

## EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITISATION AND REPROCESSING



**The Australian and International gold standard treatment for PTSD is trauma-focused psychotherapy which includes Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR).**

EMDR, a relatively new psychotherapy developed in 1987 by Clinical Psychologist Francine Shapiro, is designed to allow a trapped trauma memory to be released, desensitised, reprocessed, and resolved.

### On completion of EMDR therapy typically

- the trauma image becomes foggy/less vivid
- there is a removal of emotional charge associated with the trauma and its triggers
- there is reduction of hyper-arousal symptoms
- the trauma memory feels and is perceived as a historical and past event rather than present and vivid

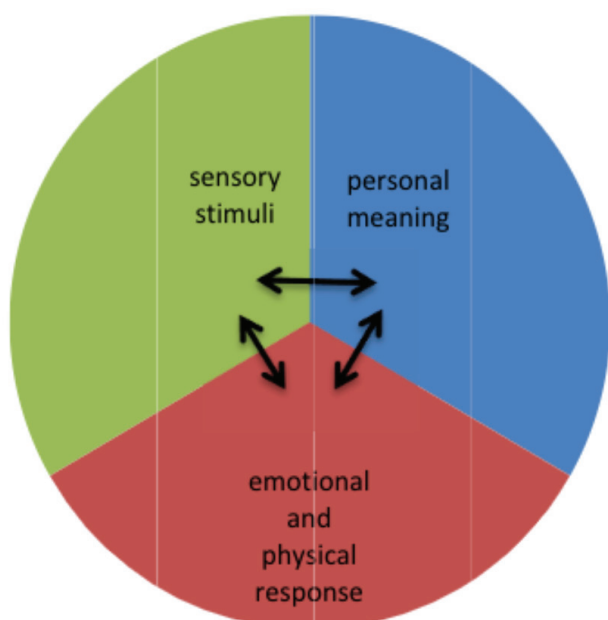
Ultimately, this reduction or cessation in trauma and other related symptoms results in an improvement in our functioning, and our ability to sustain and maintain healthy relationships and employment.

## To ensure you are suitable for EMDR, a comprehensive assessment will be completed.

Prior to commencing EMDR you will be provided with additional skills and self-soothing techniques to manage and increase your control over your trauma symptoms.

At the beginning of an EMDR therapy session you will be guided to deliberately bring into conscious awareness and connect with all the components of the trauma memory network including the sensory memory, accompanying emotions, bodily sensations and personal meaning.

### Traumatic Memory



The **sensory memory** includes details regarding the visual, smell, sound, and touch elements of the trauma memory. The sensory memory is stored in the sensory cortex of the brain.

The **emotional memory** is often called the “body memory”, as activation of this part of the trauma memory reactivates the body or physical sensations associated with the event.

The third component, the **personal meaning**, formed in the prefrontal lobes of the brain, is meaning the traumatic event has or holds for you. It is not the thoughts we had at the time of the trauma, but rather those core beliefs that form afterwards, that are presently held and have emotional resonance.

Once the traumatic memory is activated your therapist will commence bilateral stimulations (BLS) either through eye movements, palm tapping or thera-tappers. Focusing on these two tasks at once (the BLS plus the trauma memory) taxes our working memory meaning it's difficult to hold onto and the trauma memory making it less vivid and less emotional.

The aim of EMDR is to process the traumatic memory as quickly and as efficiently as possible whilst maintaining dual attention - this means having one foot in the past (the trauma memory) and one foot in the present (staying connected with present time and getting 'lost' in the trauma memory).



**To ensure the processing and momentum is not disrupted your therapist will not engage in lengthy conversation during BLS but rather will keep dialogue to a minimum.**

Additionally, your therapist will ask you to “just notice’ or observe the feelings, beliefs, sensations and images that emerge during BLS. It is important during this time not to analyse, sensor or block any of the distressing emotions or bodily sensations that you may be experiencing. Working through the negative aspects of the traumatic memory will clear the way for resolution and recovery.

Your therapist will continue BLS until the intensity and frequency of the negative physical sensations, the emotional charge, and the vividness of the traumatic memory reduces. As every mind and body is different this may take ten minutes, an entire session or several sessions.

The EMDR process is complete when new, realistic and healthy perceptions and

With EMDR there are no “rights” or “wrongs”, rather an acknowledgement that each EMDR session must be tailored to meet each individual’s needs.

## **FOLLOWING AN EMDR SESSION.....**

There may be times when you continue to process trauma material for 24-48hours after an EMDR session. This is your mind’s and body’s way of working towards clearing the traumatic memory. Please make a note of any images, thoughts, feelings, sensations or beliefs that emerge so you can discuss this with your therapist at your next session.

Following your first EMDR session we recommend having a friend or family member drive you home, and for all sessions encourage you to avoid alcohol and drugs as this may impede your recovery.

Finally, we strongly recommend engaging in relaxation exercises and taking some time to prioritise your well-being.

If you have any questions regarding the above please discuss with your medical practitioner or therapist.