



**MY PARTNER IS TRANS -  
SUPPORTING COUPLES IN  
GENDER DIVERSE  
RELATIONSHIPS**

**DONNA M CHAPMAN, LMFT**

August 1, 2019 Gender Odyssey San Diego, Ca.



# Donna M Chapman Psychotherapy

Marriage and Family Therapy

Gender, EMDR, EFT, DBT, Jungian Sandplay



**Why am I doing this?**

**Why are you doing this?**

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# WHO ARE WE TALKING TO?



Lenses – attachment - Universal – Bowlby/Johnson

Dyads – any size shape color of couple

What it might be like at the beginning, how this echoes throughout the relationship

Emotionally Focused Therapy as a model for relationship repair/under the context and into vulnerability

The single most effective intervention for a couple when one partner comes out as transgender is to be heard and understood by a safe, nonjudgmental and affirming other...

# WAIT...WHO IS TRANSITIONING?

When one person transitions,

**EVERYONE** transitions

Whether they want to or not.

Literature supports the lack of support for partners.



Why EFT?

Attachment based – ARE

Attachment injury and repair support

Creates opportunity for LOVE Conversations and emotional healing/reconnection.

Restore emotional health

# ATTACHMENT INJURIES...



Occur when...

critical moments of need/interpersonal relating fails  
the emotional wellbeing of the other is dismissed or  
disregarded

Look like...

emotional abandonment, neglect or betrayal

Feel like...

being unseen, unheard, unknown and ignored  
the partner is absent/connection is severed

# RESPONSIVENESS BREAK DOWN



Trans partner asks for support and comfort after revealing status and asking for transition

Partner may feel betrayed or in shock – cannot offer support and comfort

Partner reaches to trans partner for support and comfort

Trans partner is terrified that they will leave...  
cannot offer support or comfort

Each feels that the other is emotionally absent...

Connection is severed/Attachment injury results

# ATTACHMENT INJURY REPAIR

Therapist uses EFT protocols

Build alliance with couple,

Establish as Part of relationship as  
process consultant

Individual sessions with each partner

Create safe holding space for ALL of their  
intense emotions around the transition/relationship

Provide comfort and support to each

Return to couples work, facilitate LOVE conversations

Why have individual sessions?

Sometimes outside support only adds to trauma...





## WHAT PARTNER SUPPORTS MIGHT SAY:



Leave them!

That is disgusting!

They never loved you because they lied to you.

You can't be part of us any more..you're not  
lesbian (gay, straight) any more...

## **WHAT TRANS SUPPORTS MIGHT SAY:**



**They must support you!**

**They must never use your dead name!**

**You should leave them if they don't support you!**

**They don't really love you if they don't support you.**

**Their feelings don't matter, you're the same person.**

## OUTCOME...



Everyone feels heard and understood.

They can reach to each other for support and comfort, and trust that the other will be Accessible, Responsive and Engaging.

**Thank you!!!!**



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**Questions?**

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## REFERENCES



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