

What is EMDR therapy?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a comprehensive and integrated psychotherapy approach that treats a wide range of clinical presentations across various contexts. EMDR protocol utilizes bilateral stimulation (BLS) in the form of eye movements, tapping and/or auditory tones to accelerate the brain's capacity to process and heal a troubling memory, thought, feeling, or phobia.

When memories are inadequately processed and encoded in the brain maladaptively, the brain can get confused from current and previous experiences, resulting in a present maladaptive response. In effect, stimuli from the present can automatically link to these maladaptively stored memories, triggering a reaction to the present *as if* it were the same situation as the past. These maladaptively stored memories contain information that is emotionally charged and distorted due to the nature of these experiences and lack of available resources to process adequately at that time. Learning from these experiences also becomes maladaptive. The goal of EMDR is to reprocess these previous memories in efforts to seek adaptive resolution, de-escalate present maladaptive responses and foster new, adaptive information for future use.

Research has demonstrated that EMDR is effective for the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, phobias, panic attacks, anxiety disorders, childhood trauma, disturbing memories, complicated grief, and chronic pain. EMDR utilizes an adaptive information processing perspective to understand that adverse life experiences inform current life difficulties, including physical conditions and disease as well as on-going mental health struggles.

What are the benefits?

Research has demonstrated:

- ➔ Rapid symptom reduction.
- ➔ When processing is successful, the previously disturbing memories are neutralized and are identified with little disturbance.
- ➔ Desensitization of current distress.
- ➔ Negative images, thoughts, emotions, and sensations are resolved.
- ➔ Emotional confusion becomes rectified.
- ➔ Positive thoughts and emotions become available and can be strengthened.
- ➔ Emergence of new insight and understanding.
- ➔ New learning about self/others and experience.
- ➔ New meaning assigned to the experience and building an alternate narrative.

(Shapiro, 2018; Shapiro and Laliotis, 2010, 2014)