



Eye Movement Desensitisation & Reprocessing, or 'EMDR'

EMDR is a therapy which helps the brain to process traumatic memories. Successful EMDR therapy can help resolve the fight, flight, or freeze response to trauma and enables more regulated healing communication to resume.

Our brains are amazing and yet we still know so little about them! What we do know about our brains and trauma, is this.....

Deep within our brains we have a small structure called the Amygdala which acts as an alarm signal for stressful events and helps protect us from danger. When we experience a traumatic event(s) the amygdala can remain overactive which can lead to feelings of anxiety or of 'being in danger'.

Elsewhere in the brain, the hippocampus and the prefrontal cortex can 'shrink' in response to trauma. The hippocampus assists with memory storage including how to remember safety and danger. When its activity shrinks in response to trauma, the signals to the amygdala to 'calm down' are weakened which can cause confusion around the memory, or 'flashbacks'. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for managing thoughts and behaviour and controls our emotional response to events. When its activity shrinks in response to trauma, signals from this area are also weakened and negative emotions from the trauma memory overload the prefrontal cortex's reasoning ability.

EMDR therapy was originally developed by Francine Shapiro in the eighties as a psychotherapy treatment to alleviate distress associated with traumatic memories. Further development of the model has resulted in a treatment which can relieve distress, reformulate negative beliefs and reduce physiological arousal.

During an EMDR session, the client attends to emotionally disturbing material while simultaneously focussing on an external stimulus. The therapist most commonly uses directed lateral eye movements but other movements including hand tapping and audio stimulation may be used. This process facilitates the accessing of the traumatic memory network so that information processing is enhanced, and new associations are forged between the traumatic memory and the more adaptive memories and information, resulting in complete information processing, new learning, elimination of emotional distress and development of new cognitive insights.

At Serenity Holistic Wellness, EMDR therapy may take place inside in a room-based session, or outside in the nature setting, weather permitting. All clients seeking EMDR therapy must first complete the referral form found under the resources section on the main website to enable a 'suitability for treatment' assessment to be conducted. The duration of treatment sessions varies for each individual and this will be discussed in your first session. Generally, for single incident traumas 6 – 8 sessions (or less) once or twice weekly are required. For more complex trauma, treatment may take up to 12 sessions or longer. Sessions usually last up to 90 minutes and can be delivered once or twice weekly or even on consecutive days, but each client and experience will have different needs which will be discussed at the beginning of your treatment.