

EMDR

What Is It?

Eye-Movement Desensitization & Reprocessing (EMDR) is a research-supported psychotherapy used to relieve the psychological and physiological distress associated with traumatic stress. Research shows that EMDR is effective for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and trauma.

How Does it Work?

EMDR is a physiologically-based approach to processing trauma that helps an individual adapt and respond to disturbing memories in a less distressing way. Trauma has a broad range of effects on the way the brain processes memories and information, and EMDR helps repair and restore normal brain processing so that individuals are no longer distressed by the images, sounds, and intense feelings associated with the traumatic memory.

What is the Focus?

The client calls to mind the distressing memory, what was seen, felt, heard, thought, etc., and what thoughts and beliefs are currently held about it. The therapist uses a technique called bilateral stimulation (BLS), while the client focuses on the experience, and the client just notices whatever comes to mind without making efforts to control direction or content. BLS may be visual, auditory, or tactile, and it is continued during the processing until the memory becomes less distressing and is associated with adaptive thoughts and beliefs. During EMDR, the client may experience intense emotions, but by the end of treatment, clients report a reduction in the level of disturbance associated with the trauma.

EMDR uses a structured eight-phase approach that includes:

- Phase 1:* History & Treatment Planning
- Phase 2:* Preparation
- Phase 3:* Assessing Target Memories for Reprocessing
- Phase 4:* Desensitization
- Phase 5:* Installation
- Phase 6:* Body Scan
- Phase 7:* Closure
- Phase 8:* Reevaluation

EMDR therapy is not complete until attention has been brought to the past memories that are contributing to the problem, the present situations that are disturbing, and skills a person may need for the future.

How Long Does it Take?

One or more sessions are required for the therapist to understand the nature of the problem and to decide whether EMDR is an appropriate treatment. A typical session lasts from 60 - 90 minutes. The type of problem, the amount of previous trauma, and life circumstances determine how many treatment sessions may be necessary. Controlled studies show that EMDR eliminates/decreases the symptoms of PTSD, disturbing memories, single-incident trauma, performance anxiety, sexual and physical abuse, emotional distress, complicated grief, panic attacks, and phobias.

For More Information:

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Also visit:

- <https://www.emdria.org/>
- <https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/treatments/>



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