

How EMDR Works



What is EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy is an integrative therapy approach for the treatment of trauma and trauma-related disorders. EMDR involves the use of a set of standardized protocols combining elements from many different types of therapy.

Why use EMDR?

While it is not possible to know exactly how any form of therapy works in the brain, we do know that when a person is very upset or in a state of stress reaction, the brain cannot process information as it normally does. A moment or experience can become “stuck” or “frozen in time,” so every time that memory is triggered, it feels as though the trauma is actually happening again. These memories have a lasting negative effect that interferes with an individual’s world view, interpersonal relationships and daily functioning.

EMDR directly affects how the brain processes information, restoring normal processing functions. After reprocessing a traumatic event with EMDR, an individual can remember the event as a memory rather than reliving the event. While this is the goal of many types of trauma-processing therapy, EMDR is believed to be a conscious and intentional use of a natural process that occurs during dreaming or REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, when the brain is doing its daily work of processing, problem solving and mental rehearsal. In this way, EMDR can be thought of as a therapy based in physiology and neurobiology that allows an individual to recall disturbing material in a less distressing way.

Is EMDR Effective?

EMDR has been extensively researched and proven effective for trauma treatment by more than 20 controlled studies investigating the effects of EMDR therapy. Individuals often report improvement in other associated symptoms such as anxiety. Additionally, EMDR is efficient and rapid, allowing individuals to experience lessening of symptoms much more quickly.

Many individuals have indicated that the EMDR treatment they received at Catholic Charities was unlike any therapy they have experienced in the past in regard to how quickly it works and its effectiveness in helping to make lasting changes.

“After a lot of therapy, I figured my problems would always be with me. After a couple months of EMDR, things just felt different.” – Alex*

“EMDR was a life-changing experience for me.” – Sara*

“I couldn’t believe how quickly it (EMDR) worked for me. After two sessions, it no longer bothered me to think about the incident.” – John*

The current treatment guidelines of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies designate EMDR as an effective treatment for post-traumatic stress. EMDR has also been endorsed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense, the National Institutes of Health, the World Health Organization and many other international health and governmental agencies.

What kind of problems can EMDR treat?

Scientific research has established EMDR as effective for post-traumatic stress. However, clinicians also report success when using EMDR to treat the following conditions:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Panic attacks
- Complicated grief
- Dissociative disorders
- Disturbing memories
- Phobias
- Pain disorders
- Performance anxiety
- Stress reduction
- Addictions
- Attachment disorders
- Sexual and/or physical abuse
- Body dysmorphic disorders
- Personality disorders

EMDR at Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities has several certified EMDR therapists on staff and is in the process of training all clinicians in EMDR by the end of 2018. EMDR training for all Catholic Charities clinicians will better equip all staff to provide help and create hope for all in need in our communities.

For more information about EMDR, visit emdria.org

*Name changed for privacy

Catholic Charities
Providing Help. Creating Hope. Serving All.

803 N. Monroe Street • Bloomington, IN 47404
Phone: 812-332-1262 • Email: info@cabin.org

cabin.org