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What is EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) seeks to end our suffering connected to painful memories, harmful belief systems, and our body's physical responses to those memories. This is done by removing the blocks to our mind's natural ability to self-heal. Bilateral stimulation from eye movement, vibrating hand-held paddles, or audio tones, helps to unblock the unprocessed materials. This gives our mind (*narrative memory*) and our body (*motoric memory*) the opportunity to finish processing them. It's a lot like organizing and putting data into their proper files.

Once this processing or "filing" is complete, our memories of an event become significantly less distressing, our negative belief systems become more realistic and positive, and our bodies no longer have a negative physical response to those memories. **For example, after completing an EMDR treatment, a client might say something, like:**

"The memory no longer overwhelms me with emotion. I feel in control. Remembering what happened is more like viewing a movie. My stomach no longer hurts when I think about what happened. I no longer feel weak and helpless. I am strong, and I am a survivor."

Dr. Francine Shapiro originally developed **EMDR** to treat trauma-related distress. EMDR is an integrative psychotherapy approach **proven highly effective for the treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder** and other mental health challenges. Some examples are **distressing memories, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, feelings of powerlessness, grief, personality disorders, chemical dependency, somatoform disorders, and dissociative disorders.** The World Health Organization, the American Psychiatric Association, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services all recognize EMDR as an evidenced-based treatment approach.

An EMDR practitioner guides a client through an eight-phase treatment process, composed of detailed protocols and procedures. A practitioner ensures that the client is an appropriate candidate and prepared for EMDR treatment. **Treatment may take a few sessions to several months,** depending on a client's history. **Clients gain insights from their own accelerated intellectual and emotional processing, without committing to years of talk therapy.** The client remains in control during the session, and at any given time, can raise a hand to break or stop.

EMDR REFERENCES

1. Shapiro, Francine, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy: Basic Principles, Protocols, and Procedures*, 3rd ed., The Guilford Press, New York, 2018.
2. Knipe, Jim, *EMDR Toolbox: Theory and Treatment of Complex PTSD and Dissociation*, 2nd ed., Springer Publishing Company, New York, 2019.