

## **Biography / CV**

### **Andrea POLI *Italy***

Psychologist, Psychotherapist and PhD

Clinical psychologist, Cognitive Psychotherapist and PhD in Neurobiology at Scuola Normale Superiore (Pisa). Cofounder of the "Centro Clinico Verdi" (CCV, Prato) and member of the clinical staff of the "Scuola Cognitiva di Firenze" (SCF). He has worked for years at the Institute of Neuroscience (IN) of the Italian National Research Council (CNR) in Pisa where the main focus of his research was the molecular bases of permanent fear memory extinction. Currently, he works in the field of trauma, with a main focus on domestic violence and investigating the role of trauma in obsessive-compulsive disorder. He is author/coauthor of more than 30 peer-reