**Introduction to EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)**

When a trauma occurs, it can get locked in the brain with the original picture, sounds, thoughts and feelings. When this happens, memories are relived as opposed to just remembered. Since the experience is locked there, it continues to be triggered whenever a reminder comes up. Kind of like an exposed nerve in a tooth. These improperly stored or stuck images, thoughts or feelings are very distressing and can even cause flashbacks of the original event. It can be the basis for a lot of discomfort and sometimes a lot of negative emotions, such as fear and helplessness, that we can’t seem to control. These are really the emotions connected with the old experience that are being triggered and a lot of the time have nothing to do with the present.

Disturbing events can be stored in the brain in an isolated memory network. This prevents learning from taking place. The old material just keeps getting triggered over and over again. In another part of the brain, in a separate network, is most of the information you need to resolve it. It’s just prevented from linking up to the old stuff. Once we start processing with EMDR, the two networks can link up. New information can come to mind and resolve the old problems.

*Separate target and adaptive networks Connected target and adaptive networks*

EMDR works by helping the brain store the information properly so that it feels like it is in the past. \*\*Refer to brain handout\*\*

It is important to remember that **it is your own brain that will be doing the healing**. EMDR relies on the brain’s original function: to process information very effectively in order to insure the survival of our species. Like the body’s ability to heal a cut, the brain is able to find a way to deal with even the most difficult of experiences. This gets de-railed when emotion overwhelms the brain but it gets stimulated by bi-lateral information coming in.

EMDR uses bilateral stimulation so that both the left (logic) and right (emotions) sides of the brain get involved in processing the memory: the right side of the brain allows you to experience the emotions and the left side of the brain adds the logical thinking that puts something in perspective.

The eye movements, or tapping, that we use in EMDR seem to unlock the system and allows the brain to process the experience. This might be what is happening in REM or dream sleep: the eye movements may help to process the unconscious material.

The important thing to remember is that it is your own brain that will be doing the healing and that **you are the one in control.** Although unpleasant pictures, sensations or emotions may come up you **can stop the process whenever you want by raising your hand and saying STOP.**

Going through the “tunnel”. It is best to allow the eye movements, or tapping, to continue as long as possible, but if things feel too rough, we can stop and you can rest. The idea is that if you want to drive through a dark tunnel quickly, you keep your foot on the accelerator. If you take your foot off, your car slows down and coasts. So, to get through unpleasant emotions, keeping the eyes moving, or allowing the tapping, will get us through more quickly.

We are only processing old stuff. It may feel real, but it’s just the old memories locked in the brain. Just because you feel the fear, does not mean there is a real tiger in the room. The idea is to let the brain become unlocked, and let the information process through.

As we process the information and digest the old events, pictures, sensations or emotions may arise, but your job is to just notice them, just to let them happen. Imagine that you are on a train and the scenery is passing by. Or that you are watching a movie on a screen. Just notice the scenery without trying to grab hold of it or make it significant.

We will start by me asking you to focus on a target. Then I will ask you to follow the bilateral stimulation. After we do that for a while, we will stop and talk about anything that comes up. You can’t keep a picture steady while the eye movements or tapping is going on, so don’t even try.

When we talk, you just need to give me honest feedback on what is happening. Don’t try to please me or try to “do it right”. **You cannot do EMDR wrong.** Just tell me exactly what is happening. Don’t judge what is happening. Sometimes things will change and sometimes they won’t. I may ask if something else comes up; sometimes it will and sometimes it won’t. Just let whatever happens, happen.

You may experience some emotional disturbances in between sessions, sometimes in the form of dreams. Please make sure you keep track of these and report at your next session.

***It is important that you practice and use your current coping skills and resources you will develop, on a daily basis. Some examples: Container, Safe/Calm Place, Butterfly Hug, Deep Breathing, Letting Go of Stress (Miller) etc.***