

# TRAUMA TIP SHEET

## EMDR THERAPY CAN HELP

### WHAT IS TRAUMA

Experiencing or witnessing a frightening, dangerous, or violent event can overwhelm our body's natural coping abilities. Exposure to death, injury, abuse, or sexual violence often causes trauma. Other more common life events like job stress, divorce, or accidents can cause a trauma response as well. People respond to trauma in many different ways.

### SIGNS OF TRAUMA

- Depression, sadness, or social isolation
- Feeling the need to be hyper-aware or alert in case of danger
- An exaggerated startle response, on edge
- Increased irritability, sudden anger attacks
- Feelings of shame, guilt, or intense worry
- A sense of numbness in life
- Nightmares or flashbacks that relive the traumatic event
- Avoiding situations which may be reminders of event
- Difficulty functioning in daily life
- Substance abuse and dependence

**70%** ADULTS IN THE U.S. HAVE EXPERIENCED A TRAUMATIC EVENT\*

Childhood trauma increases life-long health risks\*\*

**90%** CLIENTS IN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA\*\*\*

### HOW CAN EMDR THERAPY HELP?

EMDR stands for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. It is a form of therapy that helps people heal from trauma or other distressing life experiences. EMDR therapy has been extensively researched and is recommended for trauma treatment.

Our brains have a natural way to recover from traumatic memories and events. Sometimes this natural recovery process can't be resolved without help. EMDR therapy is designed to resolve unprocessed traumatic memories in the brain. For many clients, signs of trauma like those above will diminish or disappear once EMDR therapy is complete.



#### EMDR THERAPIST INFO:

\*[www.ptsdunited.org/ptsd-statistics-2/](http://www.ptsdunited.org/ptsd-statistics-2/)

\*\*[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html)

\*\*\*[www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/trauma](http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/trauma)

# TRAUMA AND THE BRAIN

## EMDR THERAPY CAN HELP

Our brains have a natural way to recover from distress. Many times traumatic experiences can be managed and resolved spontaneously. Other times, our fight, flight, or freeze response prevents distress from being processed without help.



### AMYGDALA ACTIVITY INCREASES

The amygdala acts as an alarm signal for stressful events and helps protect us from danger. Trauma can cause the amygdala to stay overactive, which can lead to feelings of anxiety or being in danger.



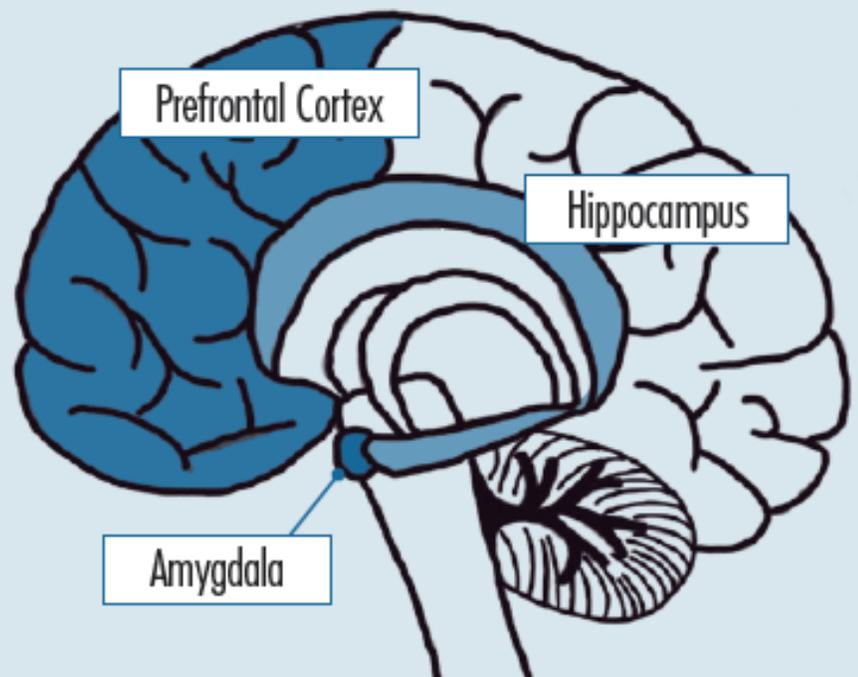
### HIPPOCAMPUS SHRINKS

The hippocampus assists with learning and memory storage, including how to remember safety and danger. It helps calm the amygdala. Trauma can cause the hippocampus to shrink. Cues to calm the amygdala are weakened, which may cause flashbacks or confusion around the trauma memory.



### PREFRONTAL CORTEX SHRINKS

The prefrontal cortex manages thoughts, behavior, and helps us control our emotional response to events. Normally, this area helps us decide that a situation is okay. Trauma can weaken the signals from this area, allowing negative emotions from the trauma memory to take over the prefrontal cortex's reasoning ability.



EMDR therapy helps the brain process traumatic memories, allowing normal healing communication to resume. After successful EMDR therapy, the fight, flight, or freeze response from the traumatic event is resolved.