

## Ted Olejnik, LICSW, LADC-1 Seeing Outstanding Results Among Soldiers

After 24 years in the Air Force, Theodore Olejnik, or Ted as he likes to be called, retired from the military and embarked on a new career in social work. The first time Ted heard about EMDR therapy was on a TV show - maybe 60 Minutes, he's not sure anymore - but the idea stuck with him. Some time later Ted saw that

Francine Shapiro was speaking just 150 miles from his home (Ted was living in Texas at the time, so 150 miles seemed fairly close) and he went to see her. He was intrigued with what he heard, but at that point EMDR therapy did not become part of Ted's practice.

"When I went to work in Vilseck, Germany, in 2003, I was seeing lots of soldiers rotating through from Afghanistan and Iraq," Ted explained. "Many were suffering from some form or degree of PTSD. We had them in Germany for a short period before they were on their way back to Iraq or Afghanistan. Because these soldiers were constantly circling through, traditional psychotherapies were simply not going to work."

Ted continued, "It was at that point that I remembered my experience with EMDR therapy and asked the Army to send me to England for training. I came back and started using it. The results were immediately effective. At that time however, I was the only person working for the Army in Germany that was doing any EMDR work.

"As word spread about the success of EMDR therapy, I started getting people referred in from all over Europe. Now remember, I only had Level 1 training and no supervision. But my results were good enough to get the attention of my superiors. A Colonel came to observe EMDR therapy in action. He was so impressed he ordered forty more therapists to be trained. I had my training in March, and by December the Colonel



arranged with Trauma Recovery/HAP to train forty additional therapists. That's pretty impressive, if you ask me."

The Army was looking for new, and more effective, treatments for PTSD. Most often soldiers have very complex PTSD. It's not 'simply' combat, but can be early childhood traumas that they carry with them into battle, too.

Ted explained, "When I came back to the States I went to work for the Veteran's Administration. Once again, I was the only therapist using EMDR. And once again my results got positive attention leading to five additional therapists being trained." Ted also sponsored his niece, Justyna who is a psychologist in Poland, to become an EMDR therapist. She came to the U.S. to be trained through HAP and eventually to become the first Certified EMDR therapist by EMDRIA in Poland. Her success treating patients with EMDR has spread throughout Poland like wildfire. This eventually led to the creation of EMDR Poland and over the last five years or so an additional 60 therapists have been trained through HAP Europe.

Since Poland has sent thousands of soldiers to assist the U.S. A. fighting the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, Ted was invited to present a training on treating combat veterans in Warsaw, Poland. Several of the attendees were from the Polish military and government mental health agencies. The head of the Polish government military mental health was so impressed with the EMDR treatment of soldiers with PTSD he stated to Ted he would find funding to train military mental health providers.

Trauma Recovery/HAP was so impressed with Ted's results that he was approached to become a facilitator or EMDR trainer. "I was trained in a rigorous six-stage training program. Becoming a trainer has really solidified my skills and deepened my knowledge base. But it's also made me want to read and understand even more. It's been a very good thing for me and for my practice," Ted said.

"Along with my own practice, I volunteer to do trainings for Trauma Recovery/HAP. Doing five or six trainings a year means a lot of time away from home and my work with patients, but I believe so strongly in the work and



the results I see with EMDR therapy, that I'm happy and proud to be involved.

"I recall how skeptical I was the first time I heard about EMDR therapy. And I get a lot of therapists who show up for training with a healthy dose of skepticism. But after three days of training and three afternoons of practicums, people leave impressed with the power and effectiveness of EMDR therapies.

"I expect to do eight separate trainings next year. Since I'm mostly retired, I have the time to do this. But I have to say, based on the way my fellow mental health professionals react to the training program, it's very rewarding work. I am constantly approached by former students who are astonished by the results they are seeing. And I'm very passionate about passing on the knowledge. Hopefully, some of the therapists I train, will volunteer to become trainers themselves," Ted said.

All of us at Trauma Recovery/HAP are grateful for the incredible amount of volunteer work Ted does. He is tireless in his teaching and passionate about relieving suffering around the world.