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healing & wellness

A Safe and Effective Therapeutic Experience

By Kelly O'Horo, MC, LPC, NBCC, Founder, and Michael D. Peck, MA, MSW, PhD



Founder Kelly O'Horo (left) with a select group of talented clinicians.

Everyone experiences distress. For many, stress occurs from our relationships, our jobs, or our families. And let's face it, there is no such thing as perfect parents or a perfect childhood!

In all relationships, each person has a unique perspective; no two people will see something in the exact same way. This difference can cause distress and conflict. Understanding how such relationship challenges occur is infinitely helpful. Even more importantly, it is possible to eliminate these conflictual responses. But, first, we must understand the "irrational" aspect of such responses.

Let's examine our natural defensive response — to fight, to flee, or to freeze. This instinctive response is one million times

faster than our rational and reasonable thoughts. For example, picture a combat soldier who feels imminent danger, fears losing his life, and suddenly hears bullets blazing. He instinctively and immediately drops to the ground. This is a normal hyper-vigilant response. Thank goodness for that! What would have happened if that same soldier had responded slowly?

Now, imagine that this soldier has returned home. He is with family and friends enjoying his child's birthday. A balloon pops. The soldier instinctively and immediately drops to the ground. The sensory input of the loud "pop" replicated past combat and told his body of imminent danger.

Unfortunately for the soldier, his body fails to distinguish between combat and birthday party. His brain responds to the

sensory input — sounds, smells, etc., without regard for his location. The instinct that kept him safe while at war now causes unneeded distress.

This same phenomena is experienced with emotional distress. Imagine a married couple with a young child. One of these parents has an extramarital affair and the child experiences the chaos of parental separation, divorce, and eventual shared custody. Despite all the love each parent has for this child, these emotionally-charged changes still create a sense of mistrust for the child. The child becomes an adult who struggles to trust his or her own spouse. The adult child is fearful that he will be “blind-sided” with the discovery that he or she has chosen an unfaithful spouse. Substantial marital conflict ensues.

The behaviors of this adult are a protective mechanism developed as a reaction to earlier life events that are experienced as some degree of trauma. In this example, the parents’ divorce was traumatic to the child, and, now, as an adult, current marital issues act as “reminders” or “triggers” to the earlier life event. Such associations often occur at an unconscious level and may lead to negative beliefs. In this example, the child, now a married adult, learned “I can’t trust.”

Even seemingly minor events cause negative beliefs about oneself. If a person was always picked last for the softball team, that person may develop the belief that, “I’m not wanted” or “I’m not good enough.” Unconsciously, these negative beliefs can infect other areas of one’s life with debilitating consequences.

When past trauma, small or large, and negative self-beliefs get triggered, a person’s brain fails to process information as it does ordinarily. One might feel “frozen in time,” as if one is experiencing the same images, sounds, smells, and feelings associated with the earlier trauma. One may feel trapped in negative self-beliefs. Traumatic memories and persistent negative beliefs have lasting negative effects that interfere with the ways a person perceives the world and relates to others.

Returning to the example of the combat veteran, his brain had a natural response to the perceived “pop” trauma. Instantaneously, neurochemicals released by the brain, including adrenaline, alerted his body to respond to the perceived crisis. It is these chemicals that create the surreal frozen in time experience. These chemical responses are autonomic and dictate response in all of our bodily systems. The body is in control just like it is in control of your next heartbeat. So, at the moment of perceived threat, the veteran’s traumatic response to fall to the floor was beyond his control.

Even during seemingly less severe crises, one cannot control the body’s response. Controlling irrational physical responses and increased emotionality is difficult, if not impossible. In our other example, in an adult who believes his or her spouse may be unfaithful, the fear-based emotional response is normal. By no means does this statement justify abuse: physical nor emotional. The rational thinking mind has the capacity to override primal emotional responses and keep a spouse from abusing another. However, in this example, the neurochemicals released because of perceived threat of abandonment generate feelings, such as lack of trust and safety, that are almost identical to those of the child when her or his parents were divorcing. The past feelings and self-beliefs, now experienced in the present, can lead to personal discomfort and marital discord.

