

Abstract for the 19th EMDR Europe 2018 Conference

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Title: EMDR as a Tool for Cope for Court: lessening the perceived stress of the forthcoming court proceeding and helping to perform in court

In Finland, annually over 500 000 civil cases are resolved and about 75,000 persons are accused of a crime in the District Court. Thus, a notably number of people end up being involved in a court proceeding at some point of their life. Court proceedings have financial, social and mental effects on people's lives and it is often experienced as an emotionally heavy life situation which can to many cause also reactive disturbances and difficulties in adapting. These symptoms can have a significant impact on the person's ability to perform in court and thereby also on the court decision.

The focus of this research project is on lessening the perceived stress of the forthcoming court proceeding in legal clients of a psychology and law firm PsyJuridica Ltd. Specifically, a EMDR based therapeutic method, Cope for Court (CfC) has been developed for this purpose. This controlled study evaluated the relative efficacy of Cope for Court compared to a no-treatment waitlist control (WAIT) in the treatment of court related stress and PTSD in adults involved in custody disputes and criminal cases. Baseline measurement and posttreatment effect of perceived stress and PTSD were measured with a specific questionnaire designed for this purpose. The results show that CfC significantly decreased perceived stress and helped the subjects to perform in court. In sum, the results of the research projects indicate that helping to advance the wellbeing of persons who are involved in court proceedings helps the progress of just trial and fulfilment of legal rights.

This study is the first to link EMDR therapy to the legal system. It is unique in that it provides data from real cases and introduces a new application of EMDR based therapeutic method for improving human wellbeing in the legal system.

Learning objectives: During this presentation you will learn (a) how stress, trauma and wellbeing are related to the legal system and more specifically, to the court proceeding, (b) how stress that is associated with testifying affects testimonial competency and (c) how EMDR can be used to increase the wellbeing and testimonial performance of individuals who will be heard at the court.