



KETAMINE ASSISTED
EMDR THERAPY™
INSTITUTE

What is Ketamine Assisted EMDR Therapy™?

Ketamine Assisted EMDR Therapy™ (KA-EMDR) is an innovative trauma treatment that blends two powerful tools—Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy and low-dose sublingual ketamine—to help clients safely and effectively process traumatic memories and adverse life experiences that are contributing to present day distress and challenges. Ketamine Assisted EMDR Therapy™ was developed in 2024 by Danielle Ciccone and Michele Topel, experts in both EMDR therapy and Ketamine Assisted Psychotherapy, and co-founders of Ketamine Assisted EMDR Therapy™ Institute.

How It Works

This therapy uses low-dose (psycholytic) ketamine, which clients self-administer with direction from a licensed medical provider. The dose is low enough to keep clients alert and engaged—unlike psychedelic or dissociative doses where people often “go inward” and can’t actively participate in therapy. Instead, the goal is to enhance emotional openness, reduce anxiety, and expand the window of tolerance, making it easier to work through difficult material in session.

Ketamine is not provided or administered by the therapist. Collaboration with a prescribing medical professional is required and there will be additional costs associated with the medical evaluation and ketamine prescription.

Why Combine Ketamine with EMDR?

EMDR therapy supports the brain’s ability to reprocess traumatic or upsetting memories that may be “stuck” or unintegrated, and which can contribute to symptoms such as anxiety, hypervigilance, emotional numbness, avoidance behaviors, emotional dysregulation, or a negative self-concept. This process is believed to work by activating the brain’s natural information processing system, allowing traumatic memories to be integrated into broader, more adaptive memory networks.

Ketamine adds another layer of support. There is significant scientific evidence that ketamine enhances a brain process called memory reconsolidation—a natural mechanism that allows emotional memories to be revised and updated with new information. When combined with EMDR, ketamine may create a unique window of opportunity where the brain becomes especially open to positive change, allowing old fear-based or negative patterns to be transformed. Ketamine has also been shown to help clients feel more relaxed and more emotionally open.

What the Research Says

Studies have shown that ketamine:

- Disrupts the reconsolidation of fear-based memories, weakening their emotional impact.
- Enhances synaptic connectivity and neuroplasticity, helping the brain form new, healthier patterns.
- Reduces activity in the Default Mode Network (DMN)—the part of the brain involved in rumination and self-critical thinking—promoting a more mindful and open state of awareness.

A recent pilot research study (Topel & Ciccone) exploring the use of Ketamine Assisted EMDR Therapy™ found that clients reported noticeable reductions in PTSD symptoms after several reprocessing sessions. Participants described feeling safer, more emotionally connected, and more open to the healing process. Reported side effects were minimal. While these early findings are encouraging, more research is needed to confirm these results in larger and more diverse populations and in randomized controlled trials.

Why This Approach May Be Helpful for You

- You remain conscious and in control during sessions.
- Ketamine helps reduce fear and psychological defenses, making EMDR more accessible and effective.
- The process is designed to be gentle, time-efficient, and highly targeted to trauma symptom resolution.
- The psycholytic (low-dose) model is shorter and more cost-effective than full psychedelic treatment sessions.

In short, Ketamine Assisted EMDR Therapy™ is a science-informed, trauma-sensitive approach that can support deep healing by enhancing the brain's ability to update and release painful memories—without requiring a psychedelic experience.

Important Disclaimers

- **Ketamine Assisted EMDR Therapy™ is a novel approach that is not appropriate for everyone.** A thorough medical and psychological screening is required to determine if this treatment is safe and appropriate for you.

- **Ketamine must be prescribed by a licensed medical professional and taken as directed**, with appropriate medical oversight throughout the course of treatment.
- **Therapists do not administer or supply the medication.**
- **This therapy is still considered an emerging treatment.** While early results are promising, larger clinical studies are needed to fully establish its long-term efficacy and safety.
- **Ketamine has potential side effects and risks.** Although low-dose ketamine is generally well-tolerated, possible side effects include nausea, headache, dizziness, blurred vision, mild dissociation, increased emotional sensitivity, increased blood pressure, and increased heart rate. These are typically short-lived and manageable in a controlled setting.
- **This therapy does not guarantee symptom relief.** As with all treatments, individual results may vary, and symptom reduction depends on multiple factors including trauma history, readiness for reprocessing, and engagement in the therapy process.

The Ketamine Assisted EMDR Therapy™ Institute does not provide medical services, does not prescribe or administer ketamine, and assumes no liability for individual clinical outcomes or for the actions of independent providers utilizing this therapeutic approach. Clients are responsible for discussing risks, benefits, and appropriateness of treatment with their healthcare team. Please speak with your therapist and prescribing medical provider about whether this treatment is a good fit for your needs, and to understand all the risks, benefits, and alternatives.