



Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

EMDR is an individual therapy designed to help people process overwhelming experiences. We call these traumatic experiences.

Some people who have been through such experiences are still greatly troubled by them later on in life. Images of the overwhelming event return in all their vehemence, for instance in frightening memories, flashbacks and nightmares. Because these re-experiencings are emotionally so intense, people try not to think about these memories. It takes a lot of effort to keep these memories at bay. Consequently, there is less room and attention to give to everyday matters. The feeling persists that the danger may strike again, which results in excessive vigilance and sleeping problems. Also, there is a tendency to easily become angry and irritated. These complaints are part of the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The best way to treat these complaints is by bringing the overwhelming and traumatic events back to mind. It is in this way that the distressing experiences are processed best.

Is EMDR effective?

A great deal of scientific research has been carried out into the effectiveness of EMDR. The results show that with most patients, the complaints diminish significantly or disappear altogether. Memories will lose their emotional charge. It will be easier to think back on the event.

How does EMDR work?

At the start of the treatment, a great deal of attention is focused on the origin and background of your complaints. This will clarify whether a trauma-oriented treatment is necessary at this moment, and whether EMDR is suitable. During the EMDR treatment, the therapist will ask you to think back on the event, including the accompanying images, thoughts and feelings. Next, the working through process starts: as you recall the event, the therapist will distract you with a 'distracting stimulus' (usually a hand gesture or a light bar, for a short while. This is also called 'set'). After each 'set' you will be asked what memories have sprung to mind. Usually, the procedure sets a stream of thoughts and images in motion but it may also give rise to feelings and physical sensations. Often, something changes. After each set you will be asked to concentrate on the most striking change.

ARQ Centrum'45 is the Dutch national centre for specialist diagnostics and treatment of people with complex psychotrauma complaints.
www.arqcentrum45.org

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How long does the treatment take?

EMDR is a short-term form of treatment. If the complaints have developed after a single overwhelming event, people can often take up their daily activities again after just a few sessions. The treatment will obviously take longer with people who have been through persistent distressing events, and with people who have more complex problems.

Are there any side effects?

EMDR is an intensive treatment. At the start of the treatment, the therapist will explain the treatment and its after-effects extensively. In addition, you will be given exercises to help you deal with your emotions in the best possible manner. After a treatment session you may for a few days feel more distressed by the memories you recalled during the treatment. But ultimately, the complaints will diminish. In general, these after-effects do not continue for much longer than three days. Then, a new balance will have been created.



Questions?

Please direct all your questions to your NET therapist or your main therapist.