars

**Abstract:** This paper shows the pre to post-treatment journey of a couple who came through an accelerated treatment process of eleven sessions of AEDP for Couples. In the course of these sessions, they moved from the brink of divorce to freshly falling in love with each other after thirty years of marriage. Key interventions of the AEDP for Couples method are shown for establishing and deepening safety within the couple dyad. This then facilitates the treatment of each couple member's trauma and deprivation within the couple sessions. This paper follows on and complements the more theoretical vantage point of the previous paper on this topic in the 2011 *Transformance Journal* "AEDP for Couples: From Stuckness and Reactivity to the Felt Experience of Love".

**This paper** begins by introducing the transcript of the initial session of a couple in the dangerous avoid-avoid phase of relationship distress. The avoid-avoid phase is a dynamic in which the former pursuer, who has been the more anxiously attached partner slowly becomes resigned and withdraws and begins acting the part of being ambivalently attached with a pattern of angrily blocking her partner's attempts to connect. The second transcript shows the contrasting experience of the same couple in their eleventh session. The reader will be able to note significantly increased signs of earned secure attachment (Roisman et al, 2002) as a result of their relationship having become a vehicle of transformation (Mars, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). This change is based on each of them experiencing loving and being loved in an increasingly balanced way both within sessions and between sessions. This process has contributed to the ongoing healing of each of their attachment-based deprivation and trauma from their previous thirty years of marriage and in each of their early development.

There is a complexity in the treatment of this loveable couple, which involves the strain introduced not by alcoholism, but the process of intense involvement in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) itself. In my clinical practice of treating couples over the last forty years, I have seen first-hand the immense power of AA in helping individuals with addictions to change their lives for the better. Over the past ten years, I have seen the vital role the AEDP for Couples method can play to facilitate the process of quantum transformation during early, mid-stage and late recovery from addiction. The function of AEDP for Couples is to co-construct the intimacy and connection (Greenan & Tunnell, 2003) needed to heal the underlying attachment-level trauma that underlies both marital dysfunction and addiction (Mars, 2010, 2011)

During the telephone intake interview and in the first session, I learn about Matt's avid immersion in Alcoholics Anonymous. For nine years, he has been going to frequent

meetings in the evenings, working with a number of sponsors, becoming a sponsor for others and twice working the steps of recovery. Matt has regularly attended AA-oriented men's groups in the evenings and has devoted many hours to volunteering for the church as part of his spiritual service in recovery. Over the nine years, Matt has increasingly gotten his primary attachment needs met from his AA-based relationships separately from Jane. Meanwhile, Jane has come to feel increasingly lonely and abandoned by Matt in their marriage. Nine months before they began couples treatment, Jane told Matt that she was on the verge of leaving the marriage due to her frustration, hopelessness and persistent feelings of emptiness. They both entered into individual treatment, with Jane asserting that either the relationship had to change or that she was leaving. Nine months later, on referral from both of their individual therapists, they came into my office to begin couple treatment.

In their first session, I greet Jane and Matt (not their real names) warmly and get them settled in their stocking feet on the couch. A shoes-off office policy is an important part of the AEDP for Couples method, so that over time the couple can make the overstuffed couch their attachment nest. I start off by asking them to tell each other what they want to develop with each other through the couple therapy. This is distinctive in AEDP for Couples. Rather than a "triangular" treatment in which both couple members speak to the therapist about the *problems* they have with each other, the therapist instead sets the container for treatment from the first minutes of the first session by helping the couple members to speak directly to each other about what each *wants* to experience **with** the other. This is different from saying what is "not wanted," which brings an atmosphere of complaint. This approach is also different from couple members making demands of what each one wants **from** the other, which brings an atmosphere of demand with resulting resistance and power struggle.

This form of couple treatment is a "somatic holding" model (Mars, 2014b), in which embodied experience is spoken in I-statements. The therapist helps both couple members to regulate their affect and to individuate by each owning his or her (or her and her or his and his) owned experience, rather than blurred we-statements or you-statements laced with projections, judgments and labels. This is coherent with the tracking of the somatic intersubjective field advocated by Shore (2012). In the AEDP for Couples model, we develop a different pattern than one couple member "telling on the other" for his or her faults and flaws, which can put the therapist in the role of the teacher, parent or problem-solving higher authority who is supposed to be the "expert" with the answers. This time-honored practice of telling the faults and failures of the other and of the relationship in couple treatment can generate anxiety, shame, revenge and dissociation in one or both members and can contaminate the safe container for deep, relational, somatically attuned, transformational treatment.

In AEDP for Couples we are seeking to generate a safe container from the first moments in treatment (Fosha, 2000; Mars, 2011), to affirm and slow down the communications and to speak from a place of increasing embodied awareness and kindness, to recall and speak of what makes the partner and the relationship worth engaging and "stretching" for.

The theme of every session is scaffolding a process of each couple member speaking from his or her heart the necessary truths about what he or she longs for, longs to give and be received by the other. The somatic focus of AEDP for Couples invites couple members to open their perception, reception and expression of emotion, and also of the other six Channels of Experience of sensation, energy, movement, auditory, visual and imaginal experiences [1] (Mars, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014).

Safety and affect regulation in each session are invoked by finding alternatives in-the-moment for any sarcasm, put-downs and gallows humor that emerge. Gallows humor (Mars, 2014a, 2014b) is a tactical defense in which what is painful to one or both couple members is described as funny and becomes the subject of derisive, defensive or socialized laughter. A distinctive feature of AEDP for Couples is to take a “nip it in the bud” position and to skillfully, gently and kindly confront and redirect laughing about what hurts and are passive aggressive put-downs, however subtle or overt. There is no “blowing off steam period” or acceptance that “this is the couple’s cultural norm.” There is no attitude in the AEDP for Couples treatment model that “we must see what the couple does at self-at-worst to really understand the system.” Establishing safety requires generating a safe place starting in the first session and in every session with the therapist gently and firmly highlighting the need to find a new way to hear and speak that builds self-reflective capacity and choicefulness in speaking *and* gesturing that progressively affirms safety and mutual respect. This affirms that justice within the relational dynamic is a precursor to verifiable trust and love (Mars, 2013, 2014a, 2014b).

Anger in this model is dealt with by helping the triggered couple member to say in I-statements to the partner what the body experience is of the anger and what is the *internal* trigger that he or she is experiencing. If necessary, the therapist “steps in” and redirects the dysregulated couple member to direct the anger in the conversation to the therapist and away from the partner. The intention is to immediately work toward regulating maladaptive anger, such as contempt, rage or revenge impulses, so the communication can be deeply received for its true meaning by both the couple members and the therapist. The beauty in this process is that often even the speaker of the dysregulated anger does not initially know what the source of the trigger is, only that he or she is “sick of the button being pushed.” Almost without exception, the initial intensity of the voice tones, gestures and facial expressions of contempt, rage or disgust relate to early trauma or deprivation history (Mars, 2013, Tatkin, 2011). These evocations of pockets of unresolved trauma (Wallin, 2007) are noted as such by the therapist either silently or explicitly and engaged productively in healing portrayals (Fosha, 2000; Mars, 2012) at opportune moments in treatment.

