

## Introducing... Donald deGraffenried, LCSW



### 'EMDR and Paying It Forward'

Many years ago as a clinician working in rural New Hampshire I would often find myself frustrated by the lack of

progress that my clients were making in their therapy. While they were responsive to the support, case management and working on Treatment Plan goals, they were often deeply plagued by unresolved trauma, anxiety, limited coping abilities and difficulty in evaluating their progress and having hope for the future. They often presented as recipients of service as opposed to active collaborators in a process of meaningful change and growth.

A colleague suggested that I get EMDR training and soon I found myself in a Part I Training in Boscawen, New Hampshire. I was inspired by the training and also felt somewhat in awe of all the possibilities with EMDR therapy. At that time I worked for FamilyStrength, a state wide agency that provided home-based treatment services within a strength based and solution oriented model.

I began to work with a woman who 10 years earlier had been in a serious car accident. She was driving on a rural New Hampshire road and was suddenly struck head on by a drunk driver. Angela was seriously injured and spent six months in rehab after the accident. After the accident she was too traumatized to drive a car and this made it very difficult for her to find and sustain employment in her rural community.

We worked on history, preparation and then picked a target to start with – the accident. To my delight as we sat at her kitchen table, as she moved into the

desensitization phase, she began to experience significant relief. The painful image of the head on collision faded, she no longer heard the braking of the glass or smelled the tires as they locked up on the pavement.

At the beginning of the fourth desensitization session she told me “I have good news and bad news to share”. She then joyfully stated: “I am driving the car”. She had not driven for ten years and was thrilled by her accomplishment. I shared in her excitement and explored how this would help her with finding employment. Finally I remembered that she had bad news to share and I asked her to tell me about it. Angela smiled, looked around the kitchen and softly said;

**“ I don’t have a driver’s license! ”**

This was a transformational experience for me and I was stunned by the rapid change for the client and how quickly she was able to move past her trauma and regain her driving skills and develop successful coping tools. As a new EMDR clinician I was deeply moved and felt a personal responsibility to “pay it forward” so that other clients in community mental health and agency settings could receive this life changing and deeply healing therapy.

I went on to become EMDRIA Certified in EMDR, an EMDRIA Approved Consultant, an Approved Facilitator and now a Trauma Recovery EMDR HAP Part I and Part II Trainer. EMDR therapy continues to impress me with its broad application, healing power and the client transformations continuously inspire me and actively charge my efforts to “pay it forward” and help to embed EMDR therapy in non-profit settings.

*By Donald deGraffenried, LCSW*