

## What is EMDR?

EMDR is a type of psychotherapy and not a technique. The EMDR approach has a model which is the Adaptive Information Processing Model, AIP. The basis of the model is that memory networks and the way they are stored in the human system create the way the world is experienced. A combination of our genetic predisposition and our experiences create these memory networks and these are the source of dysfunction as well as resources and health.

In the EMDR therapy, there are specific protocols to help access the way these memory networks are currently stored and then help move them from a place of emotional activation to a more logical, rational place. This movement of activation has been documented in research done with imaging neurobiological changes in an EMDR session. (Pagani, M. 2014)

EMDR therapy has been used with a wide variety of client presentations and is currently one of the most researched methods of contemporary psychotherapy. EMDR therapy has been shown empirically to be effective in the treatment of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). By changing the way the traumatic memories are stored, EMDR relieves the symptoms of trauma.

When something traumatic happens it gets stored in the brain without a time and date stamp. The person who has a traumatic experience can feel like that traumatic event is about to happen at any moment or is currently happening. EMDR changes the way those traumatic memories are stored so the human system can know and feel that the event is actually in the past. The things that happen in the present, which previously triggered an emotional activation because they remind the person of the past traumatic event, no longer have the same charge. Thus, the person can be more present and just react to what is actually happening now, instead of having an over-reaction due to a past event.

One of the keys to successful EMDR is accessing the disturbing memories in a way in which the client remains present. This is one major difference between EMDR and therapies in which the client is regressed. In EMDR we are interested in finding the earlier memories that are fueling the present distress and then we access the way that earlier memory is currently stored, while the client remains aware and present. In EMDR we are more interested in the way the past events manifest in a person's system at this moment than in gathering historical data. The reason we want to know how those early memories are manifesting, is because they are linked to the client's presenting complaints. So we are always asking about what is happening now with EMDR and not about how the person felt at the time of the event. We want to know what happens with them now as they remember that early event because that activation is appearing in their life as an over-reaction to present day events.