

# Common Therapies for PTSD

PTSD therapy has three main goals:

- Improve your symptoms
- Teach you skills to deal with it
- Restore your self-esteem

Most PTSD therapies fall under the umbrella of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). The idea is to change the thought patterns that are disturbing your life. This might happen through talking about your trauma or concentrating on where your fears come from.

**Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)** is a 12-week course of treatment, with weekly sessions of 60-90 minutes where you'll talk about the traumatic event with your therapist and how your thoughts related to it have affected your life. Then you'll write in detail about what happened. This process helps you examine how you think about your trauma and new ways to live with it.

**Prolonged Exposure Therapy** involves eight to 15 sessions, usually 90 minutes each. Early on in treatment, your therapist will teach you breathing techniques to ease your anxiety when you think about what happened. Later, you'll make a list of the things you've been avoiding and learn how to face them, one by one. In another session, you'll recount the traumatic experience to your therapist, then go home and listen to a recording of yourself.

**Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)** therapy is an eight-phase treatment. Eye movements (or other bilateral stimulation) are used during one part of the session. After the clinician has determined which memory to target first, he asks the client to hold different aspects of that event or thought in mind and to use his eyes to track the therapist's hand as it moves back and forth across the client's field of vision. As this happens, for reasons believed by a Harvard researcher to be connected with the biological mechanisms involved in Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep, internal associations arise and the clients begin to process the memory and disturbing feelings. In successful EMDR therapy, the meaning of painful events is transformed on an emotional level. For instance, a rape victim shifts from feeling horror and self-disgust to holding the firm belief that, "I survived it and I am strong." Unlike talk therapy, the insights clients gain in EMDR therapy result not so much from clinician interpretation, but from the client's own accelerated intellectual and emotional processes. The net effect is that clients conclude EMDR therapy feeling empowered by the very experiences that once debased them. Their wounds have not just closed, they have transformed. As a natural outcome of the EMDR therapeutic process, the clients' thoughts, feelings and behavior are all robust indicators of emotional health and resolution – all without speaking in detail or doing homework used in other therapies.

Resources: <http://webmd.com> & <http://www.emdr.com>