



Roger Mills: Trauma and the use of EMDR therapy.



Roger Mills is a psychotherapist and trainer specializing in working with PTSD. He has worked for the UK National Health Service and the Priory Group. He is an EMDR therapist, a method he uses extensively in his private practice work. Find out how the fight or flight response results in a type of memory which is radically different from normal memory.

TOP EMBODIMENT TIP: Breathe! Count to 6 while breathing in and count to 6 while breathing out.

Trauma: Recognize the difference between the memory of events that cause trauma and a normal event:

A normal event memory:

- the details are filtered out before the memory gets stored.
- the memory gets 'marked' with a timecode to understand that the event has taken place in the past and is finished.

An event that causes **trauma memory:**

- In the fight and flight response a large amount of cortisol (stress-hormone) is released, which temporarily damages the hippocampus;
- The memory tends to be much more vivid, much more emotionally latent and (sensory) detailed.
- The memory feels 'alive'.
- Every detail in the memory has the capacity to become a trigger for the memory to come alive in the present again, for example, flashbacks.
- The aliveness of the memory can lead to avoidant behaviour because it alters our basic belief system about safety and ourselves.

EMDR: Converting a trauma-related memory into a normal memory

- EMDR stands for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, which is a bilateral stimulation. It is possible to use alternative forms of bilateral stimulation, like tapping or sound.
- It begins with a particularly targeted assessment, looking at the event that resulted in trauma. In that assessment it is important to find the worst parts of the experience and the level of threat.
- It includes looking into a person's coping strategies and giving them trauma-information and finding out if there are underlying trauma-memories that were already there before this event.
- It includes building inner resources to draw from and to build from that, such as breathing exercises, visualisation or EMT.
- Use of EMDR lowers the intensity of the memory down the scale until it is not invasive anymore and becomes neutral, so it feels like it has happened in the past, instead of being alive.

Resources

- ❖ **Website:** www.millscounsellinglondon.com



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