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## Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR)

### What is EMDR?

EMDR is the acronym for 'Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing'. It is a powerful psychological treatment method that was developed by an American clinical psychologist, Dr Francine Shapiro, in the 1980s.

In 1987, Dr Francine Shapiro, observed that eye movements can reduce the intensity of disturbing thoughts and feelings under certain conditions. She studied this scientifically. In the 1989 edition of *The Journal of Traumatic Stress*, she reported success using EMDR in treating victims of severe trauma. Since then, EMDR has developed rapidly and has been widely researched. It is now used by trained therapists all over the world.

I use EMDR for the treatment of:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Stress caused by distressing events e.g. accident, assault, abuse and many other distressing events which impact upon your sense of well-being.
- Anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Depression and low mood
- Stress
- Phobias
- Low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence
- Performance anxiety e.g. presentations, auditions, exams
- Grief or loss
- Pain relief

## How does EMDR work?

EMDR uses the natural healing ability of your body. Most of the time your body manages new experiences without you being aware of it. However, when something unusual happens and a person is traumatized by it (e.g. a car accident) or the person is subjected to repeated trauma (e.g. neglect, abuse) the body's natural coping mechanism can become overloaded. This can mean that the memories and feelings associated with the event(s) can remain unprocessed. The trauma seems to get locked in the nervous system with the original picture, sounds, thoughts and feelings.

Sometimes the memory of the event is forgotten but the painful feelings can still be triggered in the present. As a result the person can experience anxiety, panic, anger and low mood.

EMDR seems to unlock the nervous system and allow the brain to process the experiences. It helps to restore normal ways of dealing with problems. Following successful EMDR treatment memories of the event are longer painful when brought to mind. The person learns what is necessary and useful from the disturbing past experience and the event is stored in the memory in a healthy and non-distressing form.

EMDR is not a form of hypnosis. EMDR appears to mimic what the brain does naturally on a daily basis during dreaming or REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep. Most people experience it as a natural and very empowering therapy, which assists the brain in working through distressing material.

## Is EMDR effective?

Research studies have shown that EMDR can markedly accelerate the healing process after a traumatic experience and that the effects are long-lasting.

EMDR meets NICE's<sup>1</sup> clinical guidelines for the treatment of PTSD.

## Further information

On my website [www.symmetrycounselling.com](http://www.symmetrycounselling.com) there is some further information on the use of EMDR. I have some testimonials from clients who have experienced the treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence