

ONE-ON-ONE

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TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

I completed my basic training in EMDR in 1992 and have been on the faculty of the EMDR Institute for the past 28 years. At the time of my initial training, I was the clinical director of a women's trauma and dissociation inpatient unit, specializing in the treatment of women recovering from both acute and chronic trauma. Out of necessity, I quickly figured out how to adapt EMDR for use with this high-risk, extremely dysregulated, dissociative population, and to my amazement, found myself getting remarkable results. I spent two decades on the training faculty of Bessel van der Kolk's trauma center in Boston and was a co-investigator on an early NIMH-funded study comparing EMDR to Prozac in the treatment of PTSD. Today, I maintain a clinical and consultative private practice in Cambridge, MA and teach for the Trauma Research Foundation, engaging clinicians from around the world in trauma-focused learning. I am an EMDRIA-approved consultant, on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research*, and a past member of the EMDR Council of Scholars, having served as the Vice-chair of the Clinical Practice workgroup.

Over the years, I have authored or co-authored several articles and chapters focused on EMDR therapy, including comprehensive reviews of EMDR applications for Complex PTSD. It

was my privilege to co-author a chapter with Dr. Francine Shapiro for the second edition of *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Adults*, edited by Christine Courtois and Julian Ford and published in 2020. And, it was thrilling to finally release a book of my own (co-written with Michael Baldwin)—*Every Memory Deserves Respect*—in May of this year.

On a personal note, I am married to Bob Stickgold, a cognitive neuroscientist and sleep researcher, who I met over two decades ago at an EMDRIA conference. Many from our community remember when my son, Adam, who is now 17 years old, made an appearance at an early HAP dance when he was just an itty bitty infant.

WHAT IS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND YOUR PRESENTATION THIS YEAR?

I hope to provide my audience with multiple clinical maps, incorporating various concepts and strategies from other trauma-focused models, to facilitate effective case conceptualization and treatment planning, decision-making, processing, and deep, long-lasting transformation. I have certainly made some significant mistakes as an EMDR therapist over the past 30 years and have hopefully learned from them and grown a lot. I would love to share some of the wisdom that I've acquired over time,



share my sense of the most common mistakes that clinicians make in working with chronic trauma survivors, and offer some helpful guidelines for staying on course.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU AS WE LISTEN TO YOUR PRESENTATION? WHAT ARE THE KEY TAKEAWAYS ABOUT EMDR AND COMPLEX PTSD?

I want clinicians to think broadly about the face of complex trauma, paying attention to the fact that trauma is both objective and subjective. That is, trauma is not just the event, but also the way someone experiences that event, the meaning that the event takes on, and how survivors attempt to adapt in their lives. I want therapists to understand how trauma involves acts of both commission and omission—things that happened (emotional, physical, sexual abuse) and things that failed to happen (protection, nurturance, rescue).

WHAT READINGS DO YOU RECOMMEND ON YOUR SUBJECT?

In terms of EMDR-specific complex PTSD (in adults) readings, I'd recommend books and/or articles by Dolores Mosquera, Jim Knipe, Carol Forgash, Laurel Parnell, Sandra Paulsen, and Robin Shapiro (to name just a few). I'd also encourage that clinicians read the 2019 review article—"The Current Status of EMDR Therapy in the Treatment of Complex PTSD"—by de Jongh et al. in the *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research*, Volume 13, Number 4. Beyond the EMDR literature base, I'd recommend books and/or articles by Kathy Steele, Janina Fisher, Bessel van der Kolk, Arielle Schwartz, Christine Courtois, and Judith Herman (again, just to name a few key authors). Also, for an up-to-date overview of the field of complex trauma treatment, I'd recommend *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Adults* (2nd Edition), edited by Ford and Courtois (2020). And, of course, "I'd recommend my book, *Every Memory Deserves Respect*.

WHAT IS THE SPARK FOR YOUR WORK WITH EMDR?

It is a privilege and extremely energizing to serve clients every day as they courageously work to heal themselves and transform their lives. Having studied many trauma-informed models over the past 30 years, EMDR remains my treatment of choice. It is an incredibly efficient, effective, and comprehensive psychotherapy; when clients are feeling hopeless and demoralized, I can confidently tell them that they can indeed recover and that it won't take a lifetime. Their hard work

inspires me to keep learning, teaching, and striving to be the best that I can.

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.

Earlier this year, at the peak of the pandemic, I treated a young hospital-based physician who was on medical leave after losing multiple patients to COVID-19. He presented with debilitating PTSD symptoms, depression, and severe insomnia. Careful history-taking revealed a significant history of childhood loss and many experiences where he was unable to "save" his mother from being beaten by his violent, alcoholic father. We targeted his memories of early loss and his sense of powerless and failure in repeated domestic abuse situations, and his symptoms began to remit. Working with the three-pronged standard protocol, we then targeted his most traumatic COVID-related hospital experiences and installed future templates related to returning to work and coping with potential losses in the future. He was able to return to work after only eight EMDR sessions, feeling resourced and hopeful about his ability to function and take care of his patients. After completing treatment, he reported that he felt less "numb and burnt out" and more "open-hearted and present."

WHY IS THIS WORK IMPORTANT?

We are still in the midst of challenging times, with the COVID pandemic, economic collapse, and both political

and racial strife bringing trauma, adversity, and loss to tens of millions. Many of those who are struggling to rebound from recent adverse experiences seem to have significant complex trauma histories. As Rolf Carriere, the former UNICEF Country Director in Asia, wrote in his 2014 article in the *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research* (p. 187), "Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy offers a potentially scalable intervention that combines effectiveness, efficiency, affordability, and acceptability—essential preconditions—for launching an ambitious global trauma therapy plan."

WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

I am particularly excited about the fact that complex trauma survivors are responding to my new book—*Every Memory Deserves Respect*—with tremendous enthusiasm and appreciation. The book is written for the layperson in a user-friendly way, accessible style and a compassionate tone. There are about 60 "billboards" in the book (photographs with brief narratives) designed to bring the major concepts of the book to life, especially for dysregulated clients who may find reading difficult. I'm hoping (especially with Prince Harry's help) that we can reach people in need to let them know about EMDR, informing them that they need not suffer any longer.