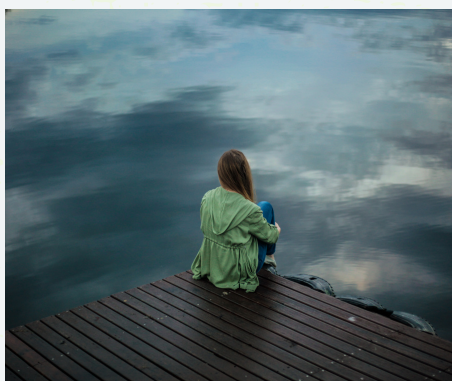
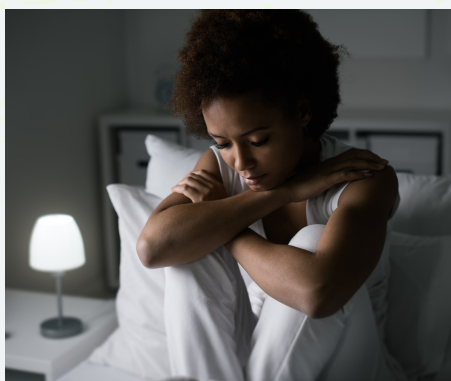


EMDR Therapy and Depression

What is EMDR Therapy?

EMDR stands for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. It is a form of therapy that helps people heal from trauma and/or other distressing life experiences.



How EMDR Helps

Our brains have a natural way to recover from traumatic memories and events. This process involves communication between the amygdala (the alarm signal for stressful events), the hippocampus (which assists with learning, including memories about safety and danger), and the prefrontal cortex (which analyzes and controls behavior and emotion). While many times traumatic experiences can be managed and resolved spontaneously, sometimes help is needed to process blocks caused by stress responses. Stress responses are part of our natural fight, flight, or freeze instincts. When distress from a disturbing event remains, the upsetting images, thoughts, and emotions may create feelings of overwhelm, of being back in that moment, or of being frozen in time. EMDR therapy helps the brain process these memories and allows normal healing to resume. The experience is still remembered, but the fight, flight, or freeze response from the original event is resolved, and the memory feels farther away. The memory moves from maladaptive to adaptive resolution.

Recognition

EMDR therapy has been extensively researched and is recognized as an effective treatment for trauma by many organizations including:

- American Psychiatric Association
- American Psychological Association
- International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS)
- U.K. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs/ Department of Defense
- U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- World Health Organization

More endorsements can be found at: <https://www.emdria.org/about-emdr-therapy/emdr-and-ptsd/>

What EMDR is Like

After you and your therapist agree that EMDR therapy is a good fit, and begin to work together, you will be asked to focus on a specific event. Attention will be given to an image, beliefs, feelings, and body sensations related to this event. While you bring up the upsetting event, the therapist will begin sets of side-to-side eye movements, sounds, or taps. Between sets, you will be asked to briefly report any changes without judgement, just noticing. You may experience shifts of insight or changes in images, feelings, or beliefs regarding the event. The sets of eye movements, sounds, or taps are repeated in silence until the event becomes less disturbing. Your job during EMDR is to simply pay attention to what is happening 'on the inside' and tell the therapist. You are in control of the treatment process. View a video Introduction to EMDR Therapy here: <https://www.emdria.org/about-emdr-therapy/>.



Trauma Symptoms

- Depression, sadness, isolation
- Avoiding responsibilities
- Difficulty functioning in daily life
- Exaggerated startle response, feeling on edge
- Anger/Difficulty controlling aggressive impulses
- Sense of numbness toward life
- Difficulty staying present with life or other dissociative responses
- Shame, guilt, intense worry
- Acting out compulsive behaviors
- Difficulties being in public places/crowds
- Involvement in high risk behaviors
- Avoiding community activities
- Marital/Family issues
- Chronic pain, headaches, medically unexplained symptoms
- Low energy
- Negative self talk
- Thoughts of 'I don't deserve to get help' or 'I am hopeless/Nothing will work for me'

EMDR Therapy and Depression

Depression can make a person feel hopeless, stuck, and overwhelmed. Traumatic and stressful life events often contribute to depressive symptoms such as negative thoughts, empty or sad feelings, low sense of self-worth, and difficulty finding pleasure in life. EMDR can provide relief for these depressive symptoms and help reframe negative beliefs, resolve unprocessed trauma and adverse experiences, improve energy and mood, and create a more positive understanding of the self and others. EMDR therapy can be used alone or with other approaches to create and promote a safe environment for clients to achieve their goals.

After EMDR therapy, thoughts of "I am a weakling" with feelings of sadness, fear, and disappointment changed to thoughts of "I am motivated" with improved well-being.*