

Integrating neurobiology of emotion regulation and EMDR therapy

Submission Statement indicating what is new, unique, and/or innovative about the material you wish to present with regard to EMDR

Emotion regulation is a relevant topic in EMDR therapy but its implications are still underdeveloped. A general recommendation is that the patient should have good emotion regulation capacities before to proceed with trauma memories reprocessing. Nevertheless, it is not so clear how EMDR defines emotion regulation, when and which types of emotion dysregulation may disrupt EMDR procedures and why it can happen, when it is a problem for different phases of EMDR protocol, and how much preparation is needed to prevent these problems. The need of the preparation phase has been questioned and the procedures that have to be included in phase 2 are under debate in the scientific community.

Recent developments in the neurobiology of emotion regulation may give us clues to understand the interaction between problems at different levels in the process of modulating emotional states and the access and reprocessing of traumatic memories with EMDR therapy.

Abstract with Learning Objectives

Emotion dysregulation is a frequent feature in trauma-related disorders. Different kinds of emotion dysregulation seem to be linked to particular psychiatric conditions, and there is growing evidence of the association between neurobiological correlates and those dysregulation patterns. Nevertheless, many of the recent findings from the field of the neurobiology have not been translated into clinical practice and are insufficiently contemplated in trauma-oriented therapies.

Emotion regulation is a complex phenomenon that goes beyond the concepts of hyper and hypo-arousal, and the window of emotional tolerance. Another aspects as under and over-controlling strategies, emotional avoidance, levels of complexity in emotion regulation, and many other topics, have been described in mental disorder, and are also relevant in trauma-related disorders. Different neurobiological correlates underlying these problems and the recent research in emotion regulation may offer relevant information for a comprehensive decision-making in EMDR therapy of these patients.

The aim of this presentation is to review recent developments in the field of emotion regulation, connecting these issues with the practical implementation of the treatment of trauma with EMDR therapy.

We describe how different patterns of emotion dysregulation may influence EMDR treatment and procedures, and also how the application of EMDR should take into account the predominant emotion-regulation strategies in specific posttraumatic

disorders. The workshop focus specifically on the relationship between emotion dysregulation and difficulties in EMDR processing of memories.

Learning objectives

1. Synthesize comprehensively the process of regulation of emotions, and their disturbances
2. Understand different pathways from early traumatizing and adverse experiences to emotion dysregulation
3. Link results from neurobiological research to clinical situations
4. Consider concepts of under/over arousal, avoidance/distraction, complexity of emotion regulation and controlling emotion regulation strategies in the EMDR case conceptualization and the therapeutic plan (phases 1 and 2).
5. Identify the influence of dysfunctional regulatory patterns in EMDR trauma reprocessing (phases 3 to 7)