



# EMDR Therapy and Existential Issues for Traumatized War Veterans

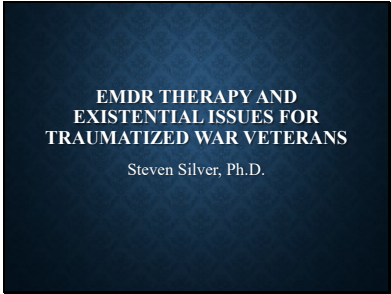
Presenter: Steven M. Silver, Ph.D.

Utilizing EMDR Therapy with Military Personnel  
and Veterans Webinar  
presented by the EMDR Central-Scotland Regional  
Group and EMDR Association UK

18 November 2021

*In Memory of Dr. E. C. Hurley*

Slide 1



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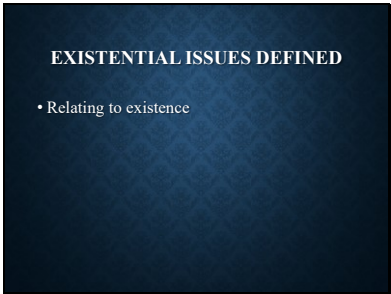
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Slide 2



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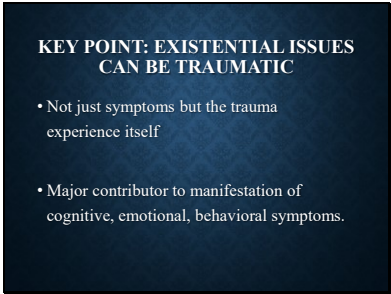
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Slide 3



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Slide 4

**EXISTENTIAL SUBSETS**

- Religious Trauma
- Moral Code Trauma
- Personal Identity Trauma
- Meaning in Life Trauma

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Slide 5

**EXISTENTIAL EVENTS AS TRAUMAS**

A quick look at the thinking about trauma...

-Freidman, et al, 2011

-Bub, K. and Lommen, M. J. J., 2017

-Frankl, V., 1969

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Slide 6

**THE RELATIONAL IMPERATIVE**

- Why is the therapeutic relationship so important?

-Dworkin, 2005

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Slide 7

**TARGETING**

- Which experiences and where to look for them?

-Shapiro, 2018

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Slide 8

**KEY POINT: EXISTENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A TRAUMA REACTION MAY BE PRESENTED AT ALMOST ANY POINT DURING THERAPY.**

Why not all right away?

- Uncovering
- Client trust of the treatment
- Client trust of the therapist

And a very useful idea.

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Slide 9

**PHASE ONE: CLIENT HISTORY GATHERING**

- Revelation
- Seed Planting

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Slide 10

**REVELATION OF EXISTENTIAL ISSUES (EXPLICIT EXAMPLES)**

- I don't deserve to be forgiven
- God is dead
- I'm worthless.
- I don't know what the point of being alive is.
- I don't deserve to be alive.
- I don't belong among other people.
- I'd be better off dead.
- Nothing means anything anymore.

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Slide 11

**REVELATIONS (NOT EXPLICIT)**

- Don't work for agreement with your understanding
- May do some "seed planting"
- Keep it moving

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Slide 12

**SEED PLANTING DIRECTIONS**

- Don't try to resolve the issue
- Key ingredient is the success of others, but not trying to mimic others
- Not The Resolution, but a resolution
- Plant the seed and move on – not an excuse for an argument

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Slide 13

**TYPICAL "SEEDS" TO INTRODUCE**

- Alternative points of view
- Meaning for suffering
- Reframing of life goals

-Frankl, 1969, 1973

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Slide 14

**CLIENT HISTORY CONTINUED**

- Blocks to client disclosure
- It's not always the event

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Slide 15

**CONSTRUCTING AN EMDR THERAPY TREATMENT PLAN**

- Like any other EMDR Therapy Treatment Plan
- What made the experience traumatic?

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Slide 16

**PHASE THREE: ASSESSMENT**

- Therapist issues about existential issues often arise in the formulation of the Negative and Positive Cognitions if not previously resolved.
- What is an appropriate resolution?

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Slide 17

**BLOCKED RESPONSES DURING REPROCESSING PHASES**

- Usual Tools
- Cognitive Interweaves
- Using seeds as CIs

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**PHASE EIGHT: RE-EVALUATION**

- Let them teach
- What are they going to do now?
- Check on triggers
- -Frankl, 1969, 1973

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**EXISTENTIAL TRAUMA SUBSETS**

- Religious Issues
- Moral Code Violations
- Personal Identities
- Meaning in Life

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Slide 20

**RELIGIOUS ISSUES**

- Client's presentation
- Particular issues for the therapist
- Using EMDR
- -Silver and Rogers, 2002

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**MORAL CODE VIOLATIONS**

- Client's presentation
- Particular issues for the therapist
- Using EMDR

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Slide 22

**ATONEMENT METAPHOR**

- Sacrifice
- Outward directed; benefits others
- Makes use of client abilities

-Silver and Rogers, 2002

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Slide 23

**PERSONAL IDENTITY**

- Client's presentation
- Particular issues for the therapist
- Using EMDR

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Slide 24

**MEANING IN LIFE**

- Client's presentation
- Particular issues for the therapist
- Using EMDR

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Slide 25

**SOME CLOSING POINTS**

- Often an existential crisis is triggered by traumatic loss
- The importance of Client Preparation
- Therapists are often very clear...
- Be comfortable with guilt.
- What are they going to do *now*?
- The Three-Pronged Approach
- Remember seed planting
- Other tools

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**REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING**

- Bub, K. and Lommen, M. J. J. (2017). The role of guilt in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2008198.2017.1407202>.
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- Friedman, M. J., Resick, P. A., Bryant, R. A., Brewin, C. R. (2011). Considering PTSD for DSM-5. *Depression and Anxiety*, 28, 750-769.

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**REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING (CONT)**

- Levin, A. P., Kleinman, S. B., Adler, J. S. (2014). DSM-5 and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 42, 146-158.
- Shapiro, F. (2018). *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy: Basic Principles, Protocols, and Procedures* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Guilford Press.
- Silver, S. M. and Rogers, S. (2002). *Light in the Heart of Darkness: EMDR and the Treatment of War and Terrorism Survivors*. W. W. Norton.

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## References and Suggested Reading

- Bub, K. and Lommen, M. J. J. (2017). The role of guilt in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 8(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2017.1407202>.
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### **Short Biography: Steven M. Silver, Ph.D.**

Steven Silver, Ph.D., is a psychologist who was trained in EMDR in 1991 by Francine Shapiro, Ph.D. She selected him to be a Trainer for the EMDR Institute and was the first Programs Chair for the non-profit EMDR Humanitarian Assistance Program. A veteran of both the United States Marine Corps and the U. S. Army, he has worked with combat veterans and their families since 1972 and for 26 years was the director of an inpatient PTSD Program for combat veterans. He led humanitarian relief teams to Bangladesh, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Northern Ireland. Co-author, with Dr. Susan Rogers, of *Light in the heart of darkness: EMDR and the treatment of war and terrorism survivors*, he has over 50 professional publications to his credit. A recipient of the Elizabeth Snyder Memorial Award (EMDR-HAP), the Ronald A. Martinez, Ph.D., Memorial Award (EMDR Institute), and the Outstanding and Sustained Service Award, (EMDR International Association), he was the primary EMDR consultant to the U.S. Army Empirically Validated Trauma Treatment Training Program. He has been a consultant to over 800 EMDR clinicians. He is a Certified Clinician and Approved Consultant with the EMDR International Association and is a Senior Trainer with the EMDR Institute.

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