What is EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a powerful method of doing psychotherapy. To date, over a million people of all ages have been successfully treated using EMDR to relieve many types of psychological distress.
WHAT KIND OF PROBLEMS CAN

- Post-traumatic stress
- Panic attacks
- Addictions
- Dissociative disorders
- Disturbing memories

HOW WAS EMDR

In 1987, psychologist Dr. Francine Shapiro made the chance observation that eye movements can reduce the intensity of disturbing thoughts, under certain conditions. Dr. Shapiro studied this effect scientifically and, in 1989, she reported success using EMDR to treat victims of trauma in the Journal of Traumatic Stress. Since then, EMDR has developed and evolved through the contributions of therapists and researchers all over the world. Today, EMDR is a set of protocols that incorporate elements from many different treatment approaches.

DOES EMDR REALLY WORK?

A number of scientific studies have shown that EMDR is effective. For example, according to research published in "Psychotherapy", in a controlled study funded by Kaiser Permanente, results showed that 100% of single-trauma and 80% of multiple-trauma survivors were no longer diagnosed with PTSD after six, 50 minute sessions. The findings from this and other studies indicate that EMDR is highly effective and that results are long lasting. For further references, a bibliography of research on EMDR may be obtained through EMDRIA, at WWW.EMDRIA.ORG.

HOW DOES EMDR

We know that when a person is very upset or traumatized, their brain cannot process information as it does ordinarily. A single moment may become "frozen in time," and, remembering a trauma may feel as bad as going through it the first time, because the images, sounds, smells, and feelings haven't changed. Such memories have a lasting negative effect on the way a person sees the world. EMDR seems to have a direct effect on the way that the brain functions. So, after a successful EMDR session, the images, sounds and feelings no longer are relived when the event is brought to mind. What happened is still remembered, but it is less upsetting.

WHAT IS AN EMDR SESSION LIKE?

During EMDR, the therapist works with the client to identify a specific problem to be the focus of the treatment session. The client calls to mind the disturbing issue or event, what was seen, felt, heard, thought, etc., and what thoughts and beliefs are currently held about that event. The therapist facilitates by directional movement of the eyes or other bilateral stimulation of the brain, while the client focuses on the disturbing material, and the client just notices whatever comes to mind. Sets of eye movements are continued until the memory becomes less disturbing and is associated with positive thoughts and beliefs about one's self; for example, "I did the best I could." During EMDR, the client may experience intense emotions, but by the end of the session, most people report a great reduction in the level of disturbance.

HOW LONG DOES EMDR TAKE?

One or more sessions are required for the therapist to understand the nature of the problem and to decide whether EMDR is an appropriate treatment. The therapist will also discuss EMDR more fully and provide an opportunity to answer any questions about the method. Once the therapist and client have agreed that EMDR is appropriate for a specific problem, the actual EMDR therapy may begin.

A typical EMDR session lasts between 60-90 minutes. The type of problem, life circumstances, and the amount of previous trauma will determine how many treatment sessions are necessary. A single session of EMDR is sufficient in some cases, however, a typical course of treatment is 3 to 10 sessions, performed weekly. EMDR may be used within a standard therapy, as an adjunctive therapy with a separate therapist, or as a treatment all by itself.

WHAT KIND OF PROBLEMS CAN

- Phobias
- Performance anxiety
- Stress reduction
- Complicated grief
- Sexual or physical abuse