

EMDR--Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing--Therapy

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Patients who have suffered for years from anxiety or distressing memories, nightmares, insomnia, abuse or other traumatic events can now gain relief from a revolutionary new therapy called EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing). Research shows that EMDR is rapid, safe and effective. EMDR does not involve the use of drugs or hypnosis. It is a simple, non-invasive patient-therapist collaboration in which healing can happen effectively.

This powerful short-term therapy is highly effective for a wide range of disorders including chronic pain, phobias, depression, panic attacks, eating disorders and poor self-image, stress, worry, stage fright, performance anxiety, recovery from sexual abuse and traumatic incidents.

Many patients who have made slow progress in the past, or who have not benefited from more traditional therapies say that with EMDR they have finally found something that works for them!

WHAT IS EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, or EMDR, is a powerful new psychotherapy technique which has been very successful in helping people who suffer from trauma, anxiety, panic, disturbing memories, post traumatic stress and many other emotional problems. Until recently, these conditions were difficult and time-consuming to treat. EMDR is considered a breakthrough therapy because of its simplicity and the fact that it can bring quick and lasting relief for most types of emotional distress.

The EMDR technique uses a natural function of the body, rapid eye movement, or REM, as its basis. The human mind uses REM during sleep time to help it process daily emotional experiences. When trauma is extreme, this process breaks down and REM sleep doesn't bring the usual relief from distress. This is where EMDR comes in. EMDR is the next step or, you might say, an advanced stage of the REM processing.

As troubling images and feelings are processed by the brain via the eye movement patterns of EMDR, resolution of the issues and a more peaceful state are soon at hand.

WHO DISCOVERED EMDR?

In the late 80's, psychologist Francine Shapiro, Ph.D., observed that particular eye movements reduced the intensity of disturbing thoughts in some clients. Dr. Shapiro decided to study this effect scientifically. In 1989, she published an article in the Journal of Traumatic Stress, describing her success using a method she called EMDR. Since that time, other therapists around the world have contributed to its development. EMDR has evolved into a highly effective technique that incorporates elements from other various treatment modalities.

HOW DOES EMDR WORK?

When disturbing experiences happen, they are stored in the brain with all the sights, sounds, thoughts and feelings that accompany them. When a person is very upset, the brain seems to be unable to process the experience as it would normally. Therefore, the negative thoughts and feelings of the traumatic event get "trapped" in the nervous system. Since the brain cannot process these emotions, the experience and/or their accompanying feelings, are often suppressed from consciousness. However, the distress lives on in the nervous system where it causes disturbances in the normal emotional functioning of the person.

The EMDR Technique does two very important things. First, it "unlocks" the negative memories and emotions stored in the nervous system, and second, it helps the brain successfully process the experience.

The therapist works gently with the client, guiding him or her to revisit the traumatic incident. As

images and feelings arise, the client's eye movements are "matched" with the remembered events and then re-directed into particular movements that cause the release of the memories.

When the memory is brought to mind, the feelings are re-experienced in a new way. EMDR makes it possible to gain the self-knowledge and perspective that will enable the client to choose their actions, rather than feeling powerless over their re-actions. This process can be a complex if there are many experiences connected to the negative feelings. The EMDR therapy sessions continue until the traumatic memories and emotions are relieved.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF EMDR THERAPY?

Research studies show that EMDR is very effective in helping people process emotionally painful and traumatic experiences. When used in conjunction with other therapy modalities, EMDR helps move the client quickly from emotional distress to peaceful resolution of the issues or events involved.

EMDR sessions work amazingly fast. Processing even the most difficult memories can be achieved in a fraction of the time it previously would have taken with traditional therapy alone. It also enables the more efficient use of conventional psychotherapies, bringing greater results in much less time. The positive, long-term results of EMDR therapy affects all levels of the client's well-being -- mental, emotional and physical, so that their responses return to normalcy and health.

Traditional therapies often focus on memories from the unconscious mind, and then analyzing their meaning to gain insight into the problem. EMDR clients also acquire valuable insights during therapy, but EMDR can short-cut the process and go right to the releasing stage.

Studies consistently show that treatments with EMDR result in elimination of the targeted emotion or memory. The memory remains, but the negative response is neutralized.

WHAT PROBLEMS ARE HELPED BY EMDR?

Studies to date show a high degree of effectiveness with the following conditions:

- * trauma
- * fears
- * anxiety
- * childhood trauma
- * phobias
- * physical abuse
- * sexual abuse
- * rape
- * victims of violent crimes
- * post traumatic stress
- * depression
- * overwhelming fears
- * panic attacks
- * low self-esteem
- * performance and test anxiety

The EMDR technique is most effective when used in conjunction with other traditional methods of therapy in treating these and many other emotional disorders.

EMDR therapy can help clients replace their anxiety and fear with positive images, emotions and thoughts.

ARE THERE STUDIES THAT SHOW THAT EMDR IS EFFECTIVE?

Fourteen controlled studies of EMDR make it the most thoroughly researched method ever used in the treatment of trauma! A recent study of individuals who experienced rape, military combat, loss of loved ones, disasters and serious accidents, found that 84-90% had relief of their emotional distress after only three EMDR sessions. Another study showed that EMDR was twice as effective in half the amount of time of standard traditional psychotherapeutic care. Another study of subjects with post traumatic stress revealed that the significant improvement they gained with the EMDR treatments were maintained for at least 15 months.

Although some people have dramatic responses in a short period of time, others will progress more slowly. However, the results will be equally effective and long-lasting.

Since the initial medical study in 1989, world-wide research has helped develop and evolve EMDR. To date, more than half a million people have benefited from EMDR therapy.

IS EMDR HYPNOSIS?

No. During the EMDR session, the client is awake and alert and in control at all times. The healing that takes place with EMDR is much faster than with hypnotherapy. Like hypnosis, EMDR seems to work with the unconscious mind, bringing into consciousness the repressed thoughts and feelings that must be experienced again in order to release their energetic hold on the person.

WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING DOES A THERAPIST NEED TO USE EMDR?

Only practicing, licensed psychotherapists, psychiatrists, social workers and counselors may receive EMDR training. These are the only mental health professionals qualified to use EMDR therapy with clients. A clinical background is necessary for proper application of the EMDR technique. This is a highly specialized method that requires supervised training for therapeutic effectiveness and client safety. In the words of the *Behavior Therapist Journal*, "Clients are at risk if untrained clinicians attempt to use EMDR." It may be wise to request the therapist to provide you with their EMDR certificate of training.

SOME OBJECTIVES OF EMDR THERAPY:

Thanks to the on-going success of EMDR therapy for hundreds of thousands of people, it is not difficult to have high expectations for a therapy program that includes the EMDR technique. The short-term benefits of EMDR is simple and straightforward--the immediate relief of emotional distress and the elimination of the debilitating effect of unresolved past trauma. Longer-term benefits of EMDR therapy include the restoration of each client's natural state of emotional functioning. This return to normalcy brings with it a greater sense of personal power, more rewarding relationships and a more peaceful life.