EMDR: Healing Attachment Ruptures within the Family

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Objectives

• Gain knowledge of EMDR therapy history and learn to integrate Attachment Theory.
• Understand how EMDR therapy can be applied to healing trauma wounds within the family system.
• Review and explore case examples for implementation of EMDR therapy with the family system and subsystems.
• Understand how EMDR therapy fosters resiliency throughout various phases of treatment.
Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory
  • Focused on the relationships and bonds between people, particularly long-term relationships, including those between a parent and child and between romantic partners (Bowlby, 1988).
  • Ainsworth's "Strange Situation" study

Attachment Styles
  • Secure
  • Anxious-Avoidant
  • Anxious-Preoccupied
  • Disorganized

Attachment Rupture
  • Perceived abandonment, betrayal, or breach of trust in a critical moment of need for support expected of attachment figures (Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001).
Adaptive Information Processing (AIP) Model

- The AIP model (Shapiro, 2018) is the underlying theoretical model of EMDR therapy.
- The model theorizes that everyday events are naturally processed and integrated with past experiences and information.
- Images, emotions, sensations, and perceptions associated with traumatic memories are stored separately in an unprocessed form.
- Traumatic memories are easily triggered by present-day conscious and subconscious reminders.
- Stored memories of attachment trauma from early childhood can easily be triggered by later relationships, resulting in defensive interpersonal reactions.
Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

- EMDR therapy consists of an eight-phased protocol
  - Phase 1: History Taking
  - **Phase 2: Preparation (Resource Development Intervention)**
    - Phase 3-7: Specific steps for reprocessing a traumatic past event or a present-day trigger
    - Phase 8: Re-evaluation and follow-up
  - Bilateral Stimulation (BLS) used during phases 3-7 to activate and integrate information from the brain’s two hemispheres.
    - Use of alternating right, left stimulation such as tapping on the knees, legs or shoulders, tapping toes or feet on the floor, or eye movements.
Integration of EMDR Therapy, Attachment Theory and Family Therapy

- Holistic and Flexible approach
- Addresses family trauma
- Opportunities to challenge and change family patterns
- Repair attachment ruptures and develop healthy attachment
Assessment

- Family of Origin
- Dissociative Experience Scale (DES)
- Attachment Questionnaire
- Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire
- Couples Satisfaction
- Trauma History/Scales
- Resiliency Scales
Attachment Focused EMDR (AF-EMDR)

- Developed by Laurel Parnell
- AF-EMDR "extends the use and benefits of EMDR and bilateral stimulation for use with clients who have been typically less responsive to traditional EMDR protocols, due to acute or chronic relational trauma and attachment deficits" (Parnell institute, 2019).
- Provides corrective emotional experiences
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MH3tKSbkje0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MH3tKSbkje0)
5 Basic Principles (Parnell, 2013)

1. Foster client safety
2. Develop and nurture the therapeutic relationship to create healing
3. Client centered approach
4. Create reparative neuro-networks through resource tapping
5. Use modified EMDR when the client needs indicate
EMDR with Couples

- Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (Dr. Sue Johnson)
- Secure attachment between couples
- Use of partner in development of RDI and cognitive interweaves
- Strengthens attunement and relational bond
- Contraindications: violence, lack of safety in relationship, unsupportive partner
- Case Example
EMDR with Children

- Attachment Disorganization
- Early Traumatic Experiences
- Right Brain Communication
- Improve affect regulation
- Addressing anticipatory grief/ruptures
- Modifications are necessary: Dual attention stimulation, language, measures, protocols
Attachment Ruptures with Children

- Regression in behaviors
- Emotional dysregulation
- Lack of attunement
- Insecure attachment
- Identify number of attachment ruptures in lifespan
- Reparative attempts?
Integration of Play Therapy with EMDR

- Play (art, music, toys, etc.) allow traumatic processing more tolerable for children
- Sensory integration
- Books
- Allows children to titrate
- Theraplay (Parent-Child Dyad and Families)
EMDR with Families

- Healing Intergenerational trauma
- Integrated approach
- Internal Family Systems
  - Client's ability to draw on parts of self as resources
- Working with Parents
  - RDI process with caregivers
    - Helps parents set a target situation around challenging parenting experiences
    - Exploring resources: Mastery, Relational, Symbolic resources, and Somatic Resources
    - Reparative Interweaves with parents present (Gomez, 2013).
Fostering Resiliency

• Resiliency Genogram
• Increasing positive cognitions
  • Using cognitive interweaves to allow a client to move past block
• Resource Development and Installation (RDI)
• Improve overall family functioning
• Increasing window of tolerance
• Improvement in reflective capacity
• Changes the family narrative (creating new narratives)
• Past, Present, and Future Orientation
Resources

Clinical
- Emdria.org
- Primer book
- EMDR and Family Process Therapy
- EMDR Therapy and Adjunct Approaches with Children
- Attachment-Focused EMDR: Healing Relational Trauma
- Healing the Folks who live inside

Client
- Dark, Bad Day....Go Away: A book about trauma and EMDR for children
- Listening to my body
- Hey, Warrior
- EMDRIA.org
Discussion

- Gaps in the research
- How will you incorporate this approach to your practice?
- In what ways do you see this fostering resilience within the family?
- Challenges or reservations incorporating EMDR to systemic work?
- Questions/Comments
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References


References


