Alternative Horizon
Counselling & Consulting

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Individual, Couple & Family Therapy, Sex Therapy, EMDR

EMDR as Adjunct Therapy

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If you are currently attending counselling with a psychotherapist or psychologist but you are feeling stuck/unresolved about one (or some) of the issues you are working on, you may benefit from EMDR as adjunct therapy.

What is Adjunct Therapy?

Simply, adjunct therapy is therapy you do in addition to the work you are already doing with your primary therapist.

How would that work?

There are different ways this can work; it is a really flexible process based on your needs/preferences and the issues you are working on.

You might:

- Meet with your primary therapist and adjunct therapist on alternate weeks
- Take a break from work with your primary therapist and have a series of sessions with your adjunct therapist, then return to continue work with your primary therapist
- Meet with your adjunct therapist three weeks a month and meet with your primary therapist the other week

Probably you would not have more than one session of therapy a week, though (i.e. you would not meet with both therapists in the same week.) That's just too much therapy! Consider the counselling room as "the laboratory" where ideas are discussed, therapeutic processes occur, and strategies are brainstormed. Much of the work of therapy happens outside the counselling room when you integrate what you have

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learned, do further reflection and processing, try to implement new strategies, learn to cope with difficulties independently. Meeting for therapy more than once a week does not allow enough time to be able to implement change, to make steps to change your life.

Why would I meet with an additional therapist?

Your adjunct therapist may have expertise in a particular area (sex therapy, LGBT issues, trauma, addictions), or in a particular approach (EMDR, cognitive therapy) that will help you to move forward with your issues.

You would choose to continue to work with your primary therapist because you already have an established relationship and understanding that comes from time together and connection. Your history and established therapeutic relationship provides a particular comfort, as well as a particular opportunity to be challenged safely.

Your work with the adjunct therapist will help you to move past a particular hurdle in your life or in your therapy work.

How can EMDR help as Adjunct Therapy?

EMDR can help if you find that you are discussing something in therapy but the incident or experience continues to feel disturbing/distressing; after discussing the issue with your therapist, you may understand the situation differently but you continue to feel emotional or physiological discomfort.

EMDR is an approach that is particularly helpful with anxiety, with a traumatic experience, or with an experience that continues to feel disturbing or limiting whenever you remember it (a humiliation, a disappointment, a betrayal, etc.) If you find that when you think of that incident or experience today you feel an emotional response, that you notice distressing or uncomfortable body sensations, or that there are disturbing/ difficult thoughts or images that accompany the memory, EMDR may be helpful to 'digest' the remnants of that experience that remain in your body.

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Do I Have to Tell my Other Therapist?: It feels like I'm cheating on her or that I'll hurt her feelings...

Absolutely, you should tell your other therapist. It is important for you to be open and honest with your therapist. A therapist cannot meet all the needs of every client. As therapists, we each have different personalities, different styles of communication, different training, different approaches. We are also trained to be client-centred meaning our purpose is to meet our clients where they are and to help them to figure out what will be most helpful for them.

It would concern me if a client said he was looking to meet with an additional therapist for a piece of specialized work and the therapist tried to talk the client out of that or said, "Why meet with someone else when I can already do that for you?" Instead, your therapist should acknowledge your experience of the therapy you are doing, acknowledge the ways you are feeling stuck, see if there are ways he/she can help and, if not, acknowledge that work with an adjunct therapist could be helpful.

(There is an exception to this. Sometimes a client 'shops' for therapists when the client is looking for a particular answer - like, "No, you don't have a drinking problem", or "I agree your violent behaviour is justified" - and will meet with more than one therapist at a time. This is not adjunct therapy, and may indeed be an example of denying what is actually the issue that needs to be dealt with.)

EMDR as an Adjunct to Couple Therapy

Your couple therapist/Registered Marriage and Family Therapist may notice that there seems to be an issue from the past that is getting in the way of the couple/relational work you are doing with your partner. There could be a wide range of situations when that becomes evident: an incident in childhood, an experience or incident in a previous relationship, an experience of trauma, a betrayal or humiliation in the past, an affair, or an unresolved incident in the current relationship that still feels bothersome. Your couple therapist might notice that there seems to be a preoccupation or a sense of 'stuckness' that seems to be getting in the way of moving forward with the relationship issues.

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That would be an ideal situation for some EMDR adjunct therapy for that individual. While continuing with couple therapy (or possibly with a break in couple therapy to focus on the individual work), the person can do some EMDR work and then return (and hopefully) focus differently on the relationship issues.

In Conclusion

You may benefit from EMDR as adjunct therapy if you are currently attending individual counselling but you are feeling stuck/unresolved about some of the issues you are working on. EMDR helps to eliminate emotional and physiological disturbance connected with anxiety or a traumatizing incident, and helps to increase a positive belief in oneself.

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