

Approaches We May Use in Complex Trauma Therapy

How Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, IFS-informed parts work, EMDR, and polyvagal-informed concepts can support healing

1.



Sensorimotor Psychotherapy

A body-centered approach that helps us notice sensations, movement impulses, and survival responses. It can support greater awareness, regulation, and choice.

May help with:

- tracking body cues
- working with freeze, fight, flight, or shutdown
- building safety and regulation

2.



IFS-informed Parts Work

This approach helps us understand the different parts of you that carry pain, protection, fear, anger, shame, or self-criticism. Therapy supports curiosity, compassion, and greater internal balance.

May help with:

- self-critical or protective parts
- inner conflict
- accessing compassion and self-leadership

3.



EMDR

EMDR is an evidence-based psychotherapy that can help people process distressing memories so they become less emotionally overwhelming and disruptive in the present. It may also support changes in trauma-linked beliefs, emotional responses, and patterns of responding.

May help with:

- trauma memories
- disturbing triggers
- trauma-linked beliefs and emotional responses

4.



Polyvagal-Informed Framework

Polyvagal-informed ideas can offer a useful framework for noticing shifts in activation, connection, protection, and shutdown. We may use this language alongside broader nervous-system and trauma education to help make sense of patterns in the body and support regulation.

May help with:

- understanding nervous system states
- recognizing cues of safety and danger
- building regulation and connection

5.

How these approaches can work together

In complex trauma work, these approaches are often integrated rather than used in isolation. These elements may overlap, occur in a different order, or be emphasized differently depending on the person.



Notice
body cues



Understand
protective parts



Process painful
memories



Build safety,
choice, and
connection

6.

What to expect



We move at a pace
that feels
manageable.



The goal is not to
overwhelm you.



Treatment is
individualized to your
needs and readiness.



Healing often
includes both
understanding and
lived experience.

Educational Use Only

This resource is intended for general psychoeducation and is not a substitute for individualized mental health care, diagnosis, or treatment. The approaches described here are not appropriate for every person or every concern. Treatment at Cordillera Counseling Services is individualized and may draw from one or more approaches depending on a client's needs, goals, preferences, readiness, and clinical presentation.

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