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Title : Once Upon a Time… When Sleeping Beauty's Forgotten Memories Awaken - Exploring Dissociative Amnesia: Challenges and Possibilities in EMDR Therapy and Beyond.

Individuals who have experienced traumatic events often have a complex and sometimes bewildering relationship with their memories. Some experiences remain accessible, others only as fragments, sensations, emotions, or isolated images, while others seem to have disappeared from memory altogether. Patients may feel profoundly unsettled by these experiences and begin to question the reality of what they believe they remember: "Did this really happen?", "Why can't I remember everything?", "Can I trust my own memory?"

These questions become particularly significant in individuals with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) or Partial Dissociative Identity Disorder (pDID), where amnesia, especially inter-identity amnesia (also called inter-identity avoidance), can considerably complicate access to autobiographical memories and their integration.

As EMDR therapy relies extensively on the reprocessing of traumatic (and pathogenic) memories, these situations raise fundamental clinical and ethical questions. How can we work when memories are fragmented, confused, contradictory, or even entirely absent? How should we approach symptoms that suggest traumatic experiences when no explicit memories are available? What stance should we adopt when previously inaccessible memories begin to emerge? And how can we support patients in their uncertainty without either confirming or dismissing the historical reality of what they report?

The issue of "false memories," suggestibility, and the reliability of memory is another major concern, requiring therapists to maintain a stance that is scientifically rigorous, clinically cautious, and respectful of the patient's subjective experience.

These questions also extend into the legal and forensic domain, particularly when previously inaccessible memories emerge during therapy. They raise important concerns about the evidentiary value of such memories, the potential influence of therapeutic interventions, and the role of EMDR therapy in this context. Navigating these complex issues requires careful consideration of both clinical and legal perspectives.

This workshop aims to explore and deepen our understanding of dissociative amnesia and inter-identity amnesia, particularly in the context of DID and pDID, while also addressing broader questions concerning traumatic memory, the emergence of previously inaccessible memories, and their authenticity, especially for legal quesitions araising.

Particular attention will be given to the clinical implications for EMDR therapy: how to adapt therapeutic interventions when memories are fragmented, incomplete, or inaccessible; how to work with dissociative processes and, when therapeutically appropriate, facilitate the emergence of previously inaccessible memories; and how to promote the processing and integration of traumatic experiences while maintaining an open, non-suggestive therapeutic stance.

Patients themselves may express a profound desire to know and understand what happened to them, as gaps in their autobiographical memory can be deeply unsettling and distressing. How can therapists respond to this need for knowing while acknowledging that the historical accuracy of emerging memories may remain uncertain or even impossible to establish? And how can we respect this uncertainty without diminishing the clinical significance of these experiences or the importance of the patient's subjective reality?

The workshop seeks to bridge theoretical and scientific knowledge with the realities of EMDR clinical practice, providing participants with opportunities for critical reflection, therapeutic guidance, and concrete strategies for navigating these often highly complex clinical situations.