Luca Ostacoli

Neurobiologically targeted EMDR treatment of depression

Inhoud

Depression is a world leading cause of disability, with huge human and social costs. Psychotherapy is recognized as the most important tool to treat it, combined with drugs or alone, but it is tricky for therapists because patients’ functioning is structured on harsh vicious circles.

The relationship with self and others is compromised, with a detachment from resources and a blaming and judging attitude; the attention is directed inward and ruminative; the window of tolerance may be very narrow, activation shifting between hyper- and hypo-arousal, with a limited space of free contact with feelings and thoughts. Anhedonia and impotence may reduce motivation both in the client and in the therapist.

Research in “affective neuroscience” opens to new promising developments, offering the possibility to “tailor” psychotherapeutic treatments on individual neurobiological profiles, based on the close connection between Central and Autonomic Nervous System in affective processing and in relational engagement. Porges’ Polivagal Theory is widely used as a functional model of autonomic arousal but its efficacy can be improved integrating it with new models of Central Nervous System processing. Richard Davidson, an international renowned neuroscientist, identified six neurobiologically grounded “Emotional Styles”, reflecting activity levels in specific and identifiable brain circuits. Each dimension is a continuum according to the degree of activation and can be assessed both clinically and with self reports.

In our center we developed EMDR approaches based on these neurobiological findings and experimented them both in our practice at the Clinical Psychology Service at University of Turin and in the EDEN (European Depression EMDR Network) project, a multicenter RCT comparing EMDR and CBT in the treatment of resistant depression, integrating “DEPREND”, Hoffman’s protocol for the treatment of depression. The workshop will focus on these integrative tools for a comprehensive EMDR treatment of resistant depression, choosing the techniques with the best ratio between simplicity and effectiveness. Each technique will be described in its subsequent steps and showed with audio visual clinical material.

Biografie

Luca Ostacoli is specialized in Psychiatry and he is EMDR Consultant of the Italian EMDR Association. He is Researcher and Professor in Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy at Turin University, Department of Clinical and Biological Sciences, School of Medicine and Surgery.

He’s been the Head of the University Service of Psychosomatics and Mood Disorders at San Luigi Hospital, Orbassano (Turin) from 2001 until September 2016, and since October 2016 he’s the coordinator of the Clinical Psychology Service at S. Anna Hospital, Turin. He applied EMDR in the medically ills and in patients suffering from mood, borderline and psychotic disorders.

He participated to the crisis intervention after the earthquake in Emilia and recently in Umbria (Italy), conducting EMDR both in individuals and in groups, and in other interventions after acute traumas in the community setting. He is member of the EDEN group (European Depression EMDR Network) and co-leader with Arne Hoffman (EMDR Germany) of a RCT on EMDR in Depression.