

## **Accelerated Resolution Therapy**

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## Accelerated Resolution Therapy

Accelerated resolution therapy (ART) is relatively new psychotherapy with the potential to offer a rapid and effective treatment for many psychiatric symptoms. ART involves a combination of techniques that are used in many other traditional psychotherapies. ART is a primarily imaginative therapy that depends upon rewriting distressing events and metaphors as one of its essential therapeutic elements. ART works to reprogram the way in which the individual remembers a distressing memory and image and how it is stored in their brain so that the individual does not have strong physical and emotional reactions. ART uses a technique through the use of rapid eye movements comparable to the eye movements that occur when a person dreams. Techniques similar to the ones used in other types of therapies, ART's particular and guided approach can provide quick recovery from reactions and symptoms that may have been within the individual for years. As stated in The Rosenzweig Center for Rapid Recovery (2022), ART combines different respected, sound treatment practices with safe and effective methods that have had scientific research studies conducted by the University of South Florida.

In 2008, Laney Rosenzweig, LMFT developed ART. As a mental health clinician, Ms. Rosenzweig was trained in multiple treatment modalities, including EMDR. The Rosenzweig Center for Rapid Recovery (2022) states that Rosenzweig appreciated the therapeutic value of eye movements but also recognized the need to modify how they are used and integrated with other techniques. The beginning of ART involved combining elements from different therapies to be more effective. Rosenzweig joined eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) with Gestalt techniques, solution-focused emphasis, and metaphors to create ART. She made treatment protocols that are directive, standardized, and easy to apply to different conditions (The Rosenzweig Center for Rapid Recovery, 2022).

According to The Rosenzweig Center for Rapid Recovery (2022), Rosenzweig initially trained clinicians in Connecticut and then expanded training to Florida after researchers at the University of South Florida began conducting studies on the therapy in 2011. Rosenzweig and her team now train providers in national and international locations. ART has been used to treat patients in multiple countries, including the USA, Italy, Scotland, Korea, Kuwait, and Canada (The Rosenzweig Center for Rapid Recovery, 2022). ART was approved by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in November 2015 (Good Therapy, 2018). SAMHSA approved ART as an evidence-based treatment for trauma-related disorders, depression, and personal resilience (Good Therapy, 2018). Also, in 2015 ART was recognized as an evidence-based practice by the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP) (Good Therapy, 2018).

Accelerated Resolution Therapy is a form of psychotherapy that is built from existing evidence-based therapies but has shown to achieve benefits much more rapidly. Benefits can be seen usually within one to five sessions. Clients with anxiety, depression, substance abuse, sexual abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, panic attacks, and many additional physical and mental conditions can experience benefits starting with the individual's first session (Howe et al., 2018). ART is not hypnosis (Howe et al., 2018).

The therapy comprises instructions and procedures, which the provider guides the patient through the therapeutic process without getting extensively involved in the patient's psychic work. The therapist instructs the patient to visualize a distressing event or representative metaphor and helps them process their associated somatic feelings. The patient does not need to provide narration during the ART process, which can help some patients experience greater control and safety in other trauma-focused therapies. The patient is then instructed to rewrite the

memory they are visualizing, leaving their declarative memory unchanged. This technique of "image rescripting" helps to eliminate resistant memory fragments. Following the ART process can provide the patient with significant psychological relief. Due to the constant pace of the ART protocol, patients do not have to experience troubling memories for an extended period. The patient may also feel a sense of closure at the end of each session so that the patient does not leave feeling vulnerable, with unprocessed emotions or issues lingering between sessions.

The ART technique also contributes to high provider satisfaction rates due to its therapeutic effectiveness and ability to reduce compassion fatigue (Good Therapy, 2018). It is emotionally easier than other therapies for the patient and the therapist because there is limited exposure to distressful memories. According to Good Therapy (2018), providers feel more confident managing their patients' suicidal urges, flooding emotions, and abreactions. Additionally, Good Therapy (2018) reported that patients report feeling empowered, relieved, more capable of managing stress, and better able to experience positive feelings.

A typical ART session begins with the therapist informing the patient that they are in control of the session and what happens. Additionally, the therapist may ask the client to do a full-body scan to understand their physical status. Then the therapist might ask the patient to recall a distressing memory or image in their mind. Next, the therapist may inform the patient to visualize the whole event and not worry about any memory gap. This part of the therapy can last anywhere from 30 seconds to 10 minutes (Clarke, 2021). Rapid eye movements are used during this stage for two things, one to visualize the event and also to help the patient with any emotional or physical reactions that might occur during this process (Good Therapy, 2018).

As the patient's emotional and physical stressors emerge, the therapist can use desensitization to reduce the impact of the memories. Sometimes the therapist might pause the visualization and

ask the client to do a body scan, which can help slow the client's stress response (Good Therapy, 2018). Once the client is calm, the therapist will continue and possibly repeat the process. The therapist can also alternate between the visualizing process and body awareness.

When the client is doing the visualization process, the therapist might encourage the client to think of solutions for the memories they are visualizing (Clarke, 2021). This process is called voluntary image replacement and occurs during rapid eye movement, using metaphors and gestalt techniques. The rescripting process is essential to the ART session and treatment effectiveness. According to Good Therapy (2018) research, the stressing memory will become less intrusive when trauma-related memories are put with positive experiences.

ART accomplishes the basic tasks common to all therapies and includes other advantages that can make patients more successful. ART offers a benefit to the patient by relieving symptoms in a few sessions. The shorter treatment plan can be more convenient and cost-effective, allowing the therapist to see more clients over time. ART does not have to be on a schedule; it is performed during each session with closure at each session, so if a client misses an appointment or does not return, the client can still experience relief from some of their symptoms. ART does not require the client to complete homework outside of the office visit. Additionally, ART can be performed by a trained therapist, but the client does not have to have the same therapist for each ART session. While a client is experiencing ART, they do not have to provide detailed information about the traumatic experience or distressful memory the client is working through.

Even with the information about ART, it is still an under-recognized and understudied therapy within the mental health community. There are a limited number of clinical trials using ART.

Over the years, there has been advancement in treating mental health along with new diagnoses or a more in-depth understanding of diagnoses. ART is a more recent treatment combining different parts of multiple therapies. Using ART can be beneficial in treating various diagnoses and numerous other patients. A patient receiving ART can benefit from 1-5 sessions with closure at the end of each session. Some patients might be unable to see their therapist for an extended period, such as in the military. Then some patients cannot disclose information, such as law enforcement or a patient who has witnessed a crime but does not want to share about the crime (Howe et al., 2018). ART has multiple benefits with not narrating or describing the distressing event; one advantage would be for the therapist not to have to experience the client going through the painful event. Another would be the client not having to re-experience the distressing event when discussing the event.

ART is an interesting technique that I have not personally experienced, but I know multiple people who have been patients and did ART with their therapist. I previously worked with women in a recovery program for drugs and alcohol. While the women were in the recovery program, one of the therapists provided ART for the clients who wished to participate. Some of the women described a freeing relief after a couple of sessions. Additionally, the women would be exhausted after the session, but after a nap, they would comment how much they would like doing ART.

## References

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