

The potential of EMDR therapy in gynaecology and obstetrics

Eva Zimmermann,

EMDR Europe accredited senior trainer, Murten, Switzerland

EMDR therapy has proven its worth in many areas of psychotherapy. It can also apply successfully to situations involving the treatment of women and couples in gynaecology and obstetrics. There are numerous situations in the field of gynaecology which can be difficult or even traumatic for women, such as a routine check-up with a vaginal examination, or minor or major surgical interventions, as well as discussions about contraception, sexuality etc. Many gynaecological situations are difficult or even traumatic or may be a trigger for women who have suffered sexual or other types of violence. Sexual problems such as problems with sexual desire, dyspareunia or vaginism following abuse or rape are just a few examples. There are also traumatic surgical procedures, such as hysterectomies (removal of the uterus) or mastectomies (removal of the breast), and which can be synonymous with major impacts and fears of a threatening future. EMDR therapy can be successfully applied in many of these cases. A woman generally consults her gynaecologist until the day she becomes pregnant. From that day onwards, her gynaecologist will become an obstetrician and she will go to the obstetrics department, unless she wants a voluntary termination of pregnancy. Obstetrics is considered to be the "happiest" department in a hospital, because "happy events" are the order of the day. However, there is a tendency to forget all the problems associated with pregnancy and childbirth, and many women do not end up with a healthy baby in their arms after nine months (or less) of pregnancy. Many women also experience serious difficulties before, during or after pregnancy and childbirth. As a therapy for treating trauma, EMDR is well suited to obstetrics, as there may be many potentially traumatic events in this context. However, EMDR goes far beyond the treatment of trauma, so it is also well suited to other interventions in gynaecology and obstetrics, whether preventive or curative. This workshop seeks to demonstrate the potential of EMDR therapy for treatment to various indications in the field of gynaecology. A particular focus will be on accompanying women with (breast) cancer, and women and couples who desire to become parents but have problems with infertility or sterility. EMDR therapy can be very useful in these specific areas.