

EMDR. What's good for the forces can be good for you too

There has been considerable media comment of late about a therapy called EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing). It is one of the methods of choice for treating members of the armed forces who have had traumatic experiences in war zones, and has proved highly effective for treating anxiety and some aspects of depression too. Unlike many therapies in common use, EMDR has been thoroughly clinically validated and millions of people have been able to banish unwanted negative emotions and put them in the past where they belong.

John had underlying feelings of anxiety that had plagued him for years and made every day a misery. EMDR was an important part of a treatment plan that enabled him to understand how he was producing the anxiety, change his attitude to work and relationships and learn how to maintain a state of calmness and peace.

Mary was unable to ski with her family because as soon as she found herself looking down from the top of the slope she froze with fear. After three sessions of EMDR and hypnotherapy she was able to enjoy skiing again.

Jane was unable to enjoy riding having experienced a bad fall some years previously. Three sessions of EMDR and hypnotherapy enabled her to resume show jumping.

Jim was so terrified of needles that he could not even look at a photograph of one. He was denying himself medical attention despite having had a severe heart condition, because of this fear. After two sessions he was able to pick up and handle a needle and after a further session was able to go to his GP for treatment that included injections.

I have also used EMDR with many other issues including fear of flying, abuse trauma, public speaking, stopping smoking, eating disorders.

Of course, not all treatments are as rapid as three sessions, and it is not appropriate to use EMDR with every negative emotion – sometimes other approaches suit better. But when it is appropriate to use it as part of an eclectic approach to helping people move forward all the experience is that it provides a quicker and more effective solution than other more traditional therapies. Which is why the services use it of course. And why it is supported by NICE the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence UK.