

What is EMDR - For Adults

EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) is a psychotherapy approach developed by Dr. Francine Shapiro to help people heal from trauma or adversities such as issues of abuse, bullying, domestic violence, grief/loss, attachment wounds, abandonment, PTSD, and many other complicated life issues. EMDR therapy is now validated as an evidence-based approach and included in SAMHSA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) and the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. In addition, EMDR therapy has been validated by over 20 randomized controlled clinical trials (see www.emdrhap.org/emdr_info/researchandresources.php).

EMDR therapy integrates elements of many traditional psychological orientations and is based on the adaptive information processing model (AIP). The AIP model hypothesizes that there is an inherent information processing system in the brain that gets blocked when traumatic or adverse events occur, causing these events to get locked in the brain with the original picture, sounds, thoughts, feelings and body sensations. Whenever a reminder of the traumatic or adverse event comes up, those pictures, thoughts, feelings, and sensations can continue to be triggered. According to Dr. Shapiro, many emotional problems and disorders are manifestations of these unprocessed trauma memories that are stored in the brain. EMDR therapy works on helping the brain reprocess these traumatic memories, and as a result alleviating the emotional and psychological disorders.

EMDR therapy has been used with children and adolescents with a wide variety of emotional and psychological problems including PTSD, anxiety, phobias, depression, attachment disorders etc. For more information on EMDR, visit **EMDR International Association or EMDR-Humanitarian Assistance Programs**.

<https://www.anagomez.org/what-emdr-adults>

What is EMDR - For Parents

You have in your hands the delicate and complex work of shaping another human being. Being a parent is such a privilege but it also requires a great commitment and work. If you have a child with emotional or behavioral difficulties, the good news is that there is help and there are many therapeutic modalities that can help you and your child. One of these therapies is called EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing). EMDR is a psychotherapy approach developed by Dr. Francine Shapiro to help people heal from trauma or adversities such as issues of abuse, bullying, domestic violence, grief/loss, attachment wounds, abandonment, and many other complicated life issues. EMDR therapy is now validated as an evidence-based approach and included in the World Health Organization and the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare has now accepted EMDR therapy as an evidence-based approach for children. If you want to read more in depth information on EMDR therapy go to <http://consults.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/16/expert-answers-on-e-m-d-r/> and access a variety of questions and answers given directly by Dr. Shapiro at the New York Times.

It is worth highlighting how the traumas that have not healed in this generation have the potential of being passed into the next. The sense of self in any child does not develop in isolation; in fact it develops in the parent-child relationship and other important relationships early in life. We came to this world to connect with others and when these connections do not happen or they happen in a way that hurt us or injure us, our sense of self does not develop appropriately. In many cases having the child as well as the parent receive EMDR therapy may be recommended for best results. Sometimes the parent may be highly traumatized by living through the traumas of their children and the healing needs to take place in both, the child and the parent. Sometimes because of the parents' early experiences with their own parents, they may have difficulties setting boundaries with their kids, or they may be overprotective, neglectful or abusive or too distant or too intrusive. Parent's emotional problems can affect their children's emotional, physical and psychological development. For instance, a parent with depression, without knowing or intending to, may neglect their child's needs for connection and love. This can result in having a child with emotional and behavioral problems.

We are privileged now to have so many tools and options that can help us heal. All of us at some point in our lives need help. We are biologically hard wired to need others and need help from others. Don't give up! There is hope and so many ways to find healing and become whole. Remember you don't have to go through this alone.

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What is EMDR - For Kids

Before we talk about what EMDR is, let me tell you about what EMDR does. When we have yucky things that happen to us, we have many mixed-up feelings and many mixed-up thoughts. We do not feel good in our minds, bodies, and hearts. It is like carrying bags of mixed-up stuff. When we are so busy carrying all these bags, we do not have space in our hearts, minds, and bodies for the good feelings and thoughts. EMDR can help kids by making those bags smaller or even get rid of them so kids will have space for the good feelings and the good thoughts. Grown-ups have a rather complicated name for EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing but Ana came up with a cool name for kids: Eyes Moving to Digest and Recover!!

