


DR. LOUISE MAXFIELD CAREER RETROSPECTIVE:

Leaving Her Mark on EMDR Practice and Research

By Kim Howard, CAE



Louise Maxfield, Ph.D., retired this summer from her position as editor of the *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research (JEMDR)*. After a lifetime of working in the psychotherapy field and for 15 years as the *JEMDR* editor, EMDRIA wants to thank her for all of her hard work publicly. Although we cannot catalog every life event, we would like readers to know a little more about the woman behind the *Journal* as we wish her well in her retirement.

Louise Maxfield, Ph.D., a Canadian psychologist, was an EMDRIA certified therapist and approved consultant. She was born in England to parents who found each other in a hospital ward during World War II when her father was dying from a ruptured appendix, and her mother was his nurse. He proclaimed that he had to live because she was an angel. After her parents married, Dr. Maxfield became one of four daughters. The death of her second sister from a respiratory

ailment when Dr. Maxfield was four taught her that we have little control in life. This sorrowful family event might have been the beginnings of a budding therapist. Initially a cautious and shy child and adolescent, Maxfield grew out of her shyness while attending the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario, where she majored in math and physics. It was a compulsory psychology course that changed her academic education and would influence her career path.

THANK YOU!!

THANK YOU FOR
CHANGING MY
LIFE AND SO MANY
OTHERS LIVES

ALWAYS IN OUR HEARTS

FOREVER GRATEFUL

from a
gift!
you have changed
the lives of all!

THANK YOU!!

Thank you for
changing the
world!

ALL THE BEST!
WITH LOVE,
GERARD XOXO

FOREVER
GRATEFUL FOR YOU

With Gratitude + Love

you have been
a tremendous
presence in my
life!

Forever grateful
- Amber

THANK YOU FOR
CHANGING MY
LIFE AND SO MANY
OTHERS LIVES

FOREVER IN
MY HEART

YOU CHANGED
MY LIFE ALONG WITH
SO MANY OTHERS

remember from the
bottom of my
heart! XOXO

you changed
my life!



FOREVER
GRATEFUL FOR YOU

FOREVER
GRATEFUL FOR YOU

CHANGING

THE PATH TO DISCOVERING EMDR THERAPY

When she graduated from the University of Waterloo in Canada, her first job was as a research assistant, working with Donald Meichenbaum before he was recognized as an expert in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). They worked at a reform school for girls who had committed serious crimes. She did not think that the CBT program was helpful for the girls, but she did learn about research. She went on to work in Child Protective Services as a social worker, providing therapy, apprehending children, and handling foster placements and adoptions. Here, Dr. Maxfield learned how the system worked and its effect on children and how workers had to be aware of the inherent power in their positions. After this, she became a stay-at-home mom with her two daughters and son.

By the mid-1980s, Dr. Maxfield worked as a therapist with adult sexual abuse survivors and families with abused children in British Columbia. Ultimately, she and her group were contracted by the government to do a 150-hour training program in each of seven different cities in the province's southern interior from 1991-1993; the program was mandatory for therapists working with sexually abused children and their families. She felt it was "so dynamic and transformative to be on the cusp of the world-changing around this issue."

In 1990, she became a Registered Clinical Counselor in the BC Association of Clinical Counselors. At that time, she began a private therapy practice, which she continued throughout her career.

By 1993 Dr. Maxfield completed an EMDR Basic Training with Dr. Francine Shapiro. She was impressed with the practical results and the unusual protocol. She used EMDR therapy at

her sexual abuse agency and in private practice. She became intrigued about its mechanism of action and wanted to conduct research to find answers to her questions.

THE COUNSELOR BECOMES THE STUDENT – AND A RESEARCHER

Although she had completed the requirements to become a Certified Trauma Specialist, Maxfield realized that she did not have any research skills or knowledge. She decided to go back to school and found Lakehead

University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Dr. Maxfield paired all her years of clinical work with a vast store of new knowledge and the opportunity to conduct research. She won a Social Science and Health Research Council Doctoral Fellowship and three Ontario Graduate Scholarships in national and provincial competitions. At graduation, she received the Governor General's Award.

