EMDR is an innovative therapy that enables people to heal from the emotional and psychological distress resulting from disturbing life experiences.

A Simple Therapy with a Not-So-Simple Name

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a mouthful, but the term represents a fairly simple therapy method that is making its way into the mainstream. More therapists are relying on EMDR in the treatment of substance abuse and a host of other issues. At its core, EMDR disarms past experiences that have set the groundwork for patients’ thinking and feeling patterns. It resets the path of dysfunctional emotions, beliefs and sensations while instilling a positive experience that is needed to enhance future adaptive behaviors and mental health. In other words, issues from the past that are still making an adverse impact in the present can be diffused and put in their proper place.

Processing the Old in a New Way

EMDR psychotherapy is an information processing therapy that uses an eight-phase approach to address painful past experiences that continue to be problematic in an individual’s daily life. It includes elements of psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, interpersonal, experiential and body-centered therapies. EMDR focuses on isolating disturbing memories and related events (which may be in the past, present or future) in order to interrupt the distress pattern that they are causing. EMDR tackles the issues that are keeping our minds from healing from former hurts. By using detailed protocols and procedures learned in EMDR training sessions, clinicians can help patients activate their natural healing processes.
How EMDR Works

EMDR sounds very complicated, but it is very simple in practice. It usually centers around eye movements, musical tones or physical taps—or a combination of all three. During the reprocessing phases, the client focuses momentarily on past memories, present triggers or anticipated future experiences while simultaneously focusing on a set of external stimuli (this is where the eye movements, tones or tapping comes in). Moving your eyes in a certain pattern, rhythmically tapping a finger on your leg or listening to soothing instrumental music through headphones during therapy may seem odd, but this “dual stimulation” allows for the emergence of insight, changes in memories or new associations that would not happen through traditional counseling methods. After EMDR, patients generally report that the emotional distress related to the memory has been eliminated or greatly decreased, and all the while they have gained important insights. These cognitive changes usually result in spontaneous behavioral and personal change, which is further enhanced with standard EMDR procedures.

EMDR therapy proves that the mind can heal from psychological trauma in much the same way that the body recovers from physical trauma or injury.

EDMR’s Eight Phases

EMDR therapy uses an eight-phase treatment approach. The first phase is history taking, or creating an assessment of the patient’s readiness for EMDR. The second is a stability assessment, which means ensuring that the client is in a relatively stable state. Phases three through six involve the client identifying the most vivid visual image related to the memory (if available), a negative belief about self, related emotions and body sensations. The patient also identifies a preferred positive belief and reprocessing begins. In phase seven, patients keep a journal to document related material that may arise. Phase eight is evaluation, in which patients take a look at the progress they have made.

About Foundations Recovery Network

Foundations Recovery Network is recognized as the premier leader in integrated treatment for co-occurring addiction and mental health concerns. Our award-winning model combines evidence-based addiction treatment with innovative therapies for emotional and mental health to effectively address a Dual Diagnosis. Results demonstrate that FRN patients are twice as likely to maintain sobriety one year post-treatment compared to those who attend traditional programs.