**Intervention:**  

*Meta Emotion Interview Questions*

by Sybil Carrere, John M. Gottman, Mary McGonigle, Stacey Prince, Dan Yoshimoto, Melissa Wilson Hawkins, Satcha Dearborn, and Amber Tabares

**Instructions:** Say the following:

I would like to ask you some questions about how you feel about your feelings. Take surprise as an example. Now, some people don’t ever like being surprised. On the other hand, some people love to be surprised and love surprising others. Surprise is a feeling that they like and really enjoy and they want to have more of it in their lives. They go out of their way to have it. So, there’s no right or wrong about this. People are just different. I am going to be asking you about your own feelings, how you experienced feeling while growing up and how you feel about feelings now, O.K.? Do you have any questions? So, let’s get started with the feeling of sadness.

**Part One: Sadness**

*Interviewer: Let’s talk about feeling sad.*

What was your experience with sadness when you were growing up; what was sadness like in your family?

What made you feel sad?

What would you do when you were sad?

Who was approachable, who did you talk to (i.e., immediate or extended family members, teachers, clergy persons), or who comforted you when you were sad?

How did your parents respond to your sadness?

How did you sisters and brothers respond to your sadness?

What was it like when your mother was sad?

What was it like when your father was sad?

How did your parents respond to each other’s sadness?

What was it like when your brothers or sisters were sad?

How did your parents respond to your sister’s and brother’s sadness?
Interviewer: Now let's move to the present.

What is it like for you to be sad now?
What would you look like, what would I see if I saw you sad? Could I tell if you were sad?
Who is approachable, who do you talk to (i.e., partner, immediate or extended family members, friends, clergy persons), or who comforts you when you are sad?
Who is approachable, who do you talk to when your partner makes you feel sad?
Can you give me a recent example of when you were sad?
In general, what are your thoughts and feelings about sadness? (In general, how do you feel about your sadness?)
How does your partner respond to your sadness?
How do you feel about your partner's response to your sadness?

Interviewer: Let's talk about your partner's sadness.

What about ________ (the partner)? Can you tell when (s)he's sad? Can you tell subtle signs? Tell me what it is like.
What does (s)he do when sad (e.g., a little blue?)
How do you respond to ________ (partner's) sadness? What might you do?
How does your partner respond to the way you deal with his or her sadness?
In general, what are your thoughts and feeling about ________ (partner's) sadness?
What does your partner's sadness bring out in you?
Can you give me a recent example or vivid example of one time that ________ (partner) was sad and what happened; who said and did what (try to get a play-by-play account of what happened)?

Part Two: Anger

Interviewer: Let's now talk about feeling angry.

What was your experience with anger when you were growing up; what was anger like in your family?
What made you feel angry?
What would you do when you were angry?
When you wanted to talk about something that made you angry, who was approachable,
who did you talk to (i.e., immediate or extended family members, teachers, clergy persons) when you were angry?

How did your parents respond to your anger?
How did your sisters and brothers respond to your anger?
What was it like when your mother was angry?
What was it like when your father was angry?
How did your parents respond to each other's anger?
What was it like when your brothers or sisters were angry?
How did your parents respond to your brother's or sister's anger?

*Interviewer: Let's move to the present.*

What is it like for you to be angry now?

What would you look like, what would I see if I saw you angry? Could I tell if you were angry?

Who is approachable, who do you talk to (i.e., partner, immediate or extended family members, friends, clergy persons), or who comforts you when you are angry?

Who is approachable, who do you talk to when your partner makes you feel angry?

Can you give me a recent example of when you felt angry? (any example is fine)

In general, what are your thoughts and feelings about your experience of anger? (In general, how do you feel about your anger?)

(For the next two questions, inquire about when their partner is angry with them and when their partner is angry in general or about something else.)

How does your partner respond to your anger?

How do you feel about your partner’s response to your anger?

*Interviewer: Let's talk about your partner's anger.*

What about ________ (the partner)? Can you tell when (s)he’s angry? Can you tell subtle signs? Tell me what it is like.

What does (s)he do when angry?