When kids receive EMDR, one of the things they do is move their eyes from one side to another while they think about the yucky things that happened to them. Most kids don't know this, but they actually do this every night....yes kids move their eyes every night while they are asleep and are having dreams. Grown ups call this Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep cycle. Ana calls this the "eyes dancing in the night." EMDR helpers like Ana can also do other things instead of eye movement. They can tap your hands or knees back and forth or they can use sounds or music that move from one ear to the other.

When yucky things happen, the brain has a hard time putting all the pieces together and as a result, things that people say or do or things that kids see, hear, smell or touch can bring up the yucky memories, the mixed-up thoughts, feelings and body feelings connected to those yucky things. EMDR helps the brain put all the pieces together so the yucky stuff can leave us and the good stuff or the things we learned from it can stay so we get stronger. Then, the brain can chew up and digest all the mixed-up feelings and thoughts as well as the yucky feelings we may have in the body.

Why continue to carry bags of yucky stuff in our minds, hearts and bodies when we can be free from them and find our happy and exciting feelings again?

(This is an excerpt from Ana's book: **EMDR Therapy and Adjunct Approaches with Children: Complex Trauma, Attachment and Dissociation.**)

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What is EMDR - For Teens

- Do you feel annoyed, angry or bored often?
- Do you isolate from others?
- Do you feel that you are not as good as others are?
- Do you have nightmares or have a hard time falling asleep or staying asleep?
- Do you have negative events that happened to you? Do you tend to keep things inside and not tell anyone?
- Do you use drugs or alcohol or do you do things to harm your body to numb or escape the uncomfortable feelings? Or do you do this to fit in because you don't feel connected to others, or you don't feel as good as others?

Well, believe it or not a lot of kids, teens and adults feel this way, and there is help for all of us!! There is a way to find hope and find our positive feelings again.

It is really cool that you are interested in finding ways that can help you get better. Let's start by talking about what happens when we go through tough stuff in our lives:

When we have bad or negative events in our lives like abuse, bullying, divorce, accidents, losses and death of a loved one, violence in the home among others, the brain creates 'files' or "apps" that contain all the feelings, thoughts, and body sensations connected to this event. When we have events that are not 'too bad', the brain has the capacity to work on these files/apps before storing them and locking them up as memories. What is stored has been sorted out and organized so the negative stuff has been let go, allowing us to keep the good stuff and learn from this experience. However, when the event is really bad or has happened several times, these files/apps get overloaded and the brain can't do the work of sorting things out and putting all the pieces of the event together. As a result, these files/apps are all messy, in pieces that are not put together and organized by the brain. Different life events we call triggers can open up these files/apps or "click" on them. A "click" may be a classmate making fun of us, being ignored, not getting what we are asking for, parents asking us to clean up our room and so on. When these "clicks" open up the files/apps, we start to have the negative feelings, thoughts, and body reactions we had when the bad stuff happened. EMDR helps the brain organize these files and put all the pieces together. When the files/apps are finally organized, the "clicks" of everyday life won't have the power to make us feel angry, sad or shameful or to think that we are not worthy or that we are not enough or to make us yell, become aggressive or do things we regret later. EMDR is not a "magic" cure. It takes some work, but it is sooo worth it because recovering our ability to feel good is worth all of our efforts.

One of the many things that happen when we do EMDR is that we move our eyes from one side to the other while thinking about the negative or tough event. This is not new for your body; in fact you move your eyes every night from side to side when you are dreaming. This is called REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep cycle. EMDR therapists know how to use EMDR and will guide you and further explain all the stuff that happens when we do EMDR and what we know about it. Do not try to do this on your own, as it is NOT recommended.

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