

## Therapy Descriptions

**EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)** This treatment modality uses exposure to the traumatic memory paired with “bilateral stimulation” of the brain by tracking the therapist’s finger or string of lights with the eyes or listening to alternating tones. Current thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and beliefs are activated and the tracking helps to reduce emotional and physiological reaction to the memory. This desensitization helps the person to reprocess their negative beliefs about themselves (for example “It was my fault”) to adaptive, healthy and more accurate beliefs (“I did the best I could”). There have been numerous studies on EMDR over the past fifteen or more years and it has been shown to be a rapid and effective treatment for PTSD.

**TF-CBT Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy** is an evidence-based treatment for children and adolescents impacted by trauma and their parents or caregivers. It is a components-based treatment model that incorporates trauma-sensitive interventions with cognitive behavioral, family, and humanistic principles and techniques. TF-CBT has proved successful with children and adolescents (ages 3 to 18) who have significant emotional problems (e.g., symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, fear, anxiety, or depression) related to traumatic life events. It can be used with children and adolescents who have experienced a single trauma or multiple traumas in their lives.

**Individual Psychotherapy** This involves meeting one on one with a licensed Psychologist, Social Worker or Mental Health Counselor. Typically, these meetings are once a week for an hour and focus on talking about the events, reactions to them and means of mitigating the effects on your life.

**Behavioral or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** This treatment approach looks at ways in which a person thinks about a problem, their learned responses to certain triggers associated with that problem and ways in which their thinking affects their emotional state. This treatment often uses a combination of exposure (deliberately thinking about an event or confronting a trigger) and relaxation training along with cognitive restructuring or changing one’s thoughts or beliefs about an event or trigger. This process tends to “desensitize” a person’s response to reminders of the event so that it no longer carries the same emotional impact. CBT has been well researched and has been shown to be an effective treatment for PTSD

**Group therapy** Group therapy can be very helpful following a traumatic event as it provides a safe and supportive environment in which to discuss a shared experience with others. There is often a felt sense that “nobody understands” and a group can help you to feel less alienated, normalizing your reactions to an abnormal event.

**Medication** People are often very leery of about medication feeling it signifies that they are “crazy” or out of control. This is, of course, not the case and many people take medication for varying lengths of time following particularly stressful life events. Traumatic events can influence the neurochemistry of the body and brain impacting a person in many ways. Excessive stress hormones can make it difficult to concentrate, relax or even sleep. They can increase blood pressure, muscle tension, skin conductance and general arousal levels. It can impair immune system functioning, making people more vulnerable to illness. Fairly often these changes can lead to depression or anxiety. Medication can be effective in resetting the levels in the brain and may prove to be very helpful for a period of time.