# E.M.D.R. (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)

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"I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections
and the truth of the Imagination"
John Keats

How often in life can we feel that the certainty expressed by Keats escapes us. Life can be challenging at best or seem like a hell from which there is no relief, even in sleep. Fortunately, in the past twenty years a relatively new form of treatment has been developed and thoroughly researched. It is a procedure used in psychotherapy to help reduce the impact of experiences from the past that intrude on your present-day life. These experiences from the past involve trauma such as abuse (physical, emotional, sexual), an accident, or a natural disaster. Even though the trauma may have happened many months or even years ago you may still feel its impact in your daily life through post-traumatic symptoms such as intrusive memories (flashbacks), emotional flooding, nightmares, anxiety, numbing, low self-esteem, and difficulty enjoying your life to the fullest.

This procedure is called EMDR which stands for *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing.* EMDR was discovered by the psychologist Francine Shapiro who investigated the way in which the brain seems to process information in dream sleep while rapid eye movements happen back and forth. She published her research in 1989, and EMDR has developed and evolved through the contributions of therapists and researchers all over the world. Though originally used primarily with those suffering from acute Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, it is now used and has helped an estimated half million people of all ages for relief from many different kinds of psychological distress.

It appears that the beneficial effects are facilitated by alternating stimulation of the right and left hemispheres of the brain. *Eye movements* accomplish this, as do bilateral alternating taps or tones. *Desensitization* refers to the removal of the emotional disturbance associated with a traumatic memory. *Reprocessing* refers to the replacement of the unhealthy, negative beliefs associated with the traumatic memories, with more healthy positive beliefs.

The length of time for treatment depends on several factors such as the nature of the problem, the client's history and complexity of the problem. When EMDR therapy is used appropriately, it can significantly shorten the overall length of time in therapy. EMDR is now the most researched treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many scientific studies have shown it is effective and long lasting. It is important to see only trained and qualified therapists formally trained in EMDR. Otherwise, there is a risk that EMDR would be incomplete, ineffective, or even harmful. For more information about EMDR check out the EMDR International Association or the EMDR Institute at www.emdr.com.

Source: Willensky et al. Basic Training Manual – Part I