

# EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ITS TREATMENT WITH THE EMDR PROTOCOL

2nd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ADOLESCENT MEDICINE & CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

NEW INSIGHT ON ADVANCE RESEARCH AND DECIPHERING BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES IN CHILD  
DEVELOPMENT

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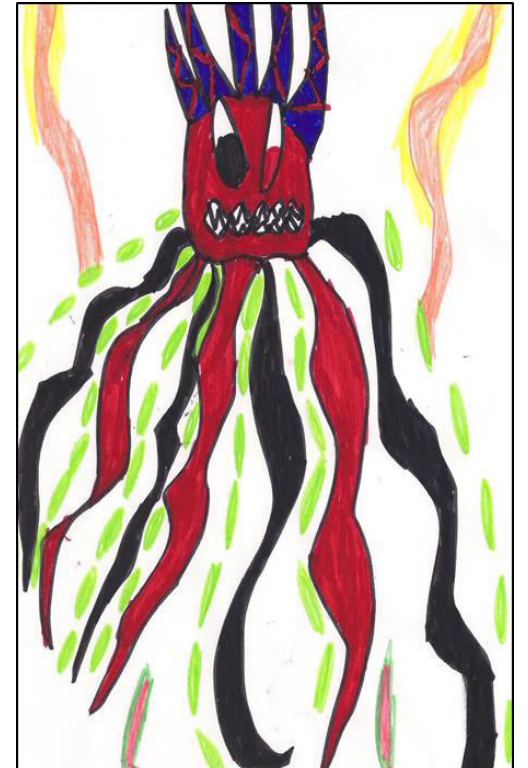
**EMDR EUROPE**

# Introduction

- ▶ Researches show that **exposure to a traumatic event causes alterations in the neurobiological and psychological functioning**, which can determine effects on the evolution of the person
- ▶ The early loss of a key family member can be expressed through a **mixture of dissociative symptoms, avoidance, hyper-arousal, outlining a developmental trauma disorder** (Van der Kolk, 2005)
- ▶ ***EMDR is an essential immediate psychotherapeutic intervention, in cases of minors who face a death in the family, because it accesses and reprocesses all the elements of the traumatic memory***
- ▶ *Domestic violence impacts irreparably on a child's growth. The presentation of a single case treated with EMDR aims to observe the impairment of cognitive functions and social aspects of an eight years old child, whose mum was murdered at the hands of her former companion. As a result of the intervention with the EMDR protocol, the child shows the effects of cognitive restructuring and re-acquisition of confidence in himself and in others.*

# Single case

- ▶ Luigi eight years old. His parents are divorced and live in different regions for work.
- ▶ His mother starts a relationship with a new partner, and has two children. She subsequently separates from this man and moves in with another man and the three kids.
- ▶ The day of the traumatic event Luigi and his mother were going to school to pick up the report card.
- ▶ Luigi takes the stairs. When the elevator gets to the ground floor, Luigi hears his mother screaming: 'Escape!'
- ▶ Luigi runs home from his siblings and his nanny. His mother dies.
- ▶ Her former partner, unable to bear the woman's decision, hit her to death with a rolling pin, straight out of the elevator.
- ▶ Luigi will no longer see his mother. From that day on Luigi refused to take the elevator.
- ▶ Luigi will have to move out with his siblings to his maternal grandparents', to another house and another school in another region.
- ▶ Luigi's father will move to his child's new city to be closer to him.



# Method – Treatment Pathway

- ▶ **Treatment with EMDR started a week after the murder,**
- ▶ it was integrated with CBT and psychoeducational interventions.
  
- ▶ Initially the **frequency** of the session was once a week, two months later it was every two weeks. Fourteen months after the traumatic event, the therapy finished and the follow up started.
- ▶ The **setting** was defined by the presence of Luigi's father at the beginning and at the end of each session.

# Method - Assessment

Assessment at the beginning:

- ▶ Test administrated to his **father** : Child Behavior Questionnaire 6-18 years (CBCL).
- ▶ Tests administrated to the **child** aimed to investigate:
  - ▶ cognitive areas: Raven's Colored Matrices (CPM-47),
  - ▶ emotional areas:
    - ▶ Rating Scale of Depressive States (SVSD),
    - ▶ Children Depression Inventory (CDI),
    - ▶ Self Administrated Psychiatric Scales for Children and Adolescents (SAFA),
    - ▶ Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC).
  - ▶ dissociative areas, regarding the impact of trauma:
    - ▶ Child Revised impact of Event Scale (CRIES-13),
    - ▶ Adolescent Dissociative Experience Scale (A-DES 1.0).

# Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

## EMDR - [www.emdr.org.uk](http://www.emdr.org.uk)

- ▶ EMDR is an evidence based therapeutic procedure that was originated and developed by **Dr. Francine Shapiro in the United States in 1987.**
- ▶ EMDR was originally designed to treat traumatic or "dysfunctional" memories and experiences and their psychological consequences, and the procedure has mainly been used in the **treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.**
- ▶ However, EMDR has been increasingly used over the years to treat grief, phobias, anxiety and panic disorders, pain, sexual dysfunction, and a wide range of experientially based disorders.
- ▶ One unusual element in EMDR is **bilateral stimulation usually in the form of eye movements, but also sometimes in the form of bilateral auditory or tactile stimulation.** A number of replicated research trials have demonstrated that eye movements reduce the vividness of emotional and traumatic imagery. It is believed that the eye movements induced in EMDR mirror the natural eye movement process that occurs in the REM (Rapid Eye Movement) phase of sleep during which information is processed naturally.

# EMDR - 8 Phases

- ▶ Phase 1: **History and treatment planning**
- ▶ Phase 2: **Preparation**
- ▶ Phase 3: **Assessment**
  - ▶ a specific scene or picture,
  - ▶ a negative cognition,
  - ▶ a positive cognition,
  - ▶ the Validity of Cognition (VOC) scale of 1-7,
  - ▶ the Subjective Units of Disturbance (SUD) scale of 0-10
- ▶ Phase 4: **Desensitization**
- ▶ Phase 5: **Installation**
- ▶ Phase 6: **Body Scan**
- ▶ Phase 7: **Closure**

# EMDR - processing the trauma

- ▶ In EMDR, the therapist will always carry out first a careful psychological assessment of *whether EMDR would be suitable for the problem (s) presented*, and will elicit a memory representing the problem.
- ▶ The client will be asked for a picture that represents the memory, a negative belief that they have about themselves in relation to the memory, and to notice associated physical sensations.
- ▶ Thereafter, a number of sets of eye movements or other bilateral stimulation are commenced, and after each set of eye movements the therapist will ask the client what they noticed.
- ▶ **Typically, the images, emotions, and sensations experienced change through this process.**
- ▶ At some point these changes become more positive and adaptive as the client reprocesses old dysfunctional information and connects with presently held adaptive and functional information.
- ▶ The **aim** is always to enable the client to recollect the original traumatic material without disturbance and to have new and more adaptive beliefs about themselves in relation to the experience.

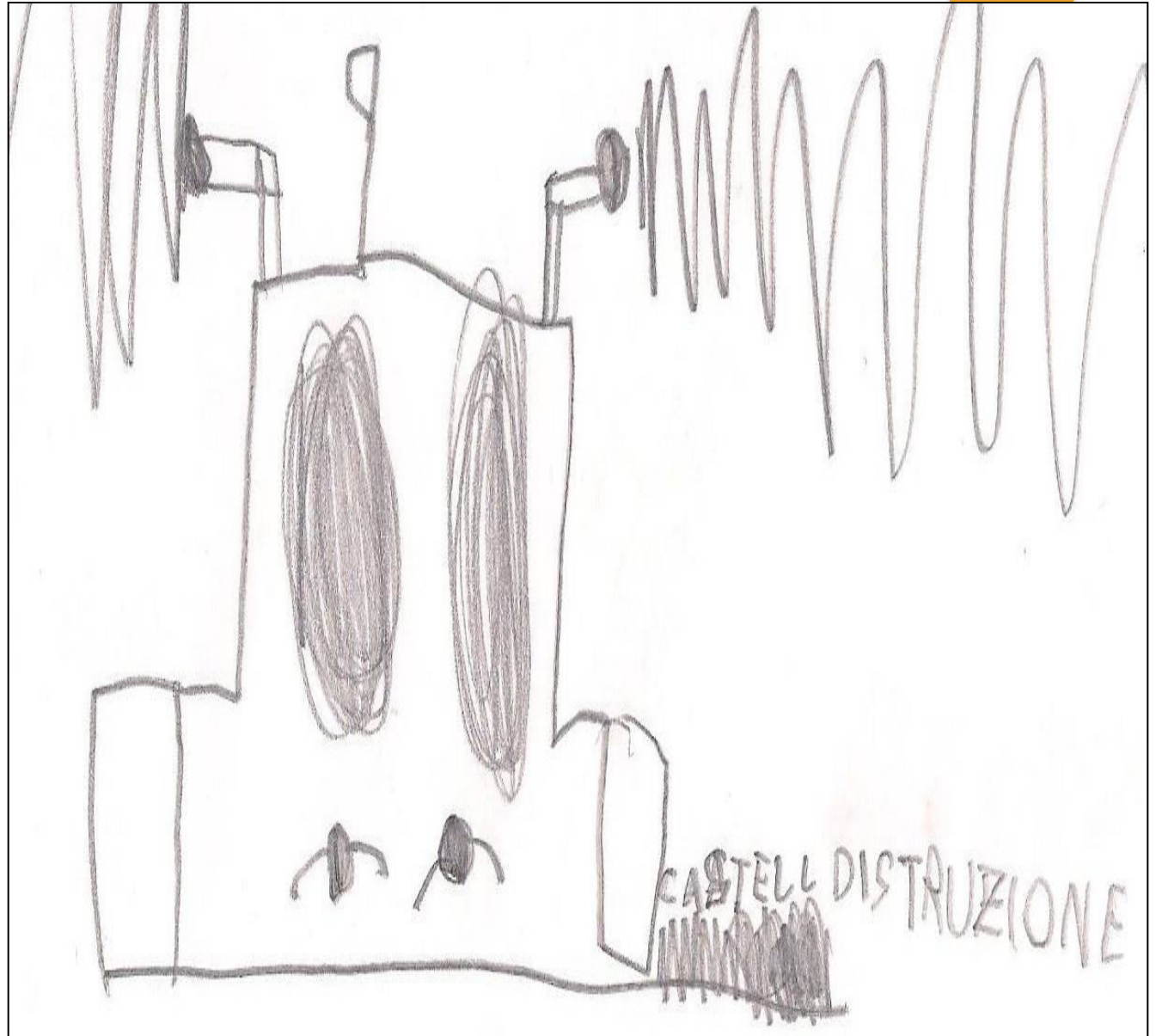


# SAFE PLACE

At the beginning:

**CASTLE DESTRUCTION**  
with many weapons to  
defend himself

“Safe place” may be thought of as an emotional sanctuary where a person can internally go to recover stability when feeling stressed.



## Treatment Plan

### 1st TARGET

The first target identified is the memory of the day of the murder, when Luigi goes downstairs.

We focus on his mother's screaming "ESCAPE":

**NC:** I am a coward, I had to help my mother, now she is gone

**PC:** I have been obedient, my mother would be proud of me, otherwise I could have died too. (**VOC 1**)

**Emotion:** Guilt (SUD 9 stomach), Anger (SUD 8 shoulders), Sadness (SUD 9 right leg), Fear (SUD 8 hands)



Luigi reprocesses the first target.

A gradual recovery of physical sensations, dissociated and fragmented at the beginning of the treatment, is observed.

Thus, leading to the integration of the body's image and of the perception, both in motion during the traumatic event.

Everything in 8 sessions, reaching NC with VOC 7 and SUD 0, feeling of joy located in the chest.

## Subjective Units of Disturbance (SUD)

**HEAD -**  
**Embarrassment/Shame 60/100**

**FACE - Sadness**  
**80/100**

**CHEST - Joy**  
**100/100**

**STOMACH -**  
**Serenity 99/100**

**HAND - Anger**  
**70/100**



# Treatment Plan – other trauma ‘t’

## PAST

running up the stairs to reach the apartment and protect himself

the waiting for the ambulance, next to his younger siblings

the arrival of his father

the funeral

## PRESENT

a visit to the cemetery

transfer to another city

the new life with his maternal grandparents

## FUTURE

the start of a new school and a new sport

anger towards the murdered mother

the idea of being a person able to handle this grief



# TARGET

## Elevator Phobia

Before I was afraid of the elevator to the point of not taking it

After Mara's teachings I am not afraid of taking the elevator



# Assessment outcome Luigi's Father

The answers given by Luigi's father to the Test Child Behavior Questionnaire 6-18 years (CBCL) show Luigi's:

- ▶ Difficulty to internalize,
- ▶ Symptoms of anxiety and somatization,
- ▶ Difficulty to manage affective relationships,
- ▶ Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- ▶ Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

# Assessment Outcome Luigi (1st-6th-12th month)

TEST	OUTCOME
Raven's Colored Matrices (CPM-47) <small>(cognitive area)</small>	T 29/36, 50° percentile, good cognitive function (1month)
Rating Scale of Depressive States (SVSD) <small>(emotional area)</small>	No significant values: depression area, social area, body image area (6month)
Children Depression Inventory (CDI)	No depression symptoms (6month)
Self Administrated Psychiatric Scales for Children and Adolescents (SAFA)	Significant scale 'separation anxiety' (6month)
Test of Understanding Emotions (TEC)	T 90° percentile, good skill 'emotion recognition'
Child Revised impact of Event Scale (CRIES-13) <small>(dissociative area)</small>	T 21 (1month) – T 18 (6month)
Adolescent dissociative Experience Scale (A-DES 1.0)	T 85 (1 month) – T 67 (6 month)

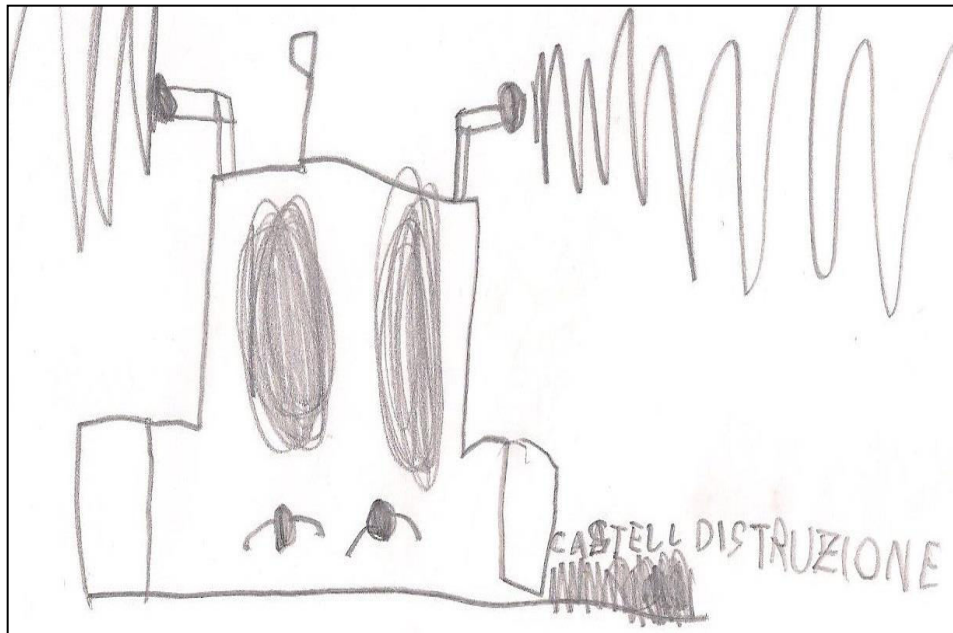
# Conclusion

- ▶ Qualitative clinical observations about Luigi:
  - ▶ He settled in the new family, school, environment, sport
  - ▶ He tells about new friends and good votes in school
  - ▶ He manages to narrate the trauma and to sense the danger that he ran that day.
  - ▶ He asked to overcome the elevator phobia, after 8 months. Today he reaches his grandparents' house (6th floor) he no longer takes the stairs !
  - ▶ Weekly he goes to the cemetery, where he visits his mother. He is able to talk about his nostalgia and the lack of its pampering.
- ▶ His father is more serene, seeing Luigi succeed in daily activities.
- ▶ **The psychotherapeutic treatment centered on the use of EMDR protocol has avoided a block in the evolution path and effectively outlined the strengthening of individual and social skills useful to work through the trauma and to cope with the growth tests .**



# Safe Place

CASTLE DESTRUCTION



IN THE CAR WITH DAD

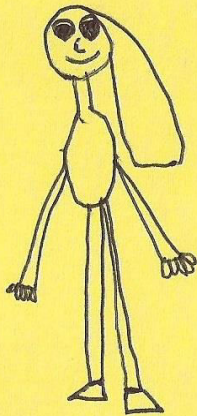


# Representation of his mother

QUESTO È: MAMMA

*Usa questo spazio per disegnare la persona che non c'è più  
o per incollare una sua foto.*

ERA IMPORTANTE PER ME PERCHÉ ...



During the therapy, **the drawing of his mum changes:**

- Luigi uses all the space in the paper
- The image is more proportionate and it seems less feeble than the beginning
- There is the use of the colour at the end
- He keeps the big eyes and the smile



# Body - Evolution of Self Representation



The monster that Luigi drew to represent himself changes in a body that:

- respects the structure of the human shape,
- is integrated in all the parts,
- is stable on the floor.
- The face smiles, the arms are open
- The use of harmonic colours shows a more balanced way of thinking about himself





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“

*Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything  
That's where the light comes in*  
LEONARD COHEN, *Anthem*, 1992

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**THANK YOU FOR**



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