In AEDP for Couples, the phase of trauma treatment using healing portrayals only takes place once the container of safety is firmly in place. The intention throughout treatment is to construct and maintain an “early warning system of awareness” (Mars, 1988, 1995) within each session that transforms the destructive potential of re-enactments of early trauma into healing experiences of couple members giving and receiving from each other “in the here and now what was needed in the there and then” (van der Kolk, 2014). This

is the simplest description of a healing “redo” portrayal. Of course, the couple therapist works to scaffold and steer disruptions into new healing experiences, but in the AEDP for Couples model, it is the connections the couples make to younger parts of themselves that helps generate powerful bonds of love and understanding through reunion portrayals, rescue portrayals and anger portrayals with his or her partner present as a supportive witness or as an active participant if invited “into the portrayal” by the partner. Healing portrayals activate transference drives (Fosha, 2006, 2009a; Prenn, 2010) in both partners to become a true other (Fosha, 2005; Fosha & Russell) to one another. In these portrayals, each partner’s urge to love, protect and support the other bring the core affects of surprise and joy into the sessions with fresh adaptive actions that heal and generate transformational momentum between each session. Because the couple goes home together, every interaction between sessions can be an extension of the momentum of healing that has been catalyzed within the session and imported into the home. Each time fresh and natural new acts of love emerge, they bring little and big nutritive surprises of relief and hope into everyday life (Mars 2009, 2014a, 2014b).

In summary, the purpose beginning in the first session and in every session is for the couple members to bring forward to consciousness and to express to each other their longing to love and be loved (Snyder, 2014; Mars 2010) in a balanced way.

We begin in the first thirty seconds of session one with Matt and Jane.

The couple is seated in middle of the sofa about one foot apart, both looking at the Therapist.

Th: So I’d love to hear (*looking at Matt*) since I already spoke some with Jane over the phone, to hear from your perspective. What would you like to see come out of this...let’s say that the couple therapy works well...what would change...what would be different?

Matt: You’re asking *me*?

Th: Yeah...if you could just tell Jane what would be helpful to you to see come out of this couples therapy...what would change?

Matt: Ok (*hesitates*)...Well, what I would like is for us (*looks at Jane*) to be able to find ways to um...say what we mean in language that we each understand...and so what I would hope could come out of this work is um...is fewer disconnect conversations (*hands parallel palms down with a gap between*) where we end up just stopping the discussion on the subject we’re on and more us feeling like we’ve...we’ve talked through whatever it is that we’re talking about to the end...however...whatever that end is...so um...’cause I think that, combined with the work that we’re doing individually, not getting triggered by each other...um...should help...and I would see you role (*looks at Th, hands extend, palms face up*) as kind of being the ambassador...or the UN interpreter... (*Jane rolls her eyes and draws her head back*)

Th: Mmm-hmmm...

Matt: You know at some point...and you know, hearing each of us just talking with each other (*hands moving in front of body*)...and um...maybe pointing out where one of us could say something different...(Jane's eyes get large, her head tilts to the side, then she sighs, mouth turned down)

Th: Mmm-hmmm...ok, thank you.

Matt: Or, yeah...

Th: Ok...good...and you're in personal therapy with who now?

Matt: With Linda \_\_\_\_\_

Th: Ok...and who are you seeing Jane?

Jane: Ann \_\_\_\_\_.

Th: Great.

Jane: Yeah...I saw her yesterday...she said that you two had spoken briefly...

Th: Good...I just blanked out for a moment...good...great...so I'm glad you're both here...glad you both have personal therapy...that's just the ultimate to get through things really efficiently and effectively 'cause then you take whatever comes up here and work on it individual therapy and keep kind of connecting with each other. (*to Jane*) And for you, what would you say...would you go ahead and tell what you'd really like with Matt to come out of this therapy?

Jane: That I feel heard...I want to feel like I'm with a partner...like you're in this...um...I need a companion...I need to feel like I've got a partner...and I definitely feel I need to feel heard and um...you're right about the disconnect...in communication and I... um...I'm working on that individually...so that I don't come from my teenager but...there are times when...you speak to me in a tone and then I just feel (*hands over chest*)...empty and I don't want to feel that (*Matt nodding*).

Th: OK...what do you want to feel instead...to let you know that you feel heard...how would you know you feel heard by Matt? **[Inviting Jane to form an explicit affirmation of what she is longing for with Matt]**

Jane: (*breathing is shallow, eyes scanning room but head remains still*)...um...I don't know. Uh...I don't think I would feel the sense of frustration...

Th: Mmm-hmmm...

Jane: And that's what I feel right now.

Th: Yeah...is it an ongoing experience...frustration?

Jane: Uh-huh...yeah...and I think the more work I do with Anne, in feeling okay about my decisions and my thoughts...the more I'm like (*lip curls, eyes roll*) uuhhh...the more confident I feel in (*hand to heart*) my thoughts...uh...and the *more* I feel like I'm not heard...um...

Th: Okay...do you know what Jane is talking about?

Matt: (*Eyes somewhat vacant, breathing shallow*) Um...not completely...

Th: Ok...I wonder if you'd ask her a question that might help you to understand more? **[I am inviting a process that could be continued at home as well so Matt shows more curiosity and interest to know Jane.]**

Matt: (*nodding*) Um...well it would help me to understand more if...um...you could offer an example of...a recent example of me not hearing something that you wanted me to hear. **[This would invite a processing of a failure experience in the first five minutes of the session, which I want to avoid.]**

Th: Ok...how about if we start with this...what did you understand her to say just now? Right here...**[Affirming that a new experience can be had right now that can begin meeting Jane's expressed longing with my support.]**

Matt: Well, I understand that you want to be heard and that you feel frustrated when you're not heard. That's what I understood...

Th: And did you get how what tells her that she feels unheard by you? What her body experience is that...

Matt: I understand what she feels...yeah (*hand gestures to Jane*)...

Th: And what is that...what is that body sense she gets when she feels unheard by you?

Matt: Shutting down...frustrated and shutting down like she doesn't want to continue and...

Th: Wow...interesting...**[I notice that Matt seems to be describing his own pattern as if it is Jane's. I read this as an example of the blur and merger that infects and inflames the relationship dynamic.]**

Matt: And you said that...I think I heard you say...that through the work you're doing with Anne [Jane's therapist], that as you're getting more confident in recognizing your feelings (*gestures to his chest with one hand*)...that...your level of frustration with me is



increasing...your level of frustration or sensitivity to not being heard is increasing (*Jane nods*)

Th: Yeah...I hear that there's more confidence that you really do know your own thoughts...you do know your own experience...and want that to be heard.

Jane: (*nodding*) Mmm-hmmm...

Th: (*to Jane*) I also think that when you say that you don't want to continue, did that fit your experience? Or is it something a little different for you? **[I am encouraging Jane to individuate her experience explicitly from M's description of her expression of her experience.]**

Jane: The shutting down...it's like (*exhales, frowns*) yecchhh...I agree (*hands extend to Matt in exasperation*) that, you know...and it feels futile to continue...**[I am assuming based on what I can track already of the cues going on in the room, that the process of Jane "not wanting to continue" involves an often repeated process of Matt dissociating when she is trying to get through to him.]**

Th: Yeah...what I heard you say is you feel *empty* at a certain point...when you feel unheard, that you feel empty inside (*Jane nodding*)...that could really be like a collapse, of a giving up...

Jane: (*eyes scan upward*) Yeah...(nodding) um...

Th: Any more you want to add to that, Jane...it could be mysterious to him...like, why would she not feel heard?

Jane: And I'm getting more of a sense of that...that you know...I want to try to be more articulate too...**[I notice this as the second time Jane has offered her part of the problem voluntarily. I regard this as a gift to the relationship and to mutual healing and contributory to a positive prognosis.]**

Th: Oh good...

Jane: And not come from...I think what has happened in the past (*Jane's energy rising, rate of speech accelerates*)...is I'm hurt...then angry and then I...I stomp like a teenager and I definitely want to act more like an adult (*looks to Matt, who nods*). Um...and I don't want to...I want to tell you more how I feel (*hands from heart outward*) and not be in reaction...

Th: (*smiling*) Wow...how would that be for you Matt?

Matt: Great (*smiles, nodding*)...

Th: Okay...is there loudness involved when you have conflict?

Jane: (*shakes head no*) No...it's usually that lack of...no...

Matt: Yeah...we're not screamers...

Th: Yeah...but it kind of gets quiet?

Matt: Yeah (*both couple members nodding*)...

Th: In a way that doesn't feel comfortable? (*chuckles knowingly*)

Jane: Right...(*both nodding at the same time, mutual green signal affect, heralding the softening of defenses*)

Th: (*to Matt*) Will you say how that affects you?

Matt: What's that?

Th: How's that affects you...that quiet...you're nodding...**[I am urging Matt**

**to follow his motoric reflex of nodding to make his neuroceptive (unconscious) implicit affirmation more explicit.]**

Matt: Oh yeah...it's frustrating...

Th: Mmm-hmmm.

Th: (*to Matt*) I just want to say what I've heard you to be saying. That you are respecting that what Jane is going through is really, really painful to her and is at times really raw.

Matt: Mmmm-hmmm.

Th: And at times you may need to make space for her to be kind of intense, even raw sometimes and that this is a process that is really important to her. And I can imagine it's not easy to avoid being reactive like you might otherwise be and to try to stay contained. But that can be a lot of energy *drain* to do that. Then Jane gets the point of view that she is heavy. And you're going, uhhh I feel heavy...ohhh, struggle...**[I am guided in saying this by the multiple signs of dorsal vagal entropy (*downward moving energy, torpor and dissociation*) that Matt has shown already in the session.]**

Matt: Nods.

Jane: Nods, slight smile.

Th: And that you're walking on eggshells. This is not fun! (*Gravely labored voice.*) This is really laborious!



Jane: (*Eyes brighten, nods emphatically*)

Th: (*To Jane*) And you're nodding. What are you nodding to?

Jane: (*Eyes bright, smiling, energy up*) Oh yes to the not-fun part.

Th: And can you say what the hurt is here for you here? What is your own feeling you're having here?

Jane: Feeling...feeling...I feel invites...I...I (*hands form gripping movement*)...It doesn't all have to be precise and you know (*shows parallel lines with her hands and arms moving forward*)...Like what the hell, I say just go get Ed's email...and oh no it's too late...it's too late...and the way that it was said...(speaking to Matt) its with a look that (*Matt's teeth are on edge inside his closed lips, looking away from Jane, then Matt turns to see Jane directly and his face softens a bit and he returns her gaze more kindly for just a moment*)

Th: (*Softly*) He's looking at you now. This look. **[With my voice signaling the importance of the moment.]**

Jane: (*voice softens, drops into State Two vulnerable sadness*) That is so hurtful (*pointing to her heart with both hands*) for me (*speaks slowly, hands open pulsing downward, voice cracking*) it drops me to my knees (*tears, trembling, Matt's eyes lower, face softens, then Matt's eyes meet Jane's as she sobs*) **[a shared State Two core affect deepens in a mutual meeting as Matt's face regains color and relaxation, and a new steady presence with Jane]**

Th: (*Nodding, smiling kindly*) You're this vulnerable to that kind of a look. (*Jane nodding*) Drops you to your knees.

Jane: Sobbing softly, (*Jane feels, looks, very young to me, maybe four, eyes downcast*).

Th: A lot of deep sadness here. (**still very vulnerable, I sense fear, as Jane's neck cords stand out and she views me from the sides of her eyes**) Do you know what this links you to Jane? (*very kind, soft vulnerable voice*) Some link even before the thirty years with Matt...drops you to your knees...that look? (*gesture from my heart outward*) Anybody come to mind...that would give you that kind of a look?

Jane: Oh...teachers...(head moves in a circular pattern, combined yes and no movements, face and voice so vulnerable, shrugs right shoulder, again in way that reminds me of a very vulnerable four year old)...(*more tears rolling down*) definitely not being good enough (*dabbing tears, big breath in, Matt looks out away from Jane for the first time, since her tears came, seems absorbed elsewhere to me*)

Th: ...and maybe not safe with anybody with regard to respect, in regard to feeling safe (*Matt rubs right eye, looks away, pensive*) And how important is Matt to be that one who

can hold you and help you to feel safe? (*Jane nods immediately*) And for you to feel good enough?

Jane: (*nods emphatically*)

We process the feelings for a while until calm returns. I want to hear from Matt what the trigger is for him about her making suggestions and his reactivity to them.

Th: How does that affect you? If you perceive her as trying to get you to do something... like the email to Ed...in a way that you might hear as "do it, do it, come on, do it"...

Matt: Oh, I dig my heels...I'm like the dog (*hands push away, palms face outward*)...not wanting to go to the bath...

Th: Ok...and the bog [***my slip that I associate with the imagery of him being stuck in a wet bog***]...I mean the dog not wanting to go where?

Matt: To the bath...(*repeats gesture*)...

Th: To the bath...okay...I get it...it's a visual example...[***I smile, and chuckle at my own slowness to "get it."***]

Matt: Yeah (*strokes head with one hand*)...

Th: (*To Jane*) Can you imagine that that happens in him...in kind of biological freeze or...push back...

Jane: Oh yeah (*eyes wide*)...And I don't feel it from others (*hands gesture out, eyes wider*)...I feel that there's a...that there are others (*Matt looking away, mouth tense, appears angry*) that he, you know...without question almost, takes their suggestion and so...(*hands apart, palms face upward; Matt's lips purse and his head tilts back, eyes wide staring, neck muscles twitch, stretches his neck back*)...and...

Th: (*to Jane and Matt*) There's a mystery here...(*Matt's eyes scan back and forth across the ceiling, his head and neck draw back and twist, like a horse rearing in my visual and imaginal channels combined*) how come he's different with you...how come Matt's different with you...[***I want to cue up each of their background awareness to come into the foreground and to become explicit and somatically perceived, received and expressed.***]

Jane: How come? I don't know.

Th: (*to Matt*) I wonder...do you notice any change in your level of muscle tension right now?

Matt: (*Matt's breathing is suspended, eyes staring, brow furrowed, mouth showing lines of*

*contraction*)...

Th: Any tightening up anywhere...any sense of tightness inside or in your skeletal muscles or any way you feel...

Matt: Uh...maybe in my core a little bit (*rubs belly*)...

Th: Yeah..

Matt: I don't know if that's from exercise, but...

Th: Your heart rate changed at all?

Matt: No...

Jane: I felt it (*voice firm, definitive, glances at Matt*)...

Matt: I'm feeling...I'm feeling frustrated...

Th: Yeah...(nodding)

Matt: Very frustrated...**["Frustration" is an implicit and generic entry point to explicit knowing that can then be unpacked as a bottom-up experience.]**

Th: Yeah...ok...can you say how you feel the frustration...where in your body...what tells you frustration is here in your body? I just want to learn about you and how you read your own body...

Matt: Um...I tend to...my focus moves from (*fingers spread apart then semi-clenched, hands pressing down*) up-close to far out (*hands spread apart*)...in my eyes...

Th: Ok...mmm-hmmm...

Matt: (*turns head and looks almost completely in the opposite direction from where Jane is*) Um...I feel a slumping in my upper torso... **[All of the above are signs of a dorsal vagal response of dissociation.]**

Th: Mmm-hmmm...ever felt that before in your life with anybody else other than Jane?

Matt: (*eyes wide and head rolls slightly*)...Yeah-eh (*eyes brighten, laughs, smiles*) with my mother...(chuckles with the acknowledgment of his mother "in the room")

Th: Okay...important... (*nods, chuckles with relief at the atmospheric change of lightening in the atmosphere*)

Matt: Yeah...*(Jane's lip curls, rolls her eyes, Matt smiles, rolls his eyes, and looks at Jane)*

Th: And your expression *(indicating Jane's look of what I read as disgust)*...how sad there's a linkage *(chuckles)*...sorry Jane *(smiling)*

Jane: I...I understand that...and I understand that...and to be linked to that is... sickening...to me...*(Matt looks stricken, looks all the way around again away from Jane)*

Th: Wow...to that...

Jane: I mean in...*(Matt looks sharply to the right, away from Jane)*

Matt: You're not...it's in me... **[Matt is describing that his trauma history with his mother is in his experience and not Jane's.]**

Jane: I know, but it affects *me* *(hands point to her heart emphatically)*...

Matt: Um-hmmm *(nods with acknowledgment)*

Th: Sure it does Jane...and it affects Matt...you're both affected by this...**[The living history of Matt's mother being dominating, disattuned and intrusive infects and inflames their marriage.]**

Jane: And I empathize with that *(hands extend towards Matt)*...cause he grew up with it...

Th: Yup...

Jane: ...but...I just feel like a dartboard...and I'm this residual effect of this...*(Matt's head slumps, makes rotating mouth movements with his tongue, looks down, slumps, and seems to be going elsewhere in memory, head down)*...and not only that...how come others get it? And I don't...*(more signs of dorsal vagal response and dissociative slumping)*

Th: They get what?

Jane: They get...they get listened to...they get...*(Matt looks fatigued, mouth set, eyes stern)*

Th: Yup...I hear you...so...I just want to empathize with you...how painful this is...the person that you live your life with has a reactivity to you that's got a complexity that leaves you feeling more alone, unheard, even reacted to and balked with in a way that you can see isn't a universal with Matt...it's specific to you...maybe more than with others and it feels really provocative to you...without his even trying...he can be even trying to be amicable and easygoing, but still something happens that affects him and affects you in a very painful way...is that so? *(Jane nodding)*...how is this sounding to you, *(to Matt)*...this

summary...how is this affecting you?

Matt: No, I'm tracking...I'm tracking with it...yeah. **[There is a double signal here: a no and a yeah, which is worthy of noting.]**

Th: Is your frustration level going up or down? Right now?

Matt: Um...I mean, I've put it aside (*smiles dutifully, hand sweeps sideways*)...for the sake of continuing the discussion here...

Th: And how do you put it aside...what is your method of putting it aside?

Matt: Um...well, what I'm learning is that it was a trigger you know, from something...

So right now, I mean...I think I've put it aside, because I'm in this process here with the three of us now and I'm uh (*Matt's hands make receiving gesture; Jane's eyes are now vacant, she drops her gaze to her lap*)...I'm hopeful that we can work through this...**[I get that Matt's heart is in the right place, but the rest of his consciousness is pulled in many directions due to unresolved pockets of historical trauma. I can hear the signs of dorsal vagal response in the listlessness of Matt's speech. I can see in his slumping and twisting the effort to stay awake and sense the energetic draining and dead-weight in my own body increase each time Jane describes her distress. In my muscles I can sense vicariously Matt's neck and jaw tension and note that I keep holding my breath as I focus on him. I track all of these and more as signs of significant unresolved trauma in Matt that are intricately linked to and worsened by Jane's unresolved trauma, which evoked in her by his dissociation and defensiveness. I am describing ongoing neuroceptively (unconsciously and biologically) driven enactments of historical trauma that are central to what we need to heal in treatment together.]**

Th: Okay...

Matt: And uh...yeah...

Th: Good...I want to say something that I don't say very often but I think it's good timing to say it, you know, one of the problems with...how long have you been married...now?

Jane: 30 years.

Th: 30 years! (*I smile to Jane and chuckle*)...would you agree? (*turns and smiles to Matt and both laugh*) **[I have found one point of agreement between Matt and Jane at a previously collapsing moment. Joining in humor here is powerfully affect-regulating for all three of us.]**

Matt: (*smiles*) I agree.

Th: A long time...and when we're married to somebody for a long time we get to be not only with our partners, but also with what they represent in our personal history. And that's very special...that place...very special (*air quotes, smiles*)...very complex...the kind of reactivities that are really deeply, deeply painful and can make loneliness in the not being seen or heard...for the individuals we are...because it's these vestiges from the past that are very, very early set in...that have kind of gotten welded into the marriage...

Matt: Mmmm...(nodding)

Th: Like kind of burned into the marriage and then at a certain point, say, well, how can we have a fresh experience of being with each other...that doesn't have all this repetition loading it down and making it feel heavy and cumbersome and laborious (*Jane nods, Matt looks stricken, eyes defocused, fatigued*)...

Th: (*chuckles knowingly, smiling at both with empathy*)

Matt: Yeah. (*both chuckle for a moment, nodding together*) **[Nodding together is a powerful coordinated dyadic motoric reflex.]**

Jane: And I will...admit...kind of on that vein...(to Th)

Th: Could you tell Matt directly...and I'll just listen...

Jane: Hmm?

Th: Would you tell Matt directly and I'll listen very closely?

Jane: (*smiles*) Um...(turns to face Matt)

Th: It's good that you talk to each other and that you...just keep on...this is a very deep thing going on between the two of you, by the way...

Jane: I don't want to be like that yechhhh...I don't want to be some...some...in reaction and I'm learning how to not be like that (*hands roll forward with momentum*)...uh...and I don't want to feel not heard, alone, looking on the outside in to my own life...I don't want to feel that either...that's the yecchhh part. **[I read this "yecchh" as disgust as a core affect that relates to her early trauma history of abandonment, of not being heard or prioritized from her earliest days. This hunch is borne out as correct in later treatment sessions. I engage Jane directly to both receive and understand and help her re-regulate herself.]**

Th: (*to Jane*) Anything new coming in?

Jane: Well, um...instead of him asking why am I feeling the way I am...it's all what, what about me! (*with a suddenly jeering voice, Jane pantomimes a self-involved little boy*)



*having a little tantrum. She throws her hands and arms to the air gesturing and looking at the ceiling as if desperate. Matt's eyes bulge as he rocks forward as if to get up and leave. He hovers, then settles further away from Jane on the couch.)*

Th: Are you mocking him with your gestures toward him? *[I keep my voice soft, slowed down.]*

Jane: I don't...I don't...

Th: I'm just curious if you are...but "what about meee" and *(hands mirror Jane's gesture more minimally, but still showing the movement, Matt readjusts to sit more upright, head turned away)*...are you mocking him *(voice kind, level slowing it down)*...in fact?

Jane: Well that sounds mean and I don't want to be mean. **[This moment is pivotal. I engage Jane's conscious choosing, rather than allowing more maladaptive affect that would lead toward a reflexive enactment of Matt's and Jane's prior historical interlocking trauma. If allowed by me, this mocking would trigger Matt into further dissociation and distancing. This would then verify to Jane that she is alone and unheard my Matt.]**

Th: Well, you're angry though...angry and frustrated and you mentioned that you may come across in a way that's harsh.

