

EMDR INTEGRATED APPROACH TO CHILDHOOD NEGLECT IN ADULTS

Luca Ostacoli

Childhood Neglect is associated with impaired cognitive and social skills, increased risk for both physical and psychic disorders, suicide risk and poorer response to treatments. Dissociative symptoms are very frequent. The treatment may be difficult and we must apply an integrated approach. At the beginning of the therapy is challenging to create a safe relationship, accepting the limited space that patients who experienced severe neglect may allow us. A crucial point is to represent their inner experience of emptiness and meaninglessness, sometimes even self-annihilation, so that we can explore it together. In this way, every time they relive it, it will no longer be something alien but more familiar and shared with the therapist. Stabilization must be tailored on their experience, making experiments to choose the most effective grounding practices to reconnect to the present moment experience. Psychoeducation must include also how children live and see the world, in order to help the adult part to understand and take care of the child one.

We need to process the core episodes in depth, reaching gradually the child's pain, covered by layers of removal built up over time, recognizing every step forward as an act of courage.

The key words are slowness, space, rhythm, tenderness. The most delicate moment, at the core of the childhood pain, is the emergence of sadness, the human feeling of loss and transformation. We must help the person to feel it, with compassion, supporting the mourning process. The therapist's inner work is very important, especially when the process seems to be stuck and in those precious moments without words during Bilateral Stimulation, when we are very close to each other, physically and emotionally. We can be sensitive to the patient's human positive qualities, letting us be nurtured by them, with the Loving Presence approach. This connection with the deprived child part is one of the deepest we can have in our therapist's life; when transformation takes place, session after session, we are enriched too; we feel grateful towards the patients and our awareness of human value increases.