



## What is EMDR

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a widely researched treatment that helps people heal from problems such as PTSD, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, phobias, complicated grief, physical, emotional or sexual abuse, addictions and more. When something traumatic happens, your mind may continue to hold onto it in a way that includes the original picture, sounds, feelings, sensations or thoughts. It seems like the trauma is locked or “stuck” inside and it can be triggered by different situations that you encounter. At times you may feel helpless because you are not able to control what is happening in your mind or your body; this is because you are re-experiencing the emotions and sensations that are connected with the old experience. EMDR helps to reprocess the trauma so that the negative thoughts and feelings are reduced.

### How does it work?

Before beginning EMDR, it is important that you have an established relationship with your therapist. S/he will prepare you by helping you learn how to notice when disturbing thoughts are beginning to come up and how to contain them and resource yourself so that you are not distressed between EMDR sessions. Your therapist will also help you build up a reserve of positive memories and experiences to help counterbalance the difficult things that have happened to you in the past.

EMDR helps facilitate the activation of the brain's inherent ability to process and integrate traumatic information that got “stuck.” This happens through bilateral stimulation, which similar to REM sleep, helps the right and left hemispheres of the brain to “re-file” difficult experiences. Some examples of bilateral stimulation include tapping alternately on your body, back and forth eye movements, and binaural auditory stimulation. During EMDR, you will identify and process “stuck” memories with the bilateral stimulation so that distressing symptoms decrease. EMDR will not erase any memories; rather you will have more control over how often you think of the memories and be able to think about what happened to you without the emotional charge that was distressing before the treatment. EMDR can help release difficult past experiences so that you feel more alive now.

For more information and research visit the EMDR International Association (EMDRIA) website at: [www.emdria.org](http://www.emdria.org)