Jane: There's no room for *me (index fingers point to self, angry)*...I mean there's no room...I feel there's no room...

Th: OK...

Jane: And it makes me feel lonely...

Th: Ok...

Jane: And I didn't get you when you were drinking and I'm not gettin' much of you *now*...

Th: Ok...

Jane: *That's* it...

Th: The real connection to you...do you want that? Do you want a real connection...  
**[coming back to the longing, the transformance drive]**

Jane: Yeah...*(nodding)*

Th: ...that's authentic and really intimate with you...interested in you, curious and growing together...

Jane: (*nodding*) Yeah...

Th: Am I saying it correct? Am I getting it correctly?

Jane: Yeah...(tears welling up)

Th: Ok...how are you doing (*to Matt, who shakes his head no emphatically*) ...This is painful...I want to see if we can bring you back in again. Sorry for the impact...

Matt: Well same thing...I mean I don't know... um...you don't think I'm intimate with you (*drops and softens his voice, looks directly at Jane*)?

Jane: (looks up) There's a limit...and I feel there's...

Th: How about right now? He asked you this straight up question..."You don't feel I'm intimate with you?" He seems like he's reaching to find out how you can feel intimacy with him, even in this room. **[affirming the new, expressed longing to hear her now, to understand her now, which is an undoing of aloneness (Fosha, 2000)].**

Jane: But I feel you want me on your terms...

Th: But what if he does...what if he wants you on his terms right now? What if he has a desire to be with you...

Jane: It's not enough for me...(shakes head no, looks at Matt)...it's not enough.

Th: Ok...this could it be a starting place...'cause he's authentically saying "This is what I want with you" and then you want something different with him and then you have some engagement...

Jane: Um...I'm skeptical and...and I'm here...so it's not like I'm not open to it...

Th: Ok...it's not like you're not open to it? **[I invite Jane to affirm what she wants again, which is an adaptive action (Fosha, 2000).]**

Jane: I mean that I'm not...That I am open (*hands roll forward, shy smile*)...

Th: Ok...

Jane: To...to more...I am open to more (*looks at Matt more softly*)

Th: Are you? Are you open to being with Matt the way he can start to be with you right now in this room?

Jane: (*nods*) Yeah...

Th: Yeah? (*nods with an affirming smile*) Cause he's here and you're here and...one thing I notice about the two of you is that I really get a lot of your exertion to speak your own truth...and I don't get...let me say this as a positive...I get that, (*to Matt*) from your point of view, you're very disciplined and very dutiful...and really wanting to be the best person you can be...I think this is true of you too (*to Jane*)...maybe dutiful isn't the right word, but I get something about you being really committed to being in your authenticity and truth and want to be met that way...is that so? (*slight nodding to Jane, speaking with gravity*)

Jane: Right...mine, I feel...is newer...in not acquiescing to someone else or not feeling like I *can* speak my truth...

Th: Yeah...

Jane: I think that's why I'm like (*facial grimace and a slight growling sound*)...because I'm finally like, hey, I have a truth!

Due to the space constraints for this paper, we end the transcript at the first twenty-four minutes of the first session here. The eruption of the very “young-feeling” disgust, contempt and revenge impulses of Jane’s deep protest is precious to the treatment. It is a vital key to accelerated, safe and successful treatment that I am able to witness how Jane drives Matt away by reflexively batting him away or blaming him, thereby unintentionally triggering shame reflexes with resultant dorsal vagal responses in Matt. Re-regulating the outburst of mocking is also essential to treatment. If the relationship is to become a vehicle of transformation, there must be brakes on it to make it safe to occupy! Tracking the repeated themes and timing of Matt’s observable signs of dorsal vagal response (Porges, 2009) also mark specific access points for future healing portrayals (Mars, 2011, 2012, 2013).

The fact that both Jane and Matt rally with each other and repeatedly re-regulate themselves with my interventions in less than twenty-four minutes of a first session are all very confirming signs. They have each revealed unresolved early attachment trauma and in the midst of that, they have remained willing to let me help them to self-regulate. With my help and encouragement, they find each other in the room as a safe-enough other. I feel confident at the end of this first session that we will have a successful treatment. I can palpably feel the love in the room in my heart and belly between each “drop” into unresolved trauma. In the AEDP for Couples model, these are among the signatures that we are already on the path to become a working team to transform Matt and Jane’s marriage from one that continually replicates early trauma through reflexive enactments into a vehicle of accelerated transformation, which moves to the new and satisfying experience of love that heals. At the end of this first seventy-five minute first session, the metaprocessing of how they feel about working with me confirms that each feel safe, enthusiastic and grateful. They explicitly express wanting to work with me, each for their own reasons. This is classic AEDP: “the first session determines whether there is a fit between the individual [or couple] to the therapist and to AEDP treatment”<sup>[2]</sup> (Fosha, spoken communication, Wright Institute, 2011).

We go now to the eleventh session, five months after couples treatment began. Jane and Matt elected from the first session to be in couple treatment every second week for seventy-five minutes. I agreed to this relatively sparse treatment frequency because they are each in individual treatment and also because they committed to witness a DVD of each session on the “off” week from couple treatment. I committed to mail a DVD to them following each time we met.<sup>[3]</sup> This way the treatment process strides from a live session in my office to a recorded session witnessed at home on the alternate week. In this way, Matt and Jane transplanted their ongoing transformational work in my office into the “set and setting” of their home. In addition, each of their individual therapists and I communicated with each other primarily by confidential voice messages about their stuck places and breakthroughs, as they surfaced in individual therapy and couple therapy. This was a coordinated treatment process with one AEDP therapist and the other, an EMDR practitioner who is AEDP-friendly. With the couple’s explicit permission during two turning-points in the treatment, I mailed both therapists DVDs of the couple’s sessions. This gives both individual therapists a window into the morphing attachment dynamics within the couple context that do not emerge in the intersubjective field of either couple member’s individual treatment.

By the eleventh session, Matt and Jane have had no major disruptions or distancing for the four previous weeks. By their mutual and bottom-up descriptions, this is the longest period of being so intimate, loving, contactful and stable in their entire thirty years together. Matt has spontaneously ended his participation in his men’s group and has cut back significantly on both AA meetings and his church work. When I ask what motivates these changes, at each step, Matt very convincingly and coherently relates how he is getting so much more with Jane now, that he is choosing time with her, because this time is so precious and rewarding that he receives with her what he has been “longing for the whole time and didn’t know it.”

From the 20-foot distance of the waiting room to my open office door before the start of this eleventh session, I can see, feel, energetically track and sense that Jane and Matt are beaming at each other, radiating love and peaceful excitement. They are notably, by their spontaneous mutual agreement, *in love*. I call this session a “harvest session” in which we together gather and metaprocess all that we have done in our previous ten sessions and the work they have done in witnessing the DVDs of each session. Note that since they come in deeply connected in an atmosphere of palpable love, I am not asking them the question with which I begin virtually every session of AEDP for Couples, which would be to ask them to tell each other what they are enjoying about being with each other, or asking how is each of them being more loving and stretching to show that love in new ways.

*(Couple is seated in middle of sofa; Jane has her legs tucked up and leaning slightly away from Matt.)*

Th: You both lost years. *(couple nodding)* And yet, at the same time, a lot productive happened during those years.

