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EMDR

Client Handout

What is EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a trauma therapy that utilizes a combination of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and relaxation techniques that bring emotional memories to surface which are then processed in a safe way. EMDR is developed by Francine Shapiro in 1987 as a treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, but is now used to effectively treat a wide range of traumas and mental health problems. EMDR involves recalling a stressful past event or traumatic memory and creating a narrative (working memory) in the light of a positive, self-chosen belief, while using rapid eye movements, tactile sensations or other forms of bilateral stimulation to facilitate the process.

What happens when someone is traumatized?

When a person gets traumatized, his or her coping mechanism become overloaded, which in turn results in disturbing experiences remaining frozen in brain or becoming unprocessed. These unprocessed memories and feelings are stored in the limbic system of the brain in a "raw" rather than a verbal or story-like form. Although memories can fade over time, painful feelings are often resurfacing and can be repeatedly triggered in the present. EMDR helps with "unfreezing" the painful memories, reframing the original trauma (reprocessing), and releasing the body from stored negative emotions (desensitization). EMDR accesses both hemispheres of the brain to make sense and meaning of traumatic experience or other emotional disturbances.

What is EMDR used for?

EMDR has been successfully used to treat:

- Trauma and PTSD
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Depression
- Phobias
- Eating disorders
- Self-esteem concerns
- Bereavement
- Addictions

How long does EMDR treatment last?

EMDR can be a brief focused treatment or part of a longer psychotherapy treatment plan. Each EMDR session lasts from 60 to 90 minutes.

What will I experience during session?

During session you will remain in control and be fully alert and awake. You can stop the process at any time for any reason. Throughout the session, the therapist will intervene as little as possible, but will still support you and guide your own self-healing.

What is EMDR therapy like?

EMDR involves a process of 8-phases:

Phase 1: A thorough assessment and psycho-education

Phase 2: Preparation

Phase 3: Identifying target, negative cognition, and positive cognition

Phase 4: Desensitization while using bilateral stimulation. Each bilateral stimulation set lasts between 45-120 seconds, after which client reports back on the experiences (thoughts, images, or feelings) that he or she had during each set. This is the most active phase that lasts for 20 to 30 minutes.

Phase 5: Installation of the identified positive cognition

Phase 6: Body scan

Phase 7: Closure

Phase 8: Reevaluation of progress

Research on EMDR

Although critics have been questioning the scientific validity of the EMDR as a treatment method, numerous people have reported significant benefits from this treatment modality. In 1999, based on various studies published in peer-reviewed journals, both the American Psychological Association and the International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies approved EMDR as a valid therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Additional information about EMDR can be found on: www.emdr.org