

What is EMDR?

If you've had something extremely traumatic happen to you, the memory of it can come crashing back into your mind, either as flashbacks or nightmares. It can be so vivid that you feel like you are being forced to relive that terrible moment again and again without warning.

It's thought the reason for this is that when the trauma happens, you're so overwhelmed that your mind cannot process the information properly. It gets badly stored in your brain. This is why, even after many years, these memories may still haunt you like they happened yesterday.

It's impossible to erase these memories completely. However, with Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), we can change the way they are stored by your brain. This makes them much easier to manage, causing you less distress and allowing you to lead a more normal life.

What happens in EMDR?

EMDR is based on a simple idea that eye movements, when combined with a positive belief about yourself, can reduce the effects of distressing thoughts. It's not fully known how this works, but many people have benefited from the results of this therapy in a very short time.

First of all you'll meet with the therapist to discuss whether it's right for you. If it is, your therapist will ask you to choose a picture that best represents your traumatic memory or experience. You won't need to discuss in detail what those experiences are, just the intensity of emotions you feel. Next you'll be asked to pick something positive about yourself.

When the therapy begins, you'll be asked to recall that image while moving your eyes back and forth. The act of doing this is thought to allow your mind to reprocess the information in a way that the brain is better equipped to handle. It also releases a lot of the pent up emotions from the experience. These can now get 'absorbed' by the brain and are replaced by the positive thoughts you chose at the beginning of the treatment.

At the end of each set of eye movements, your therapist will ask you how you're feeling. Many people who have undergone this treatment report how quickly the negative feelings subside, while the positive ones increase, and how much better they feel about themselves.

The aim of the treatment is to get you to a point where you can control your memories and not the other way round. So eventually, you'll be able to talk or think about your experiences without them upsetting you. With single traumas or experiences this can sometimes be achieved in as little as 3 to 5 sessions.

What problems can EMDR help?

This type of therapy is an effective treatment for people with post-traumatic stress disorder such as:

- Rape survivors
- Soldiers
- Disaster survivors

Want to find out more?

Websites

www.emdrassociation.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk/Information/Booklets/Understanding/Understanding+post-traumatic+stress+disorder.htm

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact your therapist or key worker.

General enquiries

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The information in this leaflet is available in additional languages and alternative formats. Please contact the Trust for further details.

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*supporting you
every step of the journey*