Matt: Mmm-hmmm

Jane: Mmm-hmmm

Th: I would say, alcoholism years...practicing alcoholism is kind of...there's not a lot to be said about what's gained...

Matt: Right...

Th: But in the recovery process, a lot is gained, but also...the separation was quite (*hands spread apart*)...painful for you especially (*Jane and Matt look at each other, then Jane nodding at Th*)...and I think Matt, you didn't even realize what you were missing.

Matt: No... (*Shaking head gravely side to side*)

Th: And there's a way...I still would like to understand...

Matt: And that in itself...I think is hard for you to conscience (*looks at Jane*)...that...that I didn't even know...that you were there...like you were...and I was focusing on these other people (*extends one hand out and away*)...instead (*Jane nodding, somber, affirming*)...

Th: Like (*singing*)...How could *you* forget me...(*speaking gravely*) How could he forget me?

Matt: What's striking me as...it almost takes my breath away...is how...(*turning to Th*)

Th: Can you tell *Jane*?

Matt: (*looks at Jane directly*)...that transformation can happen...you know...under the right conditions...at the pace at which it's happening.

Jane: (*gazing up, smiling and nodding*)...**[marker of transformative shift (Fosha, 2000)]**

Matt: I just think that it's just ummm...and it's required certain things to be in place...it's required for me...(*hand on heart*)...I'll speak about me...**[Core State]**

Th: That's wonderful...

Matt: Me to trust you (*hand extends to Jane*)...in a different way than I ever have (*Jane nodding*)...

Th: That's huge Matt...

Matt: Um...and it's required um...every one of those times that we talked about...as difficult as they were...and conversations that we had and interactions that we had that were...some

of them were really um...nasty...about...(fists bump into each other)...the subject of AA and my groups and all of that...every one of those...built and contributed (*hands gesture stepping up*) to my readiness **[States Three and Four]**

Th: Isn't that something? Well, I really hear you appreciating Jane a lot...

Matt: (*whole body nodding, smiling, beaming at Jane*) Mmm-hmmm...

Th: For what messages she brought...that were so painful to hear...and so triggering to your anger and to your irritation...even shame...which is so painful to experience...in front of her, especially...is that right Matt?

Matt: (*nodding, emphatic*) Yeah...

Th: To feel ashamed of having let her down or failed or missed some things...so painful...and you beared that...which I really appreciate...some men will not...AA or not...they will not bear it...and they just bolt...refuse...I really got that you kept showing up for Jane...(Jane smiles at Th) and have the courage to really trust that she's someone you want to trust (Jane smiles)...she's the one (Matt nodding)...how did you know? How did you know that she's the one to trust **[I ask Matt to engage his embodied sense of knowing bottom-up]**...to really believe her...that she's worth really engaging in again and letting go of a lot of the scaffolding (*hands to side*) that was holding you...with AA, with other things you were doing (*with your time*)...men's group, etc.

Matt: (*looks at Jane directly, intimately*) Because you've...you're there...you're consistent (*hand extends to Jane, palm faces up*)...in your messages to me...um...what's always been there...that I've always seen and that...is that you are kind and loving and warm...(eyes glistening with deep brown bright irises)

Th: That's huge...

Matt: And um...and it's just kind of like for me, recognizing that...what I'm learning is that this whole onion metaphor (*both hands extend out, palms face in*)...just applies to so much...and in this case, I think it applies to how I've come to understand you more and more deeply. I mean you've always been the same onion (Jane smiles with sweetness that is palpable)...um...but the sweet core and really tender part of you (*hands cupped together*)...is what I'm seeing more and more (*voice trembles*) **[State Two Core affect of emotion rising to State Three Vitality Affects, weaving in and out of State Four Core State]**...

Th: Mmm...how moving...

Matt: And you know...the fact that you um...had your own courage and talking in here about the pain you experienced at 3R [The cult-like school where Jane was trapped for years from age six to twelve, when neither parent would listen to her pleading to get her out of



there.]...that was a really powerful session for me to hear about um...I didn't know that you were that young...*(both Jane and Matt well up with tears)* **[Mutual State Two core affect, coordinated relational experiencing, two authentic selves in resonance]**

Th: Wow...what does this touch in you Jane? *(tears spring into her eyes)* "I didn't know you were that young?" Can you tell him?

Jane: I appreciate that *(nodding, more tears...shy, open, looking very young)*

Th: What's he saying and knowing in the appreciation of what he now knows and sees? *(Matt wiping tears)* He didn't know you were that young.

Jane: *(Voice trembles, eyes moist, shakes head no, gazes upward)* Um...I'm just picturing seeing my dad's truck on the freeway...Get me out of here! *(big exhale)*...

Matt: *(Stands in spontaneously for Jane, recognizing her experience)* Take me with you...*(Th looks to Matt with appreciation)*

Th: Wow...

Jane: As you said that...I was just flashing on that *(one hand raises up)*...I just happened to...it was like Auschwitz...you know...

Th: Wow..

Jane: Ahhh! Get me out of here! **[This is a spontaneous rapid rescue portrayal.]**

Th: Wow...Can you tell me more about the Auschwitz experience?

Jane: It was horrible there...just awful...

Th: At that school?

Jane: Mmm-hmmm.

Th: *(Standing in for Jane)* Yeah...get me out of here...save me...notice that I'm imprisoned here...

Jane: *(nodding)* Yeah...yeah.

Th: Awful for me...tormenting...yeah...see this to me is one of the areas Matt, that I see you really moving into that it's so important for Jane for her to feel understood by you...

Matt: Mmm-hmmm...

Th: "I didn't know how young you were at 3R"...wow...and you touch your heart and she goes...thank you for seeing me (*Jane nods, wiping tears, smiling affirmation*)...that's what I get. Thanks for knowing me. (*Both nodding confirmation*) **[undoing of aloneness, true other experience, recognition (Fosha, 2000, 2013)]**

Jane: Mmm-hmmm...

Th: Cause they didn't see you...and you are...and you're trusting...[I stand in for Jane] You see my sweetness...you see my value...you're also saying that you could tolerate my anger, because it was for a good purpose...

Jane: Mmm-hmmm...(*nodding*)...

Th: I bet you were furious at 3R...(*Jane smiles, exhales, eyes up and to the left nodding in affirmation*) **[standing in for six-year-old Jane]**...Why aren't you paying attention to me...listening to me?

Jane: (*wiping tears*) Yeah...

Th: Matt is actually being that listening one, who's really grasping, understanding you, seeing your value.

Jane: Mmm-hmmm...

Th: What are you feeling right now with Matt and his very steady gaze towards you...really seeing you...staying focused on you (*Jane and Matt smile deeply into each other*)...focused on YOU...**[Here I am instantiating the bottom-up experience of Matt being the one Jane has been waiting for her whole life, to stand with her young selves and her woman self. Matt is manifesting at long last as Jane's hero in the deepest sense of what a true other is in the primary attachment with a life partner. This is the ultimate healing portrayal in the AEDP for Couples model.]**

Jane: Very appreciative...(*nodding at Matt, both smile with warmth*)...(*Jane lights up to Matt in a full smile I have never seen before in her. She beams with her whole countenance*)

Th: Wow...what a smile! How is that to receive that smile? (*Me chuckling with delight, beaming at both of them*)

Matt: Oh it's what I get up in the morning for...that's why I'm around...

Th: Isn't that something?

Matt: You don't know that, do you? (*Jane laughs*)...You don't know how that smile...that expression (*hands in front of chest, palms face in*)...that you have, when you're warm...!

literally call it up...during the day.

