An Introduction to Dissociation and EMDR

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Introduction

- Roy Kiessling, LISW
- Trained in EMDR 1995
- Teaching EMDR
  - 1995 - practice coach
  - 1998 - presenter: EMDR conference presentations
  - 2001 - trainer for major EMDR providers
  - 2013 - independent EMDR trainer
- Experience with dissociative clients (zero - knowingly???)
  and
- IMO: an expert in EMDR

Workshop goals

- What is EMDR?
- How does EMDR help treat dissociation?
- Selecting an EMDR therapist
What is EMDR?

Background

- 1890 - Eye movements associated with thought
  - William James: *Principles of Psychotherapy*
- 1950's - Lateral eye movements related to cognitive processing
- 1980's - Eye movement speed and direction important for various mental processing functions

1976 - NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming)

- Bandler & Grinder
  - Eye movements stimulate integration
  - Eye movement quadrants process different aspects
  - Traumatic experiences remain unintegrated

1989 - Shapiro (EMDR)

- Eye movements activate REM sleep (hypothesis)
  - Memories are frozen at the time of onset
- Protocols and Procedures
  - Treatment of single incident PTSD
- AIP - Adaptive Information Processing
  - The cause is the issue, not the symptom!
  - Unprocessed memory networks from the past are activated in the present!
Adaptive Information Processing
- Biological system designed for survival (instinct)
  - Biological
  - Psychological
- The AIP is constantly working / updating the past to an adaptive present

Traumatic Disruptions
- Trauma disrupts the AIP process
  - Adult 'T' trauma 'freezes' the system – PTSD
  - Childhood ‘T’ trauma
  - 'T' trauma 'isolates' the system
    - Prolonged exposure creates an adaptive process within a closed system
  - Trauma: Freezes / Isolates / Adapts within a 'closed system'
    - Core Beliefs, Ego States, Alters

The Formation of Adaptive Neuro-networks

- Soma refers to Thalamus
- Thalamus sends raw information (except olfactory) to Amygdala & Prefrontal Cortex
- Amygdala interprets and attaches emotional significance and
  - T1: forwards to Basal groups that control behavior,
  - T2: attaches emotional and hormonal response to event.
- Prefrontal Cortex: integration and plans (regulated)
- Information is then sent to the Hippocampus for organization and cognitive mapping
The Formation of a Dissociated Memory Network

- Emotional/hormonal activation may occur before conscious appraisal arrives from Prefrontal Cortex.
- Intense emotional arousal interferes with hippocampal functioning.
- Failed hippocampal functioning prevents normalization of the event, leaving the event’s pro-emotional arousal in a ‘frozen’ state separate from other life experiences.
- Traumatic memories are timeless and ego-alien.

Dissociated networks adaptive within a closed system.

The Formation of ‘Isolated’ Neuro-networks

Senses

Sensation informs Thalamus ("How we see, hear")
Thalamus sends information to Amygdala & Prefrontal Cortex
Amygdala interprets and attaches emotional significance and
Emotional and hormonal responses to event are repeated and thereby reinforced
Prefrontal Cortex: integration and plans (environment reinforces the experience)
Hippocampus: organization and cognitive mapping is spatial, thereby strengthening the neuro-networks related to behavior, perceptions and BELIEFS.

Process as "re-running" within a "closed" system.

The Formation of ‘Frozen’ Neuro-networks (PTSD)

- Emotional/hormonal activation may occur before conscious appraisal arrives from Prefrontal Cortex.
- Intense emotional arousal interferes with hippocampal functioning.
- Failed hippocampal functioning prevents normalization of the event, leaving the event’s pro-emotional arousal in a ‘frozen’ state separate from other life experiences.
- Traumatic memories are timeless and ego-alien.

Dissociated networks adaptive within a closed system.
The Adaptive Information Processing System and Dissociation

- The earlier the ‘trauma, the more critical the adaptive response necessary for ‘survival’
  - at the time
  - now as the only learned alternative

- The Adaptive (coping) Continuum
  - Flight / Fight / Freeze / Dissociate

The Role of Attachment

- Attachment to primary caregiver
  - Mother 0-2 years of age
  - Father may be a supportive alternative after age 2/3 yrs.

