

EMDR in Motion

Enhancing the effect of EMDR by using elements of movement therapy, dance and bodyorientated therapeutic interweave techniques.

Remember Freud: Motivations and actions of human beings are based on processes that are not controlled by consciousness. - E - motions lead us into action.

Consequences of emotion and awareness are connected with the fundamental duty to regulate life in the human organism and to create homöostatic balance (Damasio, 1999)

Traumatised patients continue with their actions - they started with as the trauma happened - and exhaust themselves through constant repetitions. (Janet, 1889)

The Body Keeps the Score (B. v.d. Kolk, 1996)

Clients who suffer from traumatic stress are often afraid of disturbing and painful somatic symptoms. Structural dissociation alienates them from themselves and the body reactions. If trauma started before the client was even able to create a personality or ego states/parts the body „holds“ the discomfort and painful memory of neglect and violence. Therefore clients tend to perceive their body as hostile. They suffer from Alexythymie, the loss of meaning of body reactions and muscle activation. Losing contact to own urges and needs means one can not react properly on emotional states and needs of others either. Clients feel easily irritated and react with fight or flight. The dorsolateral präfrontal cortex has no possibility to influence the emotional brain. Traumasurvivors react with rage on very slight provocations, freeze when they are frustrated and react helpless on very minor problems - which is comprehensible only if you know the context and the personal history.

We know that experiencing the effect of eye movement - and other bilateral stimulations, is a gentle and powerful way to bring the voice of the body into the therapeutic space. EMDR helps to integrate in a unique and structured way cognitive, emotional and body sensations. To use movement and body orientated skills in difficult processes f.e. with severely and/or early traumatised clients even enhances the effect of EMDR.

Bilateral stimulation is movement plus rhythm - movement plus rhythm is dance!
Dance is life - and life is dance!

Conscious Movement and body awareness skills in psychotraumatotherapy:

Steps: Mindfulness - Breath - Conscious Movement - Dance

Traumasurvivors have symptoms not memories. Tell them to simply „relax“ leads to an increase of the arousal and the connected anxiety. On the other hand avoiding the body means avoiding the core, its the body that holds the trauma history and the memory.

In the state of freeze the emotions are stuck and blocked - conscious movement allows the body to find the natural flow again. Motion comes first - emotion follows - motion is change - a shift of energy - leads into transformation and helps the organism to find its unique homöostatic balance. Bodywork and conscious dance trains the body to be ready to hold and deal with even strong emotions. If you literally stand safe and balanced on your feet you cant be swept of your feet that easy. If the body knows how, one finds the balance again. Conscious movement and mindfulness helps to widen the „Window of Tolerance“ (Spiegel 1999/2000)

I. Stabilisation:

To install the body as a resource helps to feel connected to the needs and urges of the body. Experiencing the body in a joyful way reduces panic and anxiety. The body is the resource where emotion takes place - where the therapeutic process takes place.

Some Methods (to enhance the effect use ongoing bilateral auditive stimulation) :

1. Awareness of breath - mindfull breathing. 1.1. nose in - mouth out (avoids hyperventilation) 1.2. Breath into the belly (relaxing) - breath into chest (activating)
2. Awareness exercise (Chris Price): I am thinking - I am feeling - I am sensing

Learn to differentiate between body sensation - emotion - thinking.

Learn to use sensate words - connect body sensations, instinct, amygdalla reactions with broca area. Lern to find words for the speechless horror.

2. Bodyparts: With or without music - put your awareness in one part f.e. head and let the head move in a gentle and natural way - feel the weight - the momentum - let the body follow. Continue with other bodyparts (shoulders, elbow, hands, spine, hips, knees, feet)
3. „Ressourcegrid“ (Lisa Schwarz) combins imagination and sensation: Find resourcespots in the body, connect them - create a safety net in body.
4. Find resource movements - tiny movements that feel good.
5. Music is a resource for most people - use it in the therapeutic space. Connect music and even tiny movements.
6. Conciuous dance - 5Rhythm, Soulmotion.

II. Processing - Traumarelease:

Preconditions to process traumatic material:

It is essential to keep 1. the process within the arousal zone of the clients ANS where feeling **and** thinking is possible. 2. the affect level within the „window of tolerance“, (neither hyper- nor hypoarousal) which is usually very small for traumasurvivors but should increase in the course of therapy.