Th: Mmm-hmmm...wow. (*Chills and heat run up and down my whole body*)... **[Triadic State Three vitality affects, the spiral of upward-moving energy and mastery affects]**

Matt: Um...I use it when I send you a text ...that you don't read! (*both smile, laugh; flirting*)

Jane: I do too read it! I see it! I read it! (*smiling broadly at him*)

Th: But this gives a whole new symbolism of what the text is evoked by, though.

Matt: Yeah.

Th: I'm remembering your smile Jane...it fills me up...(intimate, warm, tender, treasuring her)

Matt: Yeah...

Th: That's the sense I get...something fills you up...

Matt: It is...it's a um...(eyes scan upward)...I mean it's...saying it's a romantic feeling is not fully...doesn't fully grasp it...it...it fills me...it completes me...it um (*Jane smiles and nods, knowing what he is saying*)...it's a reminder to me that...of how precious (*eyes wide*) our relationship is...that I get to (*hand extends toward Jane*)...that I get to um...spend time with you. (*eyes spilling tears of gratitude and grieving for self and her for the missed opportunities of the previous three decades*) **[State Three]**

Th: Yup.

Jane: And I um...thank you (*to Th*) for asking that question...how *did* you know? Because it's been so long and this has been so rapid...it isn't just in the velocity that we've come this far...

Matt: (*leaning towards Jane*) Uh-huh...

Jane: That I don't trust...and not trusting isn't really...that's kind of strong (*Matt wipes his eyes of tears*)...again...it's like a lot of watching from the outside it...wow...look at that...how did that...how did that happen?

Th: How *did* that happen? Can you tell *Matt*?

Jane: How *did* you know? *When* did you know?

Th: Yup...it's a wonderful question to bring back to Matt...I'm so glad you're retaining that...ask him again from *YOUR* position...how did you know...will you finish the

question...”how did you know what?” **[I urge them to collectively unpack the coherent narrative from the bottom-up experience of quantum transformational change.]**

Jane: (*eyes scanning upward; Matt turns his body to face Jane more squarely*)...How did you know when you were done? How did you know when to be able to trust me? And it's almost rhetorical...it's not like I need to know right now...I feel ok about not needing to know right this minute..

Matt: Ok...and it's what I've been kind of re-counting here...(Jane wipes her tears from each eye) um...it's been a combination of a number of things and among them being...not attaching as much...or detaching from um...the AA dynamic and the group dynamic...

Jane:...and you don't even have to go through...we have time to be able to go...reflect on that (*hand waving*)...in a way...wow...that was wild...how did that happen? Where did you go?

Th: What are you referring to? How did that happen? **[Making the implicit explicit.]**

Jane: How did all of the...how do people get to the place where they are? How did it happen before? Now I feel a detachment to be able to go back and discuss it in a way that is less...

Th: Keep telling Matt...

Jane: (*looks at Matt*) Less...less...it's just less...it's you know (*one hand pushes away*)...it's more of a detachment...**[I read these communications between Matt and Jane as indications of Jane being in a suddenly disorganized relationship to the experience of quantum change and searching for a new bottom-up orientation.(Mars 2011, Fosha, 2013)]**

Th: (*To Jane*) How do you know there's less of a...something in you...what has changed in you...

Jane: I feel safer to even bring it up...**[Remember that Jane and Matt are having an experience that is an ongoing “receiving in the here and now what was needed in the there and then” lived-life portrayal that brings both in daily living and in session in the context of an accelerated experiential healing experience of surprise and delight “that this too now is possible, and what do I do with this?” This describes the State Three elements of tremulous affects (Fosha, 2000)]**

Matt: Mmm-hmm (*nodding, smiling*)

Jane: I feel satisfied in...in how you respond..

Th: Wow...that's huge...

Jane: (*nodding, smiling lovingly at Matt*)

Th: Safer to bring it up to Matt and satisfied in the way he responds...what a combination...what a sandwich that is...(*fingers and thumb press together*)

Matt: (*smiling*) Yeah...

Th: Quite a delicious combination. **[I add taste (sensation) to encourage Matt and Jane to take in and digest the experience of metaprocessing the effects of treatment. The concept here is that the more Channels of Experience are engaged that agree with each other experientially, the more GEMs can be formed to take in verifiable truth [4] [5] (Craig 2005-2010).]**

Matt: Yeah...

Jane: Yeah...

Th: Wow...can you say more about how Matt is helping you to feel that you can feel safe and bring up topics that are important to you and also to feel really satisfied with him in his response?

Jane: In...just the...I mean there's been enough (*re-positions to face Matt*) that's happened in the last week or two or whatever that um...nothing monumental...but...still things that have come that have been triggering or uh...that we've been able to just sail through...(*hand sweeps away*)

Matt: (*nodding*) Mmm-hmmm...

Jane: It might've been something that was made a bigger deal about before and now it's almost...(eyes wide, hands wave) laughable...or we can bring it up and go through it with um...with added levity instead of you know...uh...attaching more hurt or whatever to it...**[bottom up processing of new experience of new experiences of safety]**

Th: Mmm-hmmm...

Jane: Than it might've in the past...

Th: To me this is a talent to cultivate...(smiling broadly, feeling proud)

Jane: (*nods, smiles*) Um...hmmm...I think it's more than words...it's...like you had said before (*hand extends towards Matt*)...uh...we know each other...our body language...

Matt: (*leaning in, nodding*) Mmm-hmm....

Jane: Uh...for me, that's huge red flags...or not...you know...even just seeing how you

are...and to be able to see you just...you know, relaxed and just...it's just so much easier to be around...um...it's a lot of energy...**[Core State new coherent and cohesive narrative forming]**

Th: How do you know? What just happened in your body?

Jane: (*exhales, sticks out her tongue*) Yeah...and to be able to live more like *that...*(*shoulders drop, chin forward*)...is huge.

Matt: Mmm-hmmm (*nodding*)

Jane: Than having to be hyper-aware of stuff...you know...**[Jane refers to the walking on eggshells experience of her previous decades of life with Matt, trying to avoid setting off his triggers of unresolved trauma that would lead him to go away from her via dorsal vagal responses.]**

Th: (*to Jane*) So what I'm hearing is a personal value for YOU, if I'm understanding you correctly Jane, to be able to stay in more of your levity, more of your light than to go into the darkness with Matt...

Jane: (*nodding*) Mmm-hmmm....

Th: And to really notice if you go into the dark places...say wait a minute...I love him, he loves me...we're basically at a good place...

Jane: Right...(*chin tilts upward*)

Th: This is just a detail...

Jane: Right...

Th: How we get through this is a question of how we get through this together...

Jane: Right...

Th: How's it feel when I put it that way?

Jane: Yeah...(*nodding, smiling*)

Th: And that it's draining and exhausting to go the dark road...

Jane: Yeah...

Th: For you personally...it's draining...



Jane: Yeah...and I feel like I don't need to go there...I don't need to (*eyes wide*)...I feel acknowledged in where the darkness was (*looks at Matt*)...

Matt: It's a feeling of...when I heard you just now say I feel acknowledged...(*speaking to Jane*)...um...I felt centered (*hands raise upward*)...it was a welling up like this (*hands sweep from torso to surround head*) in me that...hah...this is what she wants (*Jane and Matt smile deeply, Jane giggles and beams*)...

Th: See his big smile...it's what she wants! It's what she wants...I got it! (*All laugh heartily; Matt places hand behind head*) [**State 3, Vitality Affects**]...oh, what a pleasure.

