

## **What happens in a typical EMDR session**

In a typical EMDR session, a client focuses on a troubling memory. With a trained psychotherapist, the client identifies the negative belief she has about herself connected to this memory. The client then chooses a positive, more adaptive belief that she would like to believe about herself. The emotions and body sensations associated with the memory are identified. The client then attends to the memory as a whole in brief, sequential doses while focusing on an external stimulus that creates bilateral (side to side) movement: eye movements by watching the therapist's moving finger or a light or tactile tapping or tones.

After each set of bilateral movements, the client is asked how she feels. This segment is complete when the memory is no longer disturbing. The chosen positive belief is then installed, via bilateral movement, to replace the negative one. The result of EMDR is the rapid processing of information about the negative experience and movement toward an adaptive resolution. This means a reduction in the client's anxiety, a change from a negative belief about self to a positive belief and more functional behavior in relationships and at work.

EMDR deals with past events that led to present symptoms, current circumstances that trigger distress and future events that can be targeted to help you in acquiring the skills you need for adaptive functioning in the present and in the future.

A typical EMDR session lasts 60 minutes. The length of treatment depends on the nature and length of time of the problem, the degree of trauma, its complexity and the client's age when it happened. However, with EMDR, in contrast to traditional talk therapies, treatment time is usually markedly reduced.

The first couple of sessions consist of taking a thorough client history. A Safe Place (a place to go in your imagination to get serenity and peace) is installed with bilateral movement. A Resource or Skill, picked from a list by the client, is also installed to facilitate the EMDR work that can begin by the third or fourth session.

EMDR can evoke strong emotions and sensations. This is normal since the method is used to process those uncomfortable feelings and sensations when they come into the clients' awareness. Usually these unpleasant feelings are experienced briefly and soon fade as the treatment proceeds.