



PALMETTO®
ADDICTION RECOVERY CENTER



NEWSLETTER



The Healing Power of EMDR & Prayer

by Stewart Bedillion MA, LPC ~ Spiritual Counselor

If a person has run off the road and is stuck in the ditch, no amount of acceleration is going to help that individual get back on the road. Putting the “pedal to the metal” is not the answer. What that person needs is a wrecker. Once the rubber is on the blacktop, traction is now possible, and at least one can move forward. The car itself may not look good, but whether one needs to visit the body shop or just wash the car, one can still get down the road as long as traction is there. This is how I view the place of EMDR in the healing process of treatment and recovery. Addiction is typically built on pain and shame, and EMDR is a powerful tool to deal with that pain and shame. I have discovered that no amount of logical reasoning will lift a person out of their pain if they are truly stuck.

Once a person is on the blacktop, so to speak, then cognitive restructuring is able to move the person forward. As I work with people at Palmetto to achieve spiritual, emotional, and mental healing, I have combined two dynamics to facilitate that healing: prayer and EMDR.

What exactly is EMDR, and how is it applied in the healing process? EMDR stands for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. It is an experiential approach which incorporates bilateral stimulation, eye movements, hand tapping, or other bilateral movements to help an individual process a trauma or negative memory. It was originally developed in 1987 by Francine Shapiro, PhD, who began using eye movements with her patients in her private practice. Since that time, EMDR has evolved over the years as many approaches do, but

“Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

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essentially has stayed the same, and is very effective with any negative experience, no matter how small or great, where a person feels that they have not experienced resolution of that negative experience. EMDR is built on the premise that the brain processes trauma differently than what we would call normal everyday events. Negative beliefs may be attached to the memory, and therefore negative emotions are connected to the negative beliefs. The executive function of the brain is unable to process these beliefs and emotions which are contained within the historical memory, and therefore remains stuck and unprocessed. One can see the enormous opportunity for being triggered, and thus the individual seeks something or someone or both to soothe the agitation coming from the unresolved beliefs contained within the memory. Hello addiction. Bilateral stimulation seems to help unlock the stuck place and allows the person to process this in a more normal and appropriate way. EMDR is concerned about past events, present triggers, and the future template or picture. Technically there are eight phases to the EMDR process, but basically when I work with someone at Palmetto I only need to do five of these since the other three have already been done by virtue of the person being in treatment.

What does an EMDR session look like? I cannot answer for what other counselors' sessions look like who use EMDR, but I will try to walk you through what I do. I mentioned

earlier in the article that I use prayer and EMDR. Many of our patients are very open to prayer and inviting God into the session. This is not a requirement, but the fact is, many of our patients seek a deeper connection with God. I have found that prayer makes all the difference in terms of effectiveness, length of session, and clarity of what the person receives during the session. God told the prophet Jeremiah, "Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things that you do not know," Jer. 33:3. I have seen the truth of this over and over again after many hours of working with people. After finding out about the place of pain, I will typically install a calm/safe place for the patient. This is part of the EMDR protocol and is simply a tool that the person can use anytime or anywhere when the person feels a need to deal with anxiety. Once this is done, I allow the person to visit the disturbing memory focusing on the negative belief(s) and reporting to me where they feel that in their body. They are to focus on that part of their body while bilateral stimulation is applied. The client then simply reports what they are noticing after a set of eye movements or taps are applied. I simply ask them to focus on what they are noticing which may be something physical, or an emotion that is coming up, or a thought or another memory that comes into their mind. Another set of bilateral stimulation is applied. This is the Desensitization Phase, and the goal is for the disturbing material to not be disturbing any longer. This could be quite lengthy or

not lengthy at all. The next phase is Positive Installation. The goal of this phase is to install a more appropriate belief replacing the original negative belief held within the memory. The memory and the belief are held together in the person's mind, and bilateral stimulation is applied. The goal of this phase is for the new belief to feel completely true while held in the memory. I end with a Body Scan having the client hold the memory and new belief together in the mind, checking their body and reporting any tightness, tension, or unusual sensations or if they just feel calm, peaceful, comfortable, relaxed, and/or positive. The goal here is for the body to be in agreement with the new belief held within the memory. If there is disturbance at this point, bilateral stimulation is applied until the body is in agreement. This is the short version. Obviously everyone is different, and their issues are different, so I have to be flexible with what is going on with the client.

I have seen tremendous healing at Palmetto using this approach. Sometimes I let prayer stand alone, sometimes I let EMDR stand alone, and many times I combine the two. I want to stay sensitive to where the client is at and what they are open to. I have seen many clients pulled out of the ditch, so to speak; therefore, their treatment in group and everything else they participate in at Palmetto becomes so much more effective. I feel humbled and privileged to be just a small part of the healing process, and I give God all the credit for it. He truly is the Healer and Deliverer.



Welcome Aaron Beeson Jordan, LPC

Aaron is a graduate of Louisiana Tech University with a Bachelor's in Psychology (2006) and a Master's in General Counseling and Guidance (2009). Aaron is a Licensed Professional Counselor (#4468) with 6 years of experience working with individuals of different cohorts ranging from adolescence to the geriatric population.

Aaron approaches counseling using perspectives based on reality therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy. Cognitive-behavioral perspective focuses on patterns of thoughts. Actions are explored in order to better understand the client's problems and to develop solutions. Reality perspective is a cognitive behavioral approach focusing on the here-and-now of the client's situation and how to create a better future. Typically, clients seek to discover what they really want and whether what they are currently doing (how they are choosing to behave) is actually bringing them nearer to, or further away from, that goal.

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