Matt: You know though? It's not a little thing, what you're asking.

Th: Oh my goodness.

Matt: You know...not to...

Th: If it's not little...what is it for you...to show up this way?

Matt: What I'm understanding is that your desire to be acknowledged is not just like...well, let's see, I'm gonna go down the acknowledgment aisle, I'll have some acknowledgment...it's so tied in to who you are (*hands extend palm up towards Jane*) and what you lacked from so long ago (*hand sweeps away*)...that I get to give that to you (*voice trembles, tears well up*)...is...

Th: It's what you're hands are showing...feelings that well up...I get to...big feeling comes up...

Matt: It's like...um...[**finding language for the new**] ...it's why I'm here... (*tears of joy*)

Th: My goodness...

Matt: I mean...why we're in relationship...

Th: Mmm-hmmm... [**I stand in for Matt**]... That I can give this to you Jane...

Matt: It's an honor... [**Core State, new Coherent Narrative**]

Th: Yup...

Matt: And I'm starting to figure out how...

Th: Mmm-hmmm...

Matt: And again...I thank you for sticking around...[**State Three Vitality Affects, the**

## Spiral , gratitude upward-moving energy (Fosha, 2005)]

Th: Awww...

Matt: And...and being resilient and persistent and absorbing uh...(sniffs, wipes a tear)...so much in the waiting for me...(voice resonant, deep)

Th: Wow **[I stand in for Matt again]**...what a statement...and absorbing so much in the waiting for me...how's this feel...this acknowledgement of you and appreciation? Thank you for waiting for me Jane.

Jane: (smiling, subtle nodding at Matt)

Th: How is this inside for you? He's really reaching out to show himself to you...share himself.

Jane: Um...I um...I don't want to overuse the word *appreciate* but...**[State Three]**

Th: It's huge...lovely word... Yup...what a delight to see the two of you and to feel Jane, that very, very...I want to come back to a moment again...the very specific experience in my heart of this...like a hand going through it...to feel acknowledged (*hand to heart*) and to feel what the meaning is then, Matt, you get to be the MAN, her man **[engendering primal healing affects]**...who acknowledges her deeply and receives her deeply, like no one did all the way back to the beginning...and you're the one...you're the man...to be that one who's lucky enough and...wise enough to give her what she's needed and has been asking for from the beginning...as part of your purpose in being here...(Matt nodding)..I hear you saying...in a relationship or maybe even more...I don't know...do you see...what do you say being here...how do you mean?

Matt: Yeah, I mean both...I mean...I feel like I am a...I don't know (*shrugs*)...

Th: Go ahead...see if you can say it...you can always change it and just trying saying what the image is, being like a...

Matt: I need to be in relationship (*looking at Jane*)...and I need...I need to have the kind of relationship that...I didn't even know I needed...like I have with you...(Jane giggles)

Th: Wow...wow...do you hear her giggle when you say that? A little thrill. **[I amplify my perception and reception of Jane's auditory, energetic, emotional expressions to encourage Matt to find the courage to stay in a bottom-up experience and expression.]**

Matt: Yeah. And so...my purpose...to say that I'm gaining some clarity of awareness, it's dawning on me...

Th: Yup...beautiful...

Matt: That um...that...(welling up with tears, Matt's hand extends towards Jane with his palm facing up, as his voice trembles)...you know, how relationships (fingers of both hands touch)

Th: Stay with both Jane and you, specifically...

Matt: How I'm fitting something that you need (*hands extend toward Jane; J smiling and nodding*) to have fitted. **[Mutual Core State]**

Th: Wow...

Matt: I'm..I'm...

Th: I'm fitting something you need to have fitted.

Matt: You know? We're a jig-sawing in a way (*Th laughs*)...and um...so...

Th: That's beautiful...we're jig sawing in a way... **[Core state markers of authentic, original speech]**

Matt: And, whether or not that's why I'm on the earth, I don't know (*couple laughs*)...I don't need to know...I need to know that um...that you feel acknowledged...(Jane nodding) **[recognition (Fosha, 2013)]**

Th: Wow...

Jane: Thank you...

Th: I need to know that you feel acknowledged...and just to add the piece, by me.

Matt: By me...by me...**[Core State continued]**

Due to space constraints, as in the first session, we must bring the transcript of this eleventh session to a close in the twenty-fourth minute. What lies ahead in the healing journey of this couple? In response to Matt and Jane both describing how difficult it was to understand and integrate the huge amount of transformation that happened in eleven AEDP for Couples sessions, I spontaneously described the Community Healing workshop format as a potential next step in metabolizing their experience. I described that in this process, a large group of therapists who are learning the AEDP for Couples model would gather. I explained that I would edit many sessions during the course of treatment to select change moments that are pivotal in generating the series of transformational shifts that evolved through Matt and Jane's treatment. The couple would be present on stage with me as the audience of therapists speak of their own embodied responses to

witnessing video-taped play-back of the couples' transformational journey. The therapists speak in I-statements utilizing the Seven Channels of Experience to aid them in perceiving, receiving and expressing their bottom-up experience, just as Matt and Jane have been doing beginning in the first session of their treatment. I told Matt and Jane that this process, in two previous Community Healing workshops I have conducted (Mars, 2012, 2013) resulted in a remarkably stable integration through the couples metaprocessing of the outcomes of their treatment session by session with me and the audience of therapists. This statement is based on six-month and one-year follow-ups showing distinctive stabilization of treatment gains. Matt and Jane immediately said an enthusiastic "yes" to my invitation. In two subsequent sessions, as I checked in with them about how they felt about this "big stretch" of trust, they both remained calm and enthusiastic to both serve and be served by metaprocessing their treatment in the Community Healing Workshop.[\[6\]](#)

In a couple's session, three weeks after the full day of metaprocessing their work at the Community Healing Workshop in New Jersey, Jane and Matt expressed deep gratitude for such a "heavenly" experience of this high point of our work together. They each remarked about how light, connected, calm, peaceful and confident they feel within themselves and within the marriage. They let me know that they both felt complete in terms of their couple sessions. Matt and Jane described and demonstrated that they are living the life they had been longing for with each other: being in love and being a source of comfort, adventure and discovery within the "nest" of their marriage as a secure base.

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[1] For short video clips, DVD Training materials or more written information about the Seven Channels of Experience go to [cfttsite.com](http://cfttsite.com)

[2] In response to a question from a workshop participant, "Is there any diagnostic intake interview in AEDP?"

[3] I offer this service without charge to all my couples in AEDP for Couples treatment, because I find consistently that their viewing the DVDs between sessions potentiates more accelerated, deeper and more stable quantum transformational change. Viewing DVDs of sessions is especially important for couples who have deeply entrenched fixed and invariant reactivity due to mutual historical trauma and deprivation such as was true in Matt and Jane's case.

[4] Bud Craig, in his landmark series of studies from 2005 to 2010, builds empirical research with primates into the concept of Global Emotional Moments (GEM's) in humans. Craig shows how sub-components of emotion are assembled at all levels of the brain and body to form what Craig calls GEM's.

[5] When the experiences are pleasure-generating (delicious), more dopamine seeking is engaged, which encourages an engagement of the midline cortical Core Neurobiological Self. (Fosha, 2013)

[6] I will articulate more completely the development of this model in a paper I am writing for a future *Transformance Journal*, which has deep roots in Authentic Movement (Adler, 2002) and AEDP.

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