- Non-verbal communication (0-2 yrs) between mother and infant (right brain to right brain)

- Secure Attachment
  - Mother / child - good enough - repairs disruptions

- Insecure Attachment
  - Mother / child communication disruptions
  - Ambivalent - learn to ignore
  - Avoidant - can’t expect - so why bother!
  - Disorganized - can’t predict -
    - best and worst of all possible worlds!

- Severe childhood trauma - circuit breaker pops!

- flight / fight / freeze / Dissociate!
Belief Schema

➤ Beliefs are the verbalization of the emotions & affect experienced at the time of the ‘trauma’
➤ Beliefs resonate when triggered in the present
  ➤ Activate ‘pre-determined scripts’
  ➤ “Here we go again!” – ‘a way to be’ (to survive)
➤ Developmental progressions
  ➤ Once disrupted, developmental progressions become stunted

Belief Schema’s Developmental Progression

- Vulnerability (8-12 yrs.)
- Guilt (5-8 yrs.)
- Shame (3-6 yrs.)
- Control Instinct (2-5 yrs.)
- Survival Instinct (0-2 yrs.)

Dissociation and Belief Schema

➤ Survival – “I’m not going to exist.”
➤ Control – “I have to be in control in order to exist.”
➤ Shame — “Because I am so defective, I do not deserve to exist.”
➤ Guilt — “Because my behaviors are so bad, I do not deserve to exist.”
How EMDR can help

➢ Eye movement processing creates changes at a core level (not just a cognitive level)
  ➢ Trait change vs. state change
  ➢ Emotions
  ➢ Sensation
  ➢ Core Belief Schema

The ‘EMDR Approach’

➢ Helps identify ‘the past that is activated in the present’
➢ Enhances ‘affect management skills’ with the assistance of bilateral stimulation
➢ Links / up-dates / reconsolidates neuro-networks to a adaptive adult perspective
  ➢ Helps heal the ‘child survivor within’
    ➢ "It is over, you survived, your skills are no longer needed all the time….trust your adult to handle the situations and keep you alive.”

EMDR Interventions

➢ Bilateral stimulation
  ➢ Soothing, slow bilateral stimulation
    ➢ [tapping, rocking, walking thru it, slow eye movement]
    ➢ creates a sense of calm and enhances affect regulation and containment
Stabilization

- Bilateral stimulation
  - Calms / relaxes / fades images
- Client resources
  - Container
  - Inner peaceful place
  - Mindfulness
  - Concrete present orientation skills
  - Affect regulation and containment

Processing

- Single target interventions (restricted processing)
- Processing hierarchy (top-down vs. bottom up)
  - Future triggers
  - Present triggers
  - Past experience?

An EMDR Intervention

- Access and activate the targeted incident
  - May be future / present / past?
- Apply bilateral stimulation
  - The Processing Continuum
    - Restricted Processing: Short sets focused only on the targeted incident
      - Controls affect and sensation
    - Unrestricted Processing: Long sets allowing for free association across the life span regardless of the target selected
      - Allows full range of affect and sensation
• Changes occur in:
  • The decrease in the vividness of disturbing memories
  • A decrease in emotions and physical sensations
  • New insights about how the situation was handled

• Trait changes occur in:
  • Attitudes / behaviors / perspectives
  • Beliefs and scripts

• Processing
  • Single, restricted processing interventions interwoven within other forms of psychotherapy
  • Individual targets are processed then changes integrated into daily function using other forms of psychotherapy
  • Traveling through a canal: EMDR interventions are ‘the locks’ that raise one to the next level to be integrated

• Future / present processing is designed to:
  • strengthen the internal system
  • get internal parts’ collaboration
    • (not necessarily - extinction)
  • prepare internal systems for eventual touchstone processing
    • where this all began
  • recognize the past is present
    • the touchstone event is the origin of the current issues symptoms
Finding an EMDR Clinician

- Fully trained by an EMDRIA approved course
- EMDR Consultant
- EMDR Certified
- Experienced EMDR Clinician
- Advanced training in EMDR and Dissociation

Find a Therapist: www.emdria.org  www.isstd.org
- Orlando: Reg Morrow - reg@cfl.rr.com or
  windermerecounseling.com
- Orlando - EMDR Basic Training - Lakeside Behavioral Health
- Boca Raton - Roy Kiessling: roykiessling@me.com

Suggested Reading

- Siegel: *Parenting from the Inside Out*
- Shapiro: *Getting Past your Past*

Caution - has been known to trigger past memory's emotions, sensations, flashbacks