What are your thoughts and feelings about
________ (partner’s) anger?

What is it like when ________ (partner) is angry with you?

(For the next two questions inquire about when they are angry with their partner AND
when they are angry in general or at something else.)
How do you respond to ______ (partner’s) anger? What might you do?
How does your ______ (partner) respond to that (the way you respond to his or her anger)?
Can you give me a recent example or vivid example of one time that ______ (partner) was angry and what happened, who said and did what (try to get a play-by-play account of what happened)?

**Part Three: Affection**

**Interviewer: Let's now talk about affection and love.**

What was your experience with affection and demonstrations of love when you were growing up; what was affection and expression of love like in your family?
When would you feel affectionate?
What would you do when you were affectionate?
How did your parents respond to you when you were affectionate?
What did your father do when he was affectionate? (How did you know he was feeling affectionate?)
What did your mother do when she was affectionate? (How did you know she was feeling affectionate?)
How did your parents respond to each other’s affection and expressions of love?
How were your brothers or sisters affectionate? Did they express affection?
How did your parents let you know they loved you? Can you think of a time when they let you know they loved you?

**Interviewer: Let’s move to the present.**

What is it like for you to be affectionate and express your love now?
When do you feel affectionate now?
What do you do when you are affectionate?
In general, what are your thoughts and feelings about affection?
What would you look like, what would I see if I saw you affectionate or loving? Could I tell if you were feeling affectionate or loving?
Who are you affectionate toward, and who is affectionate toward you?
Can you give me a recent example of when you felt affectionate?
How does your partner respond to your affection?
How do you feel about your partner’s response to your affection?

_Interviewer: Let’s talk about your partner’s affection and expressions of love._

What does your partner do when affectionate or loving?
How does your partner let you know she or he loves you? Can you think of a recent example when this happened?
What are your reactions, thoughts, and feelings about ______ (partner’s) affectionate behavior?
When (s)he is affectionate or expresses love, what does that bring out in you?
How do you respond to ______ (partner’s) affection or expression of love? What might you do?
How does ______ (partner) respond to that (the way you attend to his or her affection)?
Can you give me a recent example or vivid example of one time that ____ (partner) was affectionate and what happened; who said and did what (try to get a play-by-play account of what happened)?

_Part Four: Pride_

_Interviewer: Let’s talk about pride and being proud of something._

What was your experience with pride when growing up? What did your family do when someone in your family was proud of something or someone?
What was it like when your mother felt proud?
What was it like when your father felt proud?
How did your parents respond to each other when either of them felt proud?
What made you feel proud?
What would you do when you were feeling proud?
Who did you talk to (i.e., immediate or extended family, teachers, clergy persons, friends) when you were feeling proud?
How did your parents respond to you when you were proud of something?
How did your sisters and brothers respond to you when you were proud of something?
What was it like when your brothers and sisters were proud of something in their lives? How did your parents respond to your sisters and brothers when they were proud of something?

**Interviewer: Let's move to the present.**

What is it like for you to feel proud of something in your life now? What would you look like, what would I see if you feeling proud? Could I tell if you were feeling proud?

Who do you talk to when you are feeling proud (i.e., partner, immediate or extended family, teachers, clergy persons or friends)? Can you give me a recent example of when you felt proud?

In general, what are your thoughts and feelings about pride or being proud? How does your partner respond to you when you are proud of something? How do you feel about your partner’s response?

**Interviewer: Let's talk about your partner's sense of pride.**

What about _____ (partner)? Can you tell when (s)he is proud? What does (s)he do when (s)he is feeling proud?

In general, what are your thoughts and feelings about _____ (partner) when _____ (partner) is proud?

How do you respond to _____ (partner’s) pride? What might you do? How does _____ (partner) respond to your reaction?

Can you give me a recent example, or vivid example of one time that _____ (partner) was feeling proud of something and what happened, who said and did what (try to get a play-by-play account of what happened)?

Can you tell when (s)he’s feeling pride about something you’ve done? What does (s)he do when (s)he is feeling proud of you?

What are your reactions, thoughts and or feeling about _____ (partner’s) sense of pride in you?