



EMDR for Trauma and On-going Stress

When something traumatic happens in your life, you may find that you are able to recall every detail of that event. Conversely, you may find it difficult to recollect the details if they are too painful. It might feel almost as if that experience or memory has been frozen in your mind and it is difficult to move on or find a resolution.

What is EMDR?

EMDR is one of many approaches to psychotherapy. EMDR harnesses the neuroplasticity of the brain to create new neural pathways and/or re-interpret the way the brain processes anxious experiences, thoughts and emotional disturbance. Neuroplasticity is the idea that the brain is modifiable by experience and desensitisation. The brain's ability to change in the nervous system's central processing unit has enormous potential for healing.

It consists of 8 treatment phases, tackling all maladaptive aspects of the problem, in order to promote a successful recovery from the difficulties you may be experiencing (Luber, 2003).

Why EMDR?

EMDR helps re-process painful memories and address conflicts in a shorter amount of time compared to other types of psychotherapies. It is also very effective in decoupling pain from memory and helpful in moving on from your past.

EMDR is the gold-standard treatment for natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, assault, rape and plane crashes. It is equally effective in addressing past traumas in our day-to-day lives such as adverse childhood experiences, infidelity, bullying and other major stressors including dealing with the stress of illnesses.

EMDR has separate protocols for ongoing traumatic stress such as prolonged illnesses in the form of cancer, autoimmune disorders or other critical illnesses. It also has a separate protocol for the treatment of relationship discord and conflicts.

How does EMDR work?

In EMDR, the therapist uses a series of hand movements to direct patient eye movements, akin to eye movements seen in REM sleep. This activates the left and right hemispheres of the brain, known as bilateral stimulation (BLS). Through BLS, EMDR uses the adaptive information processing model to help the patient review disturbing thoughts and information regarding his/her anxiety. The end result is that the patient views the disturbing material in a less distressing manner. EMDR has been found to decrease physiological arousal and emotional distress, increase relaxation, induce feelings of separation or distance from pain and repair interhemispheric communication and the de-activation of the orienting response (Grant, 1998).

If you are wondering whether EMDR can be helpful for your situation, do not hesitate to reach out to Nivedita Ramunajam for further clarification.