Dr. Maxfield's first research project, in 1997, was a study of single-session EMDR treatment



“ The EMDR community has been my ‘home’ for almost 30 years, and I will deeply miss all our camaraderie, connections, and collaborations. I have been blessed with opportunities to disseminate information about EMDR, to foster research and innovations, to contribute to our understanding of EMDR’s mechanisms and its efficacy, and to encourage humanitarian efforts. Now it is time for me to pass on the torch, and I have great confidence that others will also seize the opportunities that come to them to carry on this wonderful work. I am excited as I think about the future of EMDR therapy and about the many thousands of therapists working to bring healing, researchers seeking to advance knowledge, trainers providing wisdom, and authors writing powerful articles—all over the world. ”

—Dr. Maxfield

for test anxiety and found that EMDR reduced levels of test anxiety from the 90th percentile to the 50th percentile at a one-month follow-up. Dr. Shapiro was the external reviewer on her paper. Spin-offs from an initial collaboration with Charles Figley resulted in Dr. Maxfield's first publication on EMDR. She also wrote the initial draft for EMDR in the first International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) treatment guidelines. By 1999, she went to the University of British Columbia for part of her internship. She worked as an investigator with Steve Taylor on a project comparing EMDR, Exposure, and Relaxation therapies. She also conducted a meta-analysis that found that the more rigorous EMDR studies produced larger effect sizes. After this, Dr. Maxfield investigated the role of eye movements in EMDR, finding support for working memory theory, with faster eye movements more effective than slow movements in reducing the vividness and emotionality of distressing memories.

COLLEAGUE, THERAPIST, AUTHOR, AND TEACHER

In 2000, as a result of her interest and work concerning EMDR therapy, Dr. Maxfield became Dr. Shapiro's assistant. She worked with her for 2.5 years while doing her Ph.D. studies, which she completed in 2003. During that time, she realized that she was a good editor and could help people write and develop research designs. While working with Dr. Shapiro, she coauthored papers; provided information about EMDR therapy and related research to the public, research, and clinical communities; edited and reviewed articles and chapters about EMDR; provided an international networking function;



“Thank you for your careful work and scholarship over all of these years of dedication to EMDR therapy and spreading the word worldwide—a goal close to my heart. You have been my colleague, consultant, and friend for a very long time, and I hope that you will come again to a conference, so we can celebrate your contributions to our community. With warmest wishes to enjoy your retirement and flourish in the world in the future.” – Marilyn Luber



and advised researchers regarding research designs and outcome measures. Dr. Maxfield's relationship with Dr. Shapiro continued even after her role as assistant ended. They continued to collaborate on various projects and co-edited with Florence Kaslow the “Handbook of EMDR and Family Therapy Processes (Wiley, 2007).

After completing her Ph.D. and working as a child psychologist in a family treatment center for two years, she moved to London, Ontario, where she worked in an acute care outpatient hospital setting. Her job was providing Dialectical Behavior Therapy and EMDR to adult patients with Complex PTSD and severe psychopathology.

Dr. Maxfield was also an Independent Expert Assessor for the Indian

Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat and did expert assessments and court testimony for First Nations members to assess the level of harm they had been subjected to as children in residential treatment centers.

Rosalie Thomas, R.N., Ph.D., a board member of the EMDR Foundation, an EMDR approved consultant, and EMDR certified therapist (retired), has known Dr. Maxfield for years. She says that her gentle and quiet approach has always made it seem like she has been around since the beginning of EMDR therapy. “In many roles and situations, Louise has been my go-to person for her wisdom and her expertise. I turned to her often when I needed information about a conference application or a research application. She made sure



“Her presence, her leadership, her strength in face of challenges, and her careful and thoughtful responsiveness will be sorely missed both personally and professionally.” – Rosalie Thomas



all of the information was correct in the EMDR Early Intervention Toolkit research design section. She’s been a treasured colleague in helping to sort through issues of fidelity in innovative proposals from our creative EMDR colleagues,” Thomas said.

Dr. Maxfield has been a member of the EMDRIA Research Committee since 2000. She also reviewed articles for many other journals, including *JAMA*, *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology*, *Journal of Psychological Trauma*, etc. Since 2007, she has been an EMDRIA Approved Consultant. She has provided consultation to EMDR therapists and has been supervising psychology graduate students in their internship residencies (2006-2013) and in their practicum placements (2003-2013). Also, she was a member of the Early Psychosis Intervention Working Group for Northwestern Ontario (2004-2005). She was an adjunct clinical professor in the Department of Psychology for Western University (2008-2017), an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Western University (2006-2016), and an adjunct professor in

the Department of Psychology at Lakehead University (2005-2015). Dr. Maxfield’s research interests include best practices for treating PTSD, affect dysregulation, and dissociation; the development of psychiatric disorders; the patient characteristics predicting treatment response; and, treatment mechanisms of action.

Deany Laliotis, LICSW, founder and director for the Center of Excellence in EMDR Therapy, also an EMDRIA certified therapist and approved consultant, said that Dr. Maxfield is one of a kind. “Like many of us, she is passionate about EMDR therapy. Unlike some of us, she is passionate about the research in EMDR therapy. As both a clinician and a researcher, Louise has always inspired those of us who are therapists, consultants, and trainers to not only be more evidence-based in our work but to appreciate the value of research and how good research informs best practices. When I have commented to her in the past about her agility with research, she would say to me and others, ‘You don’t have to be a researcher, but you do have to be pro-

research. It’s not one or the other. It’s the relationship between the two.’ That is one of the many gifts she gave me,” Laliotis said.

JEMDR: EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In 2005, Drs. Shapiro, Maxfield, and others recognized the need for a professional scientific journal that could advance EMDR therapy and provide a platform to share information about treatment practices and disseminate information about EMDR research. Enter the *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research* (JEMDR). The hope was that it would facilitate communication among EMDR’s international community. The *Journal* officially started in 2006 with Dr. Maxfield as founding editor. It is a “quarterly, peer-reviewed journal devoted to integrative, up-to-date papers about EMDR” (www.emdria.org/publications-resources/journal-of-emdr-practice-research). In addition to ensuring that core scientific and publication standards were met, as editor, Dr. Maxfield made sure that the complexities of EMDR therapy were presented accurately.

“Louise’s contribution to the field as the editor of our peer-reviewed *Journal* put EMDR therapy on the larger professional map. We owe her a great debt of gratitude for that. Francine wanted EMDR therapy to be professionally acknowledged worldwide, and Louise made sure of it by being the gatekeeper of good research during her tenure as editor. Her shoes will not be easy to fill,” Laliotis said.

Dr. Maxfield was determined that *JEMDR* should be an international journal. She selected an editorial board with diverse international membership. *JEMDR*’s global approach continues to be evident with at least half of its contributors coming from non-American

countries. Dr. Maxfield was always very appreciative of the work done by the editorial board and the *Journal's* various reviewers. She often said, "We would not have a journal without your contributions!" In editing, she tried always to be respectful of the author, and she viewed her role as a facilitator. "When I'm finished, the authors should feel that the paper presents their voice, their ideas, and that the final version is the best possible version."

Marilyn Luber, Ph.D., EMDR therapist, EMDR approved consultant, and author, said, "Currently, *JEMDR's* international readership has over 20,000 subscribers, and it is by far the most widely cited for EMDR content, among the highest-ranked journals in all indexed journals in the categories of psychology, psychiatry, and related fields. Louise has created an open forum for clinicians and researchers to carry on a stimulating and collaborative dialogue. Over the



Dr. Maxfield believed that publishing strong well-written articles and studies would have a positive influence on EMDR's status in the wider world.

15 years that Louise has been at the *Journal's* helm, she has helped many researchers and clinicians worldwide reach their potential in the academic format of the journal literature. She brings joy to her work with authors and has had the opportunity to indulge her professional passion by spreading the word about EMDR therapy and helping countless others do so as well," Luber said. "Louise's legacy is the careful scholarship and passion she brought to research and EMDR therapy. The issues of *JEMDR* she edited will live forever as models of scholarship and research."

