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From anxious to empowered: How the messenger of anxiety can be used to help people move toward healing and purpose

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The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 264 million people worldwide meet criteria for an anxiety disorder, with nearly twice as many women afflicted than men. In the USA, anxiety disorders are the most common, with 18.1% of the population meeting criteria each year. While a great deal of anxiety treatment focusses on symptom management and reduction, there's one particular piece to the problem of anxiety that is often misunderstood and overlooked. For some, underlying a lot of anxiety issues is an unrecognized and unresolved experience of trauma somewhere in the sufferer's history. Unresolved trauma is a problem that can impact the sufferers emotional, relational and occupational functioning. Anxiety is a messenger that tries to point the sufferer to the deeper issue that needs to be addressed. While many assume that significant or "Big T" traumas cause one to be "damaged for life" or take many years of therapy to resolve, this belief is not always reality. Additionally, other events, known as "little t" traumas are often not even recognized as having a significant effect on one's mental health. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR) is one highly effective therapy for addressing both "Big T" and "Little t" traumas. EMDR helps people to heal from paralyzing anxiety and trauma issues by using the brain's own capacity to process and move towards better mental health and functioning. Nearly 50 studies utilizing EMDR demonstrate positive treatment outcomes. However, many barriers keep people from obtaining treatment, including fear, stigma and access to services. There is much work to be done in terms of providing education regarding anxiety, trauma and treatment as well as encouragement and empowerment for those who are suffering from these issues to aid them to seek the treatment that they need.

Biography

Jennifer L Fee is a Psychologist with over 25 years of training and experience helping people with anxiety, panic and trauma recovery. As an EMDRIA approved Consultant, she helps other professionals gain certification in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR). She maintains a full-time private practice and works as a half-time Assistant Professor in the Graduate Psychology Program at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, California. As an International speaker, she aims to break the stigma surrounding mental health disorders, educate the public regarding trauma and its treatment and inspire hope among those who are suffering.

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