

What is EMDR?



by Linda Ronconi, LPC, LMFT

EMDR is an acronym for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, and is an innovative form of therapy that makes use of recent research in the area of neurophysiology. It is a complex, powerful and **brief** method of psychotherapy that uses eye movements or other forms of rhythmical stimulation to assist the brain in processing information at a rapid rate.

The focus of EMDR is on trauma, both big "T" trauma, such as war, rape, natural disaster, loss and grief, as well as small "t" trauma in which a seemingly innocuous event of personal significance leaves an indelible mark on a person's psyche. The effects of trauma can be reversible. Trauma is defined as "an emotional shock that creates substantial and lasting psychological damage."

According to research, traumatic memory may be the result of *the way information is stored* in the brain. In the EMDR process, some aspect of the traumatic memory is unlocked, reactivated and allowed to emerge so that a person's innate ability to heal psychologically can proceed.

The EMDR process accesses the traumatic memory and the

specific image and negative cognition connected with it, but does not dwell on it. An individual session can be intense because EMDR focuses on the feelings related to the specified trauma and on several other aspects and levels concurrently, working with the thoughts, physical sensations and behaviors that relate back to the traumatic incident.

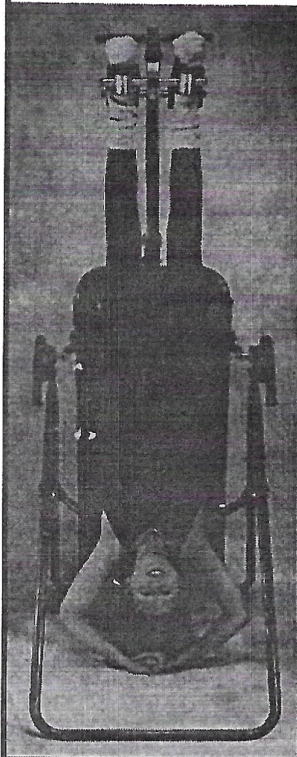
EMDR can remove the blocks that inhibit natural movement toward healing. Healing occurs when traumatic memory is put to rest with all other memories. Clients report that disturbing images have changed for the better, or have disappeared completely, along with the anxiety that accompanied the traumatic event.

EMDR treatment is considered to be dramatic and innovative and is, therefore, controversial. One of the benefits of controversy is that concerned skeptics demand evidence. As a result, there are now more controlled studies supporting the effectiveness of EMDR than of any other method used in the treatment of trauma.

If you decide to use EMDR for trauma resolution, be sure to seek out a licensed clinician specifically trained in EMDR for trauma resolution, and be sure that he or she has kept up with the latest developments. Information on trained clinicians can be obtained through the EMDR Institute at Pacific Grove, CA, (408) 372-3900.

Linda Ronconi is a licensed psychotherapist who has been in practice for over ten years. She has been utilizing EMDR as a treatment for trauma resolution for the past five years, and is a member of the EMDR International Assoc. She is also trained in critical incident stress management, and is a part of the Texas EMDR Critical Incident Debriefing Team. Ms. Ronconi holds weekly EMDR orientation sessions which are open to the public, and where questions and concerns regarding the efficacy of EMDR treatment to specific situations will be addressed. If interested, please call Alamo Mental Health Group, 210/496-9994.

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