



### **A report of Sheri Oz**

Sharing her EMDR HAP work with municipal employees in the north.

It is now 24 hours after the declaration of a ceasefire and I slept through most of those hours – my couch is back against the wall and the cushions that were on the floor behind it to serve as my "bunker" are back in place.

My head has cleared, my cold is gone, and a sore that suddenly appeared a few days ago has healed. I can now tell you about the work I did with municipal employees in Nahariya and Maalot.

Most of the people I spoke with were simply exhausted from long hours and from the strain of fear and worry. Most were not showing signs of anxiety beyond what would be expected at a time of war. This war touched everyone in a very unique personal place – I think one of the benefits people got from talking with a professional at this time, with or without the need to use EMD to help with traumatic stress was the chance to take a step back even while inside the experience and see what they were learning from it – about themselves and/or about others.

For those who were suffering anxiety, the war also touched in unique places: for one it reignited his own soldiering experiences and caused anger that at his age he is still having to experience war; for another the grief of having lost a loved one to a missile was confounded with fear for her own safety; someone else saw the systemic problems of his place of work highlighted by the stresses of the crisis and was angered by what he saw; another woman saw her own problems with defining boundaries draining her energies; others witnessed deaths and property damage as missiles landed in their presence and many experienced a shattering of a worldview.

The interventions for those who suffering from more than "just" exhaustion included: the two-hand interweave to compare emotional states, for example, and clarify the more problematic one or organize thoughts, Tom Cloyd's safe-place breathing exercise (which I love, by the way), the butterfly hug and sometimes just psychoeducation about physiological

responses to trauma and normalization of their reactions.  
For many this was sufficient.

Given that we were working in a situation where the danger had not passed, as others have mentioned, and because with municipal employees the time at our disposal for sessions was very limited (they were all in a rush to get back to work, or to do something significant before the next siren would sound), and because these were highly motivated people with strong resources (after all, these were the minority of city employees who remained in the north), it was sufficient to bring them to the point where they were aware of some inner conflict touched by the war situation, whether that was a current conflict or one remaining unresolved from the past – it seemed this "aha" experience was a relief for many that gave them deeper understanding of their experience.

My personal "aha" experience is seeing the incredible difference between my state of mind today versus my state of mind during the war and the professional use I will make of my awareness of this amazing phenomenon. I want to thank Fran Yoeli, HAP, Mazal Menachem and the professionals at Shefi in Nahariya and Maalot who gave me the opportunity to work and learn during this crisis.

Sheri Oz