

EMDRIA FOUNDATION: THE FUTURE OF EMDR

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Do YOU really understand how vital it is to support EMDR research?

Has EMDR enhanced your practice, like it has mine? Has EMDR changed the lives of your clients, like it has mine? Has being a part of the EMDR community enriched your life, like it has mine? I hope so, as I am certainly grateful for all the benefits I've received. Newly trained therapists are wowed by its power, and seasoned EMDR clinicians are still amazed by its transformational effects. At any gatherings of EMDR clinicians, big or small, there is a life energy which is present and palpable. However, outside our community, EMDR still does not shine so bright. Although this controversy is nothing new, it is time that EMDR therapists sit up and take notice. It is hard to believe in 2010 that EMDR is still being ignored in scholarly works on trauma treatments. In the edited text by Courtois and Ford's (2009) Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders: An Evidence Based Guide, EMDR doesn't make the Table of Contents. Rather it is mentioned only as a CBT approach. Contributions to this text are written by well-known and highly regarded trauma experts in the field today. Yet, contributions by EMDR authors or researchers are missing in action. Why is that? Perhaps even more surprising, is the lack of reference to EMDR, in the text's afterward written by Bessel van der Kolk, MD. As most of you know, Dr. van der Kolk is a long time supporter of EMDR and certainly has carried the torch for EMDR in unfriendly territories for many years. That tide is also changing, "as there are enough people who earn money doing EMDR to take on that job!" Although I find the following thoughts from him unsettling, I also see them as a wake-up call. They are only upsetting, if the EMDR community chooses to do nothing about them. Here are his thoughts:

EMDR is being profoundly overlooked in treatment guidelines which is tragic and quite awful since it's such a central healing agent. I am indeed very concerned about the future of EMDR. However, just because it is an outstanding treatment for traumatic memories does not ensure its long-term survival. I think that the EMDR community needs to do some serious thinking how it can keep itself from being swept away. I feel they are naive about the politics and funding of evidence-based treatments. They also seem to be naive about the need to reach out and make political connections with other trauma organizations. Strategic alliances may produce joint efforts at getting funding and doing research together. I never see EMDR research submissions at professional meetings I attend, no papers in major journals, and never see concrete financial contributions to expand research opportunities from the clinicians who earn a living utilizing this terrific tool. In order to promulgate a treatment you need to publish large volumes of papers about it and fund research to push the envelope. The drug companies know how to do that - they plow their profits back into research and advertising. The EMDR clinical community seems to feel absolutely no obligation to donate part of their income to keep their chosen treatment alive. At this point EMDR is not a researchable modality unless funding

becomes available. NIMH will not support it and the EMDR community seems to trust that there is a God out there who loves EMDR and will make it a widely accepted treatment just because they see it work in the privacy of their offices. To me, the answer is clear - if EMDR practitioners want to expand acceptance of EMDR they will need to make it happen: they would need to offer free training for psychiatric residents in academic institutions and thereby support training of a new generation of potential researchers, and they need to raise money to support research. To my mind, it's like belonging to a church or a temple- if it sustains you, you have to tithe. So, all ye EMDR practitioners out there who feel misunderstood and under-appreciated - complain not that EMDR is neglected and abused, but get to work to do the things that are required for a treatment to have a future in the marketplace.

These are strong words – words to motivate YOU to act. As the EMDRIA Foundation launches a new website and initiates a marketing campaign with the new informational brochure, I hope you heed Dr. van der Kolk's call for action. EMDR is too important to let it slip away. Perpetuate the life energy that flows so easily within our community to radiate far and beyond. Please recognize EMDR with your contribution by visiting www.emdriafoundation.org. ❖



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