

The Treatment of Traumatic Memories in Patients/Clients with Complex Dissociative Disorders: The Use of EMDR and Guided Synthesis

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The treatment of traumatic memories in the therapy of chronically traumatized patients who have complex dissociative disorders needs careful preparation and the utmost care. The standard EMDR protocol is not sufficient for memory work with these patients, and can destabilize them. Thus, the therapist needs to have a good understanding of the dissociative personality structure that exists in these patients, including dissociative parts, their strengths and deficits, and their interrelationships. Using the framework of phase-oriented treatment and the theory of structural dissociation of the personality, this workshop will help participants understand essential preparatory work which has to be completed before working through traumatic memories with EMDR, and become more knowledgeable about using modified EMDR approaches to work with traumatic memories in these complicated cases. The theory of structural dissociation helps the therapist become aware of which dissociative parts of the personality (and their interrelationships) need to be included in the preparation phase, which deficits need to be recognized and treated, and which resources need to be developed for the treatment of traumatic memories to be successful. Attention is also given to a comparative approach, i.e., guided synthesis. Both approaches need largely the same preparation. A modified protocol of EMDR for complex dissociation will be presented. Videos of EMDR and guided synthesis will be shown in the workshop.

Learning objectives:

1. Participants will be able to: Describe structural dissociation and why understanding of this phenomenon is needed for adequate treatment of traumatic memories
2. Apply specific modified EMDR protocols for the treatment of traumatic memories in complex dissociation
3. Describe the guided synthesis approach and how it differs from the EMDR approach