

# UNLOCKING THE HEALING POWER OF EMDR: HOW THIS GROUNDBREAKING THERAPY IS HELPING INDIVIDUALS OVERCOME TRAUMA



I have been doing EMDR therapy for over 20 years, it's the reason that I decided to dedicate my life to being a therapist. Before I learned how to do EMDR, I was frustrated with the limitations of talk therapy. EMDR allowed me to work much faster and see very quick results. Instead of patients taking years to get better it took months and sometimes weeks. I still see the benefits of talk therapy, but I always try to incorporate EMDR when I can.

## **What is EMDR**

EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) is a type of therapy that has been gaining recognition in recent years. The therapy involves a series of guided eye movements while the patient recalls traumatic experiences, with the goal of reducing distress and reprocessing traumatic memories. EMDR can be conducted via zoom, making it a convenient and an effective option for those who prefer to receive therapy from the safety and comfort of their own homes.

Unprocessed trauma in the brain can lead to various mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Therefore, addressing traumatic experiences and processing them is crucial to prevent long-term negative effects on mental health. EMDR can be a helpful therapy for individuals struggling with trauma and its associated mental health conditions. EMDR aims to help individuals process and integrate traumatic memories, thereby reducing the distress associated with them and improving overall well-being.

Research has shown that EMDR can be an effective treatment for various psychological disorders, including PTSD, anxiety, depression, and phobias. It has also been found to be effective for patients who were suffering from unresolved grief and guilt. EMDR can be helpful not only for individuals who have experienced a single traumatic event but also for those who have experienced complex trauma, such as childhood abuse or neglect. It can help address the various layers of trauma that may be present.

## **Example of how Reprocessing works**

I have found that when people experience trauma, they often create faulty narratives about their issues. This is one reason talk therapy may have a poor success rate when dealing with trauma. Patients come to see therapists with the wrong narrative, and these are the issues that get addressed and get worked on. But what if the therapist and patient are working on the wrong issue?

For example, I worked with a war veteran who had not had a good night's sleep in over 20 years. He felt so unsafe that he slept with a flashlight every night. He also suffered from depression. As we conducted EMDR therapy, he recalled two instances when he had almost faced death. While re-experiencing these events, it was as if my office lit up, and his depression seemed to vanish. He reexperienced the event with excitement and detail. He described hanging off a ship while avoiding gun fire. He was proud and excited how he escaped death. He described in detail and with excitement how he felt alive. What became clear was that he craved the feeling of danger, as it made him feel alive. Once we identified his real issue, we were able to work on finding alternative ways for him to feel alive. After just one EMDR session, he experienced his first night of restful sleep and no longer needed his flashlight.

For twenty years, this man had been focusing on feeling safe in therapy, only to become more depressed. By addressing the correct underlying issue, we were able to make a breakthrough and improve his well-being.

## **How Desensitization works**

During an EMDR session, the patient focused on a memory of a friend dying in his arms while following and focusing on an object with his eyes. As the session progressed, the perception of that traumatic memory began to change, and the unpleasant feelings and negative thinking associated with the memory faded. This result was a feeling of closure and a decrease in emotional intensity. The war vet not only reprocessed the memory, but the memory no longer haunted him. He remembered the event, but he no longer felt the charge.

## **Conclusion**

EMDR is a psychotherapy technique that is an effective treatment for a range of psychological disorders. While the underlying mechanisms of therapy are still being investigated, research has shown that EMDR helps patients process and integrate traumatic experiences more effectively, reducing distress and improving overall well-being. Despite some criticisms, EMDR remains a popular and effective therapeutic option for those struggling with trauma-related symptoms.