Be aware of the fact that for clients with low or hurtful attachment experiences. the intimite space of a relationship can be a trigger. Therefore its necessary to create a safe therapeutic space including attachment, mindfulness and awareness of bodyreactions and movement.

The therapeutic relationship is the safe container where the client may invite the wounded, disintegrated parts of the self. „Ingridients“ of this relationship are:

Client: (Sometimes apparently no) relationship and attachment between ego states/parts: adult selfs - child selfs (Inner ressources: Body awareness, imagination, soothing and grounding skills...)

Therapist: Relationship and attachment between adult self and (preferable) healed child self (Inner ressources including body and movement awareness...)

Attachment: Eye contact, breathing together, awareness of reflexes, mirroring posture, mirroring movement

Extern: Safe place in the office - childsplace - using space, different levels, music, creativity.

Therapeutic interweave to deal with dissociation:

Bodyorientated therapeutic interweave helps the ANS of the client

- to stay within the window of tolerance

- to accelerate the desensitization process by leading into deeper levels of body consciousness.

Teach the client to use a signal when she/he feels dissociated, (disconnected, dizzy, far out, near myself, numb....) Then help the client to „associate“ consciousness to the body.

Keep going with the bilateral stimulation during or short after the therapeutic interweave.

Methods:

First step: body awareness - awareness of posture - tense parts of the body - release parts

„Do not change anything, be aware of parts of the body that are already relaxed (flowing, warm, safe, grounded) - and now be aware of parts that are tense - be aware of tiny little movements in the body -

Second step: Stress movement - Ressource movement

„Tenseness in the muscle is a preparation for a movement - find which movement the body „wants“ to do“ (Somatic Experiencing, P. Levin) „Do not act against the movement (do not try to relax) even exaggerate the tenseness, the movement that goes with the tenseness hold it - and then relax“

„Slow down - find a slow motion movement.“

- Find resource movements: „Which movements are feeling good (warm, grounding, soothing) ?“

Third step: Find two or three different movements - connect - repeat - add breath - add awareness - dance

Challenges if you work with the body and movement level: Shame and guilt - the suffering of (childhood) trauma survivors.

Exploring shame and guilt on a body level brings the phenomena in a safe way into the therapeutic space where it can be explored and therefore more easily handled:

Shame - a big protection shield of the person and the body. Its „Fort Knox“ for bodysensations and emotions.

Shame is often interrupting attachment in the therapeutic relationship. If its possible to bridge the gap with awareness one finds a „therapeutic treasure“ of hidden emotions, thoughts, attitudes. Body interventions enable to explore the sensate quality of shame, its movement and mayor function - making the person „invisible“.

Guilt - gives the client at least the feeling that he/she could have done something to change the situation. (Pia Andreatta) Feeling the guilt - as weight, tension, texture - in the body makes it possible to explore it on a sensate or movement level. Flood back from sensation to memory is possible (How old does that part of yourself feel?). One can go on with inner child work and reconnect the child part within the adult self.

III. Integration:

New patterns of behavior , new patterns of movement need mindfull repetition,

Install new postures that express self consciousness and self esteem. f.e. Posture of prosperity and inner strength. Add sound.

Bodywork and dance inbetween the psychotherapy sessions enhances the process : Tai Chi, Chi Gong, Yoga, Trager, Conscious Dance....

Suggestions for utilization of the EMDR Protocol:

- After Target - Image - NC - PC (VoC) - Emotion, find a body **resource** (D. Grand) - start with the resource. Use the resource if the client dissociates or the process „loops“.

- Find a movement resource - (or both: Which movement goes with the disturbance) - which movement is a relief, resolves the tenseness? If the process loops or sticks use the resource movement.

- Find a movement that's combined with the disturbance - what is the posture - the movement?
After processing, at the end of the process use bodytest to ask to compare - how is the movement now?

- Dealing with Pain - Add movement to the Chronic Pain Protocol (Mark Grant, Claudia Erdmann):

Pain as „target“ - describe the pain - give it an image and a posture or a movement

Find a resource in the body - where is the body still feeling good, without pain? Find a posture.

Is there a movement unfolding? Find a movement.

After processing finish with an „Antidote Imagery“ and the installation of a „Movement Medicine“ - which Movement is a relief, releasing, soothing for the pain?

„There are thousand miles of unexplored wilderness between head and feet.“ (Gabrielle Roth)