

ONE-ON-ONE

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TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

I am a teacher, author, and psychotherapist with over 25 years of clinical experience. I specialize in treating children, adolescents, and families affected by complex and developmental trauma as well as generational wounds and dissociation. I am the author of *EMDR Therapy and Adjunct Approaches with Children: Complex Trauma, Attachment and Dissociation* and several books, book chapters, and articles on the use of EMDR therapy with children and adolescents. I have traveled the world teaching and learning from wonderful clinicians that are dedicating their lives to healing our young generations. And I have developed numerous intensive training programs and protocols that include the *EMDR-Sandtray Protocol and The Systemic, EMDR- Attachment Informed Program to Heal Intergenerational Trauma & Repair the Parent-Child Attachment Bond*.

WHAT IS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND YOUR PRESENTATION THIS YEAR?

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought trauma and adversity to most families and children. In addition, it has exacerbated pre-existing trauma in children and their parents as they had to endure losses, seclusion, financial hardships, and lack of social support. We are seeing an increase in violence directed toward the self and others and the aggrava-

tion of emotional and behavioral issues in children. Despite all the adversity and trauma COVID has left in our world, our children are malleable and hold an incredible capacity to heal and grow within them.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU AS WE LISTEN TO YOUR PRESENTATION? WHAT ARE THE KEY TAKEAWAYS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS?

This presentation will address the challenges and intricacies and the step-by-step strategies for working with children and youth with symptoms arising from accumulative trauma, ongoing stress, losses, and social isolation. How do we support our families as we live through such uncertain times? This seminar will offer strategies that work not only with the child but the parent-child relationship. I will also discuss adjunct approaches, and strategies well-grounded in the latest neurosciences will be discussed.

WHAT READINGS DO YOU RECOMMEND ON YOUR SUBJECT?

I would recommend my book, *EMDR Therapy and Adjunct Approaches with Children: Complex Trauma, Attachment, and Dissociation*. In addition, I would recommend any books from



Dan Siegel, Allan Schore, Louise Cozolino and Stephen Porges, Kathy Steele and Onno van der Hart, Frank Putnam, and my favorite researcher Karlen Lyons-Ruth. Besides Dr. Shapiro, they are the authors and researchers that have influenced my work the most. There are also multiple recent books on EMDR therapy with children from various authors that can support our EMDR child community.

WHAT IS THE SPARK FOR YOUR WORK WITH EMDR?

I have by now worked with thousands of children and their families as their direct therapists or the consultant of their therapist, and I have observed first-hand the power of EMDR therapy. I have witnessed the imprints and legacies that trauma leaves in our children's embodied mind, and I have also witnessed their recovery and healing through the use of EMDR therapy.

WE ALL LIKE EMDR STORIES OF HEALING AND CHANGE. TELL US ABOUT YOUR MOST CHALLENGING CLIENT AND HOW YOU HELPED. OR CONVERSELY, TELL US ABOUT YOUR BEST SUCCESS STORY.

I have had many incredibly challenging cases that turned into very successful stories. This story has many elements of real cases, but to protect the identity I have heavily modified multiple details.

Johnny, a 7-year-old boy, comes to therapy because of severe emotional dysregulation, harm, and violence to other children and animals. This child spent the first four years of his life in an orphanage before getting adopted into an American family. This child suffered deprivation at all levels and severe neglect. The journey with this child challenged me as a clinician and as a human being. EMDR therapy served as the overarching structure for treatment while other approaches such as play therapy, Theraplay, somatic therapies, and parts work were used. The AIP model was accompanied by the Polyvagal theory and dissociation theory as this child presented with severe dissociation. However, after several years of treatment, this child excelled at school and formed meaningful and close relationships with his parents, family, and friends. As he goes through different developmental stages, he comes back for more EMDR treatment for short periods as he can enter into deeper and deeper layers of the self and access more profound and deeper levels of healing. He is an adult now that has been able to attend college, find a passion

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in life, and a way to engage it in his work. The parents that also received EMDR therapy have been incredible companions for this client and have grown with him.

WHY IS THIS WORK IMPORTANT?

Without actively embracing the legacy left by trauma, children and adolescents can continue to be impacted by the cognitive, emotional, and especially by sensorimotor schemas that lay at the core of such traumatic experiences. The child that continues to exist in survival due to trauma will continue to fall behind as their counterparts move forward into developing more sophisticated ways of self-regulating and connecting

with others. Unresolved trauma will continue to impact their biology and every area of their lives. According to Ford and Courtois (2009), trauma interfere with the formation of a coherent identity, and EMDR therapy, on the other side, supports resilience, a restoration of the body-mind relationship, and the emergence of a more integrated coherent sense of self. Trauma is passed through generations, but when we support the healing of one child, we are also impacting multiple generations to come in a positive way.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

I have always been a curious individual, continuously wondering about the depths of our human existence, the spring and winters, deaths, and rebirths that take place in our lives. I am excited about philosophy, psychology, spirituality, and the road that can take us into a much greater understanding of our own embodied minds and expand our level of consciousness. I love stories and storytelling as we all have an individual story that we are here to understand and make sense of, and we are also part of a generational storyline. Beyond loving to dive into the depths of what it means to be human, I also love dancing, nature, a good sense of humor, and connecting in meaningful ways to others. As a Latina, I love music, especially salsa. I am also excited about helping children and advocating for animals and our planet. I am excited about existing in this historic moment, and I am excited about living life, even when the winds get rough and challenging.