

## **State-of the Art Treatment Modalities for Traumatic Stress Diagnoses**

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In some instances, helping an individual recover from trauma does not require any specialized techniques. Many people improve in a few weeks by learning about what causes trauma symptoms and working with a counselor to learn stress management tools and to process the traumatic event. It is also very helpful for individuals to learn that their symptoms are a normal response to an abnormal event and that they can recover.

When an individual is not making consistent progress towards recovery, it is often an indication that more specialized techniques will be useful. Twenty years ago, recovery in complex cases often took months or years. With today's techniques recovery from flashbacks, chronic avoidance, or anxiety reactions can be achieved in anywhere from a few minutes to a few sessions. Research has shown that three techniques are particularly helpful in this regard.

**Visual-Kinesthetic Dissociation (VKD)** is one of the techniques in Neurolinguistic Programming. With the assistance of a trained counselor, and guided imagery, the client establishes a safety anchor and then relives the traumatic event in his/her imagination from a very distant perspective (such as the projection booth in a movie theater). While viewing the event from this emotionally detached place, the client identifies what was s/he needed to recover from the event. Next, the client imagines walking into the traumatic scene and giving the traumatized self what s/he needs. Finally, the client imagaically takes the traumatized self out of the scene and places him/her in his/her own hear as a way of reintegrating the dissociated part. This technique often helps to bring a sense of peace and resolution and helps the individual move forward. The technique is not recommended for those who have difficulty separating fact from fantasy or those who are easily emotionally flooded.

**Thought Field Therapy (TFT)** utilizes a combination of tapping on certain acupressure points in a particular sequence along with certain eye movements and vocalizations. These activities are done while recalling a certain feeling or event. Usually, one to several sequences of these protocols will eliminate the trauma symptoms so that the memories of the traumatic event only emerge when the individual wills them to do so. The writer especially likes this technique because it does not appear to have any harmful effects and because clients can be taught to use the techniques on themselves.

**Eye Movement Desensitization Response (EMDR)** entails thinking of the traumatic event while holding the head still and moving the eyes in patterns proscribed by the counselor.

This technique appears to interrupt a reaction pattern that has become ingrained and relieve the traumatic response to an event. Counselors who use this technique need to be very well trained and able to discern who will benefit and who will be made worse by it. Individuals who are easily emotionally flooded as well as those living with Dissociative

Identity Disorder (DID) may actually experience a worsening of symptoms after using this technique yet for others the technique speeds recovery. Each of these techniques are very powerful and very effective and should only be utilized by a therapist after a trusting relationship has been developed with the client.