



Community Collaboration Bringing EMDR Therapy Training to Charleston

Shortly after mental health consultant Sarah Cherry arrived in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015, she searched for ways to connect with her new community personally and professionally. As a combat trauma-trained clinician, and wife of an active duty officer, she had many trauma treatment options in her therapy toolbox, including Prolonged Exposure Therapy, Cognitive Progressing Therapy and Dialectical Behavior Therapy. Having heard about the success stories with EMDR therapy treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), she wanted to be trained and meet fellow clinicians in the process.

Sarah researched the most efficient and evidence-based EMDR training courses. She became familiar with Trauma Recovery, EMDR Humanitarian Assistance Programs (HAP) after meeting Roxann Hassett who is a volunteer for the organization. While at the time, she never imagined planning and coordinating the execution of an EMDR Basic Training, Sarah quickly assumed leadership responsibility to bring EMDR skills to this underserved community.

Collaborating with Hassett, Sarah began her planning by looking for an affordable venue to host the event. Through Hassett's friend, Austin O'Malley, she discovered Holy Spirit Lutheran Church. The pastor was happy to

help expedite the training, and set the date a year in advance. However, when he unexpectedly relocated, Cherry thought she had fallen back to square one in search of an agency sponsor. Fortunately, when she contacted new Holy Spirit president Jenny McCullough, she was pleasantly surprised to learn that Jenny's husband is a combat veteran so they understood the need for EMDR therapy, and were eager to help launch the training by donating the church space. The McCullough's proved to be priceless partners by pitching in on every aspect of executing the training, from hands-on electrical and AV fixes, to logistics.

The May 3rd training at Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Charleston was attended by 40 clinicians. The trainers and facilitators expertise, currency with the latest research, focused effort and care to reach everyone in the session impressed Sarah and her colleagues. The trainers' expert delivery made the material accessible and understandable start to finish, enabling everyone to engage and participate fully. Attendee satisfaction was high with many saying they got much more than EMDR therapy tools out of the sessions.

Sarah feels she obtained EMDR therapy skills from the training, and other equally valuable benefits. The training experience provided her with a local professional network of colleagues whose abilities she knows and trusts with referrals. In addition, the enthusiasm and collaboration continues through recurring EMDR therapy group consultation, where the newly trained group gathers to share experiences and brainstorm. All anticipate participating in the Part 2 training in mid-November. One demonstration of the groups' sense of identity and bonds was their joint decision to give thank you gifts and handwritten thank you notes to the Trauma Recovery/HAP training team.

Cherry reports that while at first she felt ill-equipped to plan and execute organizing a training, she credits her success to being open and saying YES to the community. When she clearly communicated what she needed, and where and when to help, the community answered YES. All she had to do was ask.