

## **REPAIRING ATTACHMENT AND INTERNAL WORKING MODELS WITH EMDR: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

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Bowlby (1969; 1973) describes attachment relationship as a proximity-seeking behavior, beginning early in infancy, and regulated by an innate attachment behavioral system, the function of which is to obtain protection and care from the attachment figure, in response to real or perceived stress or danger. Furthermore, he proposed that, in parallel with the attachment system, the parent develops the caregiving system, whose particular goal is to provide protection to the child. (Bowlby, 1969, 1988). Attachment behaviors are ultimately guided at a cognitive level by internal representation, or Internal Working Models (IWM), based on the generalization and differentiation of the child's experiences, that will then extend to later social interactions. The quality of attachment that an infant develops with a specific caregiver, therefore, is largely determined by the caregiver's response to the infant when the infant's attachment system is "activated". The children whose caregivers are able to accurately interpret and respond to their signals of distress in a prompt and appropriate manner are more likely to achieve a secure attachment. Main and Hesse (1990) hypothesize that an attachment figure who, in turn, has experienced negative life events (such as a loss or trauma) behaves in a manner toward the infant that is frightened or frightening and that causes the infant to experience dysregulating fear in relation to the caregiver, leading to disorganization of the infant's attachment strategy. When children experience negative or traumatic events in the relationship with the primary caregiver, the memories of these events tend to be stored in a dysfunctional and non-metabolized form of "mnemonic network" containing perceptions, expectations, negative emotions and bodily sensations that may be related to the traumatic attachment experiences. This condition could persist during the course of development and could negatively affect the patient's quality of life. The EMDR treatment, in these cases, may be useful to help patients to access to traumatic memories related to attachment relationships and to process them in an adaptive manner. When the patients, with the help of EMDR, are able to identify and elaborate their early traumatic memories, they can gradually separate them from their past and organize them in a consistent and coherent narrative. The objective of the workshop, therefore, is to provide the theoretical basis for the understanding of the attachment dynamics and how these can guide the therapeutic work with EMDR. During the workshop will be presented the research data concerning the efficacy of EMDR treatment in the dynamics of attachment and clinical cases that will help to understand how to use EMDR with the wounds of attachment.