

EMDR

EMDR is a therapeutic method that has been in use since 1989, which utilizes bilateral sensory stimulation of the brain in conjunction with a set of highly elaborated and well-researched therapeutic protocols and procedures, to facilitate accelerated processing of psychological issues. What is dramatically different about EMDR as compared with traditional psychotherapies is that, with simple traumas, it can yield positive results in a much shorter time frame – often in anywhere from 1 – 5 (50-75 min) sessions. More complex traumas, such as childhood sexual abuse, usually take longer to resolve.

How Does EMDR Work?

Memories of distressing events are stored by the brain as a “gestalt”, complete with all the related sensory, emotional and cognitive information: visuals, sounds, scents, thoughts, feelings and body sensations. Memories of successive distressing events are then layered on top of the original memories in memory networks of seemingly related events. This can create blockages in the brain’s ability to process new information adaptively, that is, to resolve distressing or traumatic events.

A psychologist named Francine Shapiro discovered that it was possible to stimulate the brain’s two hemispheres through “alternating left-right visual, audio and tactile stimulation” (for instance, through hand movements, flashing lights, alternating tones or “buzzes” from vibrating devices, or by simple hand taps). This sort of bilateral sensory stimulation, coupled with the therapeutic procedures of EMDR, can reduce the “charge” of disturbing memories and emotions, and enhance the brain’s ability to respond adaptively to situations by creating links to different memory networks. This process is sometimes referred to as neuronal integration.