There is Help

The good news is this: There exists effective intervention that can eliminate maladaptive responses! Yes, the brain has the capacity to heal! Individuals can become free from past trauma and



Dr. Chante Pantila inspiring those who take this awesome journey.

wounds using Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, also known as EMDR.

EMDR occurs by accessing the same brain processes that occur during REM (rapid eye movement) sleep; however, you are awake, alert, totally aware of what is going on, and in control. To access this natural brain process back-and-forth eye movement, tapping or audio is used along with standardized and well-researched protocols. This procedure helps you to access troubling memories and reprocess and store them with less distress.

In our example, the veteran has been meeting with his therapist and is ready to reprocess the memories from combat. The therapist has worked diligently with him to establish trust and safety, and to determine the protocols to be used to help him reprocess his traumatic war memories. During the EMDR, he likely will remember some traumatic events; however, his brain automatically reprocesses the memory without the trauma present. He still remembers the events, such as the bombs dropping, and has feelings about that memory, but the memory now is in perspective. He has reprocessed the memory, but without the neurochemicals present when the brain is experiencing trauma. Now, the popping of a balloon no longer triggers a traumatic response.

The EMDR International Association (EMDRIA) notes that “EMDR therapy has helped millions of people of all ages relieve many types of psychological stress.” You, too, may benefit from EMDR therapy. For a thorough description about EMDR, please visit the EMDRIA website at www.emdria.org, or the EMDR Institute website at www.emdr.com.

Unresolved traumatic events, from small- to larger-scale, can influence a variety of mental health symptoms. EMDR therapy may help you if you are experiencing any of the following:

Meet the Clinicians of Infinite Healing & Wellness



Kelly O'Horo, MC, LPC, EMDRIA and Certified Therapist is the founder of Infinite Healing and Wellness. She has been working as a counselor since 2008. Infinite Healing and Wellness LLC is a collaborative counseling practice designed to serve children, families, teens, adults and couples and cater to first responders and military veterans and their families to experience "limitless opportunity for growth."



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Amy Burnside,
LMSW, DBT and
ACT Therapist

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little,
- Pulling away from people and things,
- Having low or no energy,
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters,
- Having unexplained aches and pains,
- Feeling helpless or hopeless,
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than you should,
- Feeling unusually confused or forgetful; on edge, angry, or upset; or worried and scared,
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends,
- Having thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head,
- Thinking of hurting or killing yourself or someone else, or
- Unable to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

We can Help

At Infinite Healing and Wellness, we provide a safe and effective therapeutic experience. We are a group of highly skilled therapists and experts in EMDR. During your initial session(s), your therapist will assess the nature and dynamics of the problem and decide whether EMDR is an appropriate treatment for you. A typical EMDR session occurs for 60-90 minutes. Throughout the counseling process, whether using EMDR alone or with standard "talking" therapy, clients are supported in creating healthy changes in their lives. Of course, the duration of treatment varies based upon the issues you bring, life circumstances, and your history of trauma.

The incredible effectiveness of EMDR is proven by many clinical trials, and, more importantly, by the many therapeutic successes in our offices. After healing from trauma, individuals have a significantly improved sense of well-being and happiness. This new and improved sense of self benefits co-workers, friends, and family. Our clients have shared about the many ways their lives have improved after successful EMDR treatment!

At Infinite Healing and Wellness, our mission is to provide an exceptional psychotherapy experience, which allows our clients to reach their limitless potential, while recognizing that the strength that lies within is our most priceless attribute. We empower our clients with unconditional positive regard and foster the process by providing a mental health retreat! Becoming one's most optimal self is a luxury that every human deserves.

Partnering to provide limitless opportunity for growth!

Infinite Healing & Wellness is located at 2563 S. Val Vista Dr., Suite 108 in Gilbert, AZ. Call 480-448-1076 for further information or to make an appointment. We can be found online at Infinitehealingandwellness.com and can be reached by email at info@infinitehw.com.