



TMD News

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Temporomandibular Disorders/Orofacial Pain
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The Mind-Body Connection

Your Emotions and Physical Pain...

Most people are familiar with the idea that a *traumatic experience can lead to emotional distress*, sometimes many years after the traumatic event. Many of us, however, don't think about the fact that physical tension and even pain can also be related to something bad that happened to us, even a long time ago. *Extensive clinical and basic science research into the etiology and management of TMD have revealed the close mind-body connection that underlies the development of TMD and orofacial pain.*

EMDR (Eye movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)...

Judith Daniel is a local psychotherapist who helped introduce EMDR to our practice several years ago as we became more aware of the mind-body connection in pain therapy. *EMDR is a powerful method of psychotherapy that we have utilized since then to treat many psychological needs, especially PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)*, which is often the underlying etiology of many temporomandibular disorders. Leading research indicates that EMDR is **five times more effective** than the use of antidepressants for the treatment of trauma.

Each of us has the capacity to respond to painful experiences in an adaptive way...

transforming negative experiences into useful information and growth. Sometimes, however, when we are overwhelmed by negative emotions like fear, anger or hurt, our systems can shut down and not fully integrate the experience. *This can overwhelm the nervous system and instead of understanding and integrating the memory, we store avoidance and emotional or physical pain in our bodies.* When this happens, we may replay the painful memory, even many years later. Or, we may not notice the memory at all but feel the tension or stress of it as physical pain or other unexplained sensations.

When a person is very upset, their brain cannot process information...

and a moment can become "frozen in time." *Intellectually, a person may realize the past is the past or rationalize a situation, but their emotions may react primitively.* EMDR directly involves brain functions stimulating both hemispheres of the brain through eye movements and/or auditory or kinesthetic signals. It can help dissociate the memories of trauma stored in the hippocampus from the emotions of the trauma in the amygdala. This treatment combines cognitive and behavioral therapies with neuroscience. It has been used effectively to help soldiers with PTSD as well as survivors and rescue workers of many well-known tragedies, including the Oklahoma City bombing, Chernobyl, The World Trade Center and Pentagon crashes, and Columbine. *Following an EMDR session, a person will still recall a disturbing situation, but the emotional aspect of that situation will be decreased or completely absent.*

TMD and orofacial pain are often physical presentations of emotional distress and trauma, and EMDR is an effective therapeutic tool to help heal the painful memories that sometimes underlie facial pain.