AWARDS, PUBLICATIONS, AND SPREADING THE EMDR THERAPY MESSAGE

Dr. Maxfield believed that publishing strong well-written articles and studies would have a positive influence on EMDR's status in the wider world. So, she used her role as editor as an opportunity to mentor authors and researchers, and made a consistent effort to educate others about writing styles as well as publication and research standards. Like Dr. Shapiro, she strongly encouraged research and has consulted in the planning of numerous research projects.

She is also an advocate for EMDR innovations and has supported various innovations as well as research and work with EMDR early interventions. Her most recent article is a call for the development and research of therapist-guided EMDR self-help applications. As a strong advocate for humanitarian efforts, Dr. Maxfield believes that it is essential for EMDR therapy to become more accessible, available, and affordable for millions of people around the world.

Dr. Maxfield has been awarded many different awards for her academic excellence and research competence. In 2008, EMDRIA awarded her the Francine Shapiro Award for her outstanding contribution and service to EMDR. She received the Research Award from both EMDRIA (2001) and EMDR Canada (2003) for her excellence in EMDR Research. She has a long list of publications



"While you will no longer be formally with us, those of us who have worked closely with you will be channeling our 'Inner Louise' by asking ourselves the same questions you would ask us as well as promoting the importance of good research." – Deany Laliotis



on subjects ranging from EMDR humanitarian projects to explaining the effects of eye movements from a working memory perspective to the treatment of recent traumas and community disasters, etc. She has done many plenary and keynote presentations on EMDR for EMDR Canada and EMDRIA. She also has refereed many conference presentations for these organizations. She has given more than 100 presentations on radio and television and to public groups and organizations concerning mental health, trauma, abuse, posttraumatic stress, parenting, and related issues.

"As a writer and an editor, she has been a true teacher. Having prepared an article for submission to the *Journal*, I was nervous about her feedback. Instead, not only was she complimentary, she was very supportive. I came to appreciate through her that I can write about what I do and teach it. As a teacher myself who values the importance of helping her students know what they know, she gave that same gift to me," Laliotis said.

Luber started working with Maxfield in 2007. "I remember first sitting down with Louise when I began to work on my EMDR Scripted Protocol book series around 2007. I consulted with Louise to figure out the best universally available source for the protocols and procedures. After putting our heads together, we came up with the solution that became the touchstone for all of my books: use Francine's 2001 text as the basis for the work. Louise's thought process, interest, and encouragement were invaluable to me at that time, and I am forever grateful," said Luber.

A LEGACY THAT WILL BE TOUGH TO IMPROVE

When you are the original, it's hard for anyone who follows. "I think Louise's legacy will be much broader



"One of the first people I interacted with when I joined EMDRIA in 2017 was Louise Maxfield. It was clear that she had great commitment to research in EMDR, and to the *JEMDR* specifically. She has shepherded, nurtured, and built the *Journal* from the time it was just an idea until now. She has been instrumental in the work of the Council of Scholars. I know the EMDR community is better in many ways because of her work, and it falls to us to carry her commitment forward into the future. Her shoes can never be filled, but we can strap on our own and continue to do the work." – Michael Bowers, MA, EMDRIA Executive Director



than just research. Her many writings, whether with Francine or as an individual author, have impacted [our community] internally through her support of researchers, research projects, dissemination of information within the global EMDR community, and practitioners, researchers, and writers alike. Further, she has made it possible to take that information out of our community to the broader public. She's truly carried the torch alongside Dr. Shapiro for many years, and for that collaborative effort and her infinite wisdom, she'll be long remembered," Thomas said.

Dr. Maxfield is an excellent clini-

cian, researcher, and EMDR therapy champion. We thank her for all these years of dedication and service to our community. The EMDRIA Board of Directors and the community at large wish her well in her retirement.

Editor's Note: Background material for this article came from the subject herself and this article by Dr. Marilyn Luber in the Francine Shapiro Library. <https://emdria.omeka.net/items/show/25396>

Kim Howard, CAE, is EMDRIA's Director of Communications and Marketing.