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What is Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy?

EMDR therapy is an integrative, client-centered approach that treats problems of daily living based on disturbing life experiences that continue to have a negative impact on a person throughout the lifespan. Its Adaptive Information Processing theory (AIP) hypothesizes that current difficulties are caused by disturbing memories that are inadequately processed, and that symptoms are reduced or eliminated altogether when these memories are processed to resolution using dual attention bilateral stimulation. The resolution of these targeted memories is hypothesized to result in memory reconsolidation [and the opportunity to establish a new perspective, understanding and sense of meaning related to the previously distressing memories]. The standard application of EMDR therapy is comprised of eight phases and a three-pronged approach to identify and process: (a) Memories of past adverse life experiences that underlie present problems; (b) Present-day situations that elicit disturbance and maladaptive responses; and (c) Anticipatory future scenarios that require adaptive responses. There is strong empirical evidence for its use in the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder, and it has also been found to be an effective, transdiagnostic treatment approach for a wide range of diagnoses in a variety of contexts and treatment settings with diverse populations.ⁱ

ⁱ Laliotis, D., Luber, M., Oren, U., Shapiro, E., Ichii, M., Hase, M., Rosa, L., Alter-Ried, K. & Tortes St. Jammes, J. (2021) What Is EMDR Therapy? Past, Present, and Future Directions. *Journal of EMDR Practice and Research*, Volume 15 (Number 4), 186-201.