

EMDR

When it comes to trauma, no two people are the same. Trauma can stem from a single one-off accident or distressing event, major complex life experiences like childhood abuse, neglect or sexual violence, a natural disaster or a less obvious 'minor' ongoing event ie: bullying, living in an emotionally abusive environment.

Unresolved trauma can be devastating which can impact on many aspects of daily living, family life, personal and professional relationships. Unprocessed memories can be stored in the brain in a 'raw' form where they can be continually re-evoked when experiencing events that are similar to the original experience. Symptoms can be overwhelming, feeling out of control, associated body reactions and images in your mind.

EMDR is an effective treatment for children and adults who have problems following traumatic experiences. Supported by extensive research, it is recommended by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It integrates a range of therapeutic approaches and combines them with eye movements or other forms of bilateral stimulation which activates the brain's information processing system.

EMDR can be used for trauma as-well anxiety, panic attacks, depression, stress, grief and loss, phobias, self-esteem. It can be used alone, or may be combined with other approaches, such as creative arts, sandplay, play therapy.

The client will be asked to think about the worst part of a traumatic memory and to be aware of any feelings, thoughts or body sensations which go with the memory. This memory is then held 'in mind' by the client while the therapist encourages them to move their eyes from side to side for a short time, following the therapist's finger or a light bar. Following this the therapist will ask the client to 'blank out' the memory and then to bring it back and report on any changes. Further bilateral stimulation can then be used with this memory until it is no longer upsetting.

EMDR is suitable for both adults and children. There is a myth that EMDR can only be used on adults. That is simply untrue. EMDR can be used with children (even pre-verbal children in some cases).

EMDR is recognised by the World Health Organisation (2013) as an effective therapy for children and adolescents who have experienced traumatic events. It also has the highest recommendation for Children and Adolescents with PTSD from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS, 2018).



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