

EMDR THERAPY

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a method of psychotherapy that was developed by Dr. Francine Shapiro in 1987. Scientific research has shown its effectiveness for post-traumatic stress, and clinicians have found it useful in treating several other conditions including anxiety, panic attacks, phobias, grief, stress, addictions, and sexual and/or physical abuse.

We don't know exactly how EMDR works, but we do know that trauma interrupts the brain's ability to process information properly. Distressful memories can then be triggered by sounds, images, feelings, even smells, causing intense responses that interfere with the person's ability to function. In the original work, eye movement was the method used for stimulating each hemisphere of the brain alternately, tapping into both the logical side and then the emotional side as a trauma or stressor was recalled and processed. Today, other bilateral stimulation approaches include left/right tapping and/or the use of alternating sound using headphones. EMDR supports accessing the issue through thought, emotion and body sensation, making it a holistic approach to resolution.

With EMDR, the therapist assists the client in changing negative experiences into adaptive learning experiences. The process includes: describing the disturbing event or issue; identifying the thoughts and beliefs held about the event; using eye movement or other bilateral stimulation of the brain while the client recalls the event; noticing whatever comes up for the client in terms of thoughts, feelings, body sensations; allowing this process to continue until the memory is less upsetting and positive associations, thoughts and beliefs about one's self present themselves. Each person's experience is different. There is no one right way for it to happen. Some clients will experience intense emotions during the session but they will decrease dramatically by the end.

Some issues can be dealt with and resolved in one or two sessions. The impact of life experiences and the amount of previous trauma may necessitate a longer series of sessions to reach the desired level of healing. EMDR is often used along with other therapeutic approaches such as different talk therapies commonly available.

For more information, contact: Candace Sinclair, M.A., L.C.P.C.
candacesinclair@northwestcommunitycounseling.com
847-551-9779, ext. 3