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Adapting EMDR Therapy for Dissociation: Therapeutic Challenges and a Transdiagnostic Perspective

Dissociative symptoms are common across a wide range of clinical presentations and frequently emerge during EMDR Therapy, regardless of whether clients meet diagnostic criteria for a dissociative disorder. From a transdiagnostic perspective, dissociation is understood as an adaptive response that can influence emotional processing, therapeutic engagement, and the pace of trauma work.

This lecture explores the therapeutic challenges that dissociation presents throughout the different phases of EMDR Therapy and offers practical guidance on adapting treatment while maintaining fidelity to the EMDR model. Through clinical examples and video material, participants will learn to recognize both subtle and more overt manifestations of dissociation, differentiate protective responses from processing difficulties, and make informed clinical decisions regarding pacing, stabilization, and trauma reprocessing.

By integrating current clinical knowledge with practical applications, this keynote provides clinicians with a flexible framework for adapting EMDR Therapy to the needs of clients with dissociative symptoms across diagnostic categories. We will address concrete strategies to enhance therapeutic attunement, improve treatment planning, and facilitate safer and more effective trauma reprocessing.