



About...

EMDR

What is EMDR

(Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing)?

When an event occurs which is severely traumatizing for an individual, it is thought memories can get stored in a raw form and they are not processed completely. This can lead to a number of difficulties including distressing intrusive thoughts, strong emotional reactions and avoidance. The aim of EMDR is to process these memories, reducing the associated distress. EMDR is a form of psychotherapy and was developed in 1987 by Francine Shapiro.

The therapy was originally developed to treat difficulties caused by exposure to traumatising events such as military action, physical and sexual abuse and life threatening incidents.

EMDR is an eight-phase approach. It addresses the past experiences that are the origins of the trauma; the current situations that trigger disturbing emotions, feelings and thoughts; and the positive experiences needed to enhance future health and wellbeing.

How does EMDR work?

At the time of a traumatic event strong emotions affect the mind's ability to process the experience. Individuals may feel "stuck" with the distressing memory re-experiencing sights, smells, sounds and tastes associated with the original trauma. These memories may be triggered by something connected to the original trauma or may just "pop" into the individual's head.

EMDR helps to reduce the intensity of these memories by facilitating the processing of them. Over time the distressing memory and associated emotions, thoughts and beliefs are worked through until the individual is able to think about the trauma event without “re-living” it.

The key to EMDR is “bilateral stimulation” – the alternating left/right brain stimulation. This is most commonly achieved using eye movements but sounds or taps may also be used. This process seems to unblock the information processing part of the brain and as a consequence distressing memories lose their intensity.

When is EMDR used?

EMDR has been most successfully used in the treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence for this purpose.

It has also been used in the treatment of:

- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Depression
- Stress
- Phobias
- Sleep Problems
- Complicated Grief
- Addictions
- Pain Relief
- Self Esteem

What Happens in a Session?

Your therapist will begin with a thorough assessment. This assessment will include your past history, the kinds of distress and difficulties you are experiencing and your support system.

You will be shown how to use relaxation techniques such as visual imagery or meditation prior to beginning EMDR therapy.

During an EMDR session you will be asked questions about a memory whilst the therapist helps you to recreate the eye movements. The eye movements will happen for a short while and then stop. This process is repeated until the distress caused by the memory is reduced as much as possible. Relaxation techniques are used to help the individual to feel calm again after each session.