



EMDR

(Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing)

Fact Sheet

EMDR stands for “Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing”. It was initially discovered by Ms. Frances Shapiro in 1989.

What Is EMDR?

EMDR is an intervention to help individuals who are survivors of any kind of traumatic event, including – but not limited to – abuse (physical, sexual, verbal, emotional), natural disasters, accidents, personal crisis or tragedy, or war. The procedure includes facilitation of eye movement while the person is guided through an account of the trauma. *It is not necessary for the client to detail the negative experiences out loud during EMDR.*

The procedure can help individuals resolve these negative experiences and to maintain a more positive self-concept, both in relation to the trauma, and overall.

The treatment of traumatic events with the EMDR method is based upon the belief that there is a physiological component to every experience. It is believed that when an incident occurs that is traumatic, that the brain processes necessary for information processing are disturbed. This seems to “freeze” the information in its original anxiety-producing form, complete with the original image, negative self-assessment, and other related symptoms. Because the information has not been sufficiently processed, it continues to surface in the form of distressing symptoms or even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD: which may be characterised by intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, and nightmares).

These symptoms may be resolved through use of EMDR, as the eye movements allow the “frozen” information to be processed and integrated as part of the normal information gathering process that we all experience after an event has occurred.

What Can I Expect In An EMDR Session?

“During EMDR treatment, the client is asked to hold in mind an image of the trauma, a negative self-cognition,

negative emotions, and related physical sensations about the trauma. While doing so, the client is instructed to move their eyes quickly and laterally back and forth for about 15 to 20 seconds, following the therapist’s fingers.

The client then reports the images, cognitions, emotions, and/or physical sensations that emerged.

This procedure continues until desensitisation of troubling material is complete and positive self-cognitions have replaced the previous negative self-cognition”. (Wilson and Becker, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1995, Vol. 63, No. 6, 928-937).

Prior to an EMDR session you will work with your therapist to develop several different ways of working with emotional distress. These may include a variety of imagery and stress reduction techniques you can use during and between sessions. A goal of EMDR is to produce rapid and effective change while the client maintains equilibrium during and between sessions.

Additional steps after an EMDR session might include you keeping a running log of any anxiety provoking incidents or memories that surface, with the goal of resolving those memories in future sessions.

Will I Have Any Adverse Reactions?

As with any form of therapy, there may be a *temporary* increase in distress. Distressing and unresolved memories may emerge; some clients may experience reactions during a treatment session that neither they nor their therapist may have anticipated, including a high level of emotion or physical sensations; and subsequent to the treatment session, the processing of incidents/material may continue, and other dreams, memories feelings, etc., may emerge. However, most clients report few adverse reactions between sessions.

Is EMDR For You?

Speak with us at Awaken Psychology if you think you could benefit from EMDR.

