

The use of EMDR within an Acute Sexual Assault Referral Centre

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Overview

- What is EMDR?
- How does it work?
- EMDR and Sexual Assault
- EMDR Preparation Phase: Safe Place and Resources
- Case example

Things invented or discovered by accident...

Play-Doh

Fireworks

Potato chips

Slinky

Saccharin

Post-it notes

Silly Putty

Microwave Ovens

Corn Flakes

AND

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

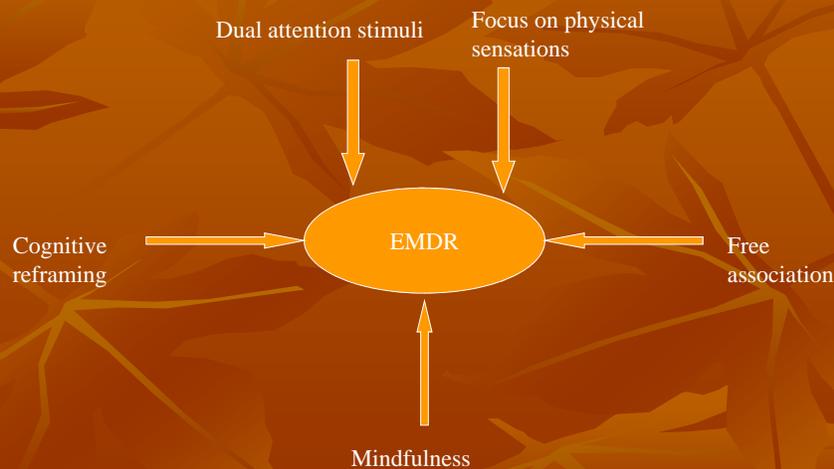
(EMDR) Shapiro (1987)

What is EMDR?



- EMDR is a comprehensive, integrative psychotherapy treatment.
- EMDR is effective in treating psychological difficulties arising from traumatic experiences **BUT** EMDR is not just for trauma
- Structured eight phase approach
- It contains elements of many effective psychotherapies in combination with a technique that stimulates dual attention
- EMDR activates the information processing system of the brain
- EMDR does not involve discussion of details of the traumatic event or homework assignments

EMDR: Therapeutic elements



EMDR as a synthesis of elements of many traditional psychological orientations

How Does EMDR Work?

Theoretical explanations:

- Linked into the same processing that occurs during REM Sleep
- Dual attention stimulation elicits an Orienting Response, which disrupts the traumatic memory network, interrupting previous links to negative emotions and allows integration of new information
- Hemispheric synchronization
- Not hypnosis

Shapiro (2001)

EMDR & Sexual Assault

- People who have been sexually assaulted much more susceptible to developing PTSD than any other trauma
- PTSD persisting for at least 1 year following the trauma is present in about 50% of cases (Davidson et al., 1996)
- Feelings of shame, guilt and self-blame are common following sexual assault
- The strong evidence base for the effectiveness of EMDR is reflected in National guidelines endorsing EMDR as a treatment of choice for PTSD (NICE)

Benefits of EMDR

- Alleviation of symptoms
- Disturbance caused by traumatic memory is lessened
- Improved self-esteem
- Feeling calmer/ at peace
- Relief from bodily disturbances

EMDR Phase 2: Preparation

Creating a “Safe Place”:

- self-care technique to help handle strong emotions
- “Safe Place” as a sanctuary in mind’s eye
- It may also be helpful to imagine **nurturing and/or protective figures (known as “resources”)** joining client in that safe place, for the purposes of offering comfort, support and love.
- **Affect control is crucial. Clients must be able to shut down intense affect when they need to.**

Phase 2: Case example

- 32 year old woman
- Allegation of oral and vaginal rape by stranger at night on her way home after work
- Overriding sense of self as “disgusting” & “dirty”
- Hypervigilance, avoidance of reminders; excessive cleaning of teeth
- Handed notice at work as scared of walking in the dark
- Re-experiencing e.g. “his smell”; “his mad eyes”
- “can’t kiss properly” since incident
- Suspect found not guilty; “I feel worse since the court”

Case example contd.

- Preparation work took place during court proceedings
- Able to create a 'safe place' in her imagination, i.e. Presence of her guardian angel; noticed his wings hugging her, his position (above her), his words of encouragement, bright healing light and warmth. BLS used to install pleasant, relaxed body sensations whilst being in this place.

Case example contd.

Later, the resource created and installed came up automatically during first session of desensitization (EMDR phase 4) of incident, which helped client feel comforted, protected and "(...) not alone".

"My angel fought and argued with him but we could not avoid what happened (...) he (angel) told me it would soon end and he is there with me (...) I'm not alone"

