

EMDR in the treatment of depression

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Severe depression is one of the most common mental disorders and affects between 5-15% of the general population in their lifetimes. Although many psychotherapeutic and pharmacologic interventions exist that are considered to be effective in depression, the treatment is less than satisfactory. High relapse rates (ranging at 50% after two years), unsatisfactory remissions and suicidal risks are among the major problems. Scientific studies of EMDR have shown that it is one of the most effective tools to treat posttraumatic stress disorder. One of the lesser known properties of EMDR is that it also seems to be an effective intervention in depression.

Our study group has done research on the subject since 2007 and finalized two controlled pilots studies that show the potential of EMDR in depression. A multicenter RCT study is underway. Even if the results of the study will not be available yet, some useful clinical observations on the use of EMDR in depressive patients will be shared.

Dr. Arne Hofmann is specialist for internal and psychosomatic medicine and is head of the EMDR-Institute in Germany. He learned EMDR in 1991 during a residency at the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, California and has introduced it in the German speaking countries. He founded one of the first inpatient units for victims of trauma in Germany and has helped develop aftercare programs after mass disasters like the train accident in Eschede 1998, the school shooting in Erfurt in 2002 and in the wake of the Tsunami in 2004. Dr. Hofmann is a funding board member of EMDR-Europe and a member of a German national guideline commission on the treatment of PTSD. He is teaching, researching and publishing in internationally the field of psychological trauma and EMDR.