

Crowe Associates Ltd

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Butterfly Hug-a self-directed EMDR method

Overview



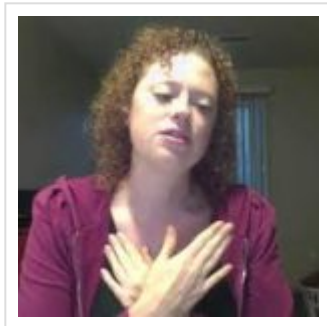
When I was in training as a therapist, I came across an approach called " EMDR" (short for eye movement desensitization and reprocessing) which is a fairly new, non-traditional type of psychotherapy. It has been growing in popularity, particularly for treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Whilst it is used a lot in dealing with PTSD, it can also be used in day to day situations to calm and ground ourselves and lower our stress levels and come back to the present moment. I am from a pragmatic school of approach that if something has been extensively researched and proven effective and works, and its relatively straightforward to do, then it's a good thing!

The Butterfly Hug is accomplished by an individual wrap their arms around themselves, so that each hand touches the opposite upper arm or shoulder. They then move their hands like the wings of a butterfly, to tap their arms/shoulders in an alternating rhythm. (as an alternative, the person might just tap their knees.)

The “Butterfly Hug”, or “Hug of self love” originated with Lucy Artigas, while working in Acapulco with survivors of hurricane Paulina in 1997. Sometimes this approach is taught in the context of therapy, but like other techniques such as [anchoring in NLP](#) it can be done by individuals as a self soothing approach when under stress.

The approach

- Cross your arms over your chest, so that the tip of the middle finger from each hand is placed below the collarbone. Hand and fingers should be as vertical as possible, so that the fingers point towards the neck and not towards the arms
- Your eyes can be closed, or partially closed
- You alternate the movement of your hands, like the flapping wings of a butterfly; let your hands move freely



Aim to breathe slowly and deeply (abdominal breathing) while you observe what is going on through your mind and body such as thoughts, images, sounds, smells, feelings without changing, pushing your thoughts away or judging

- You can pretend as though what you are observing is like clouds passing by
- Stop when you feel in your body that it has had enough and lower your hands to your thighs
- Some approaches encourage you to create/”install” a safe place; a place where you feel safe or calm and think about what images, colours, sounds you see in the safe place
- Whilst it isn’t prescriptive about the length of time, this can be done anywhere anytime, and might last just 3-4 minutes, so not a long exercise

Resources

A short video on the practice: <http://www.debbieaugenthaler.com/butterfly-hug-simple-technique-helping-anxiety/>

A deeper overview on the context and the practice: [THE-BUTTERFLY-HUG-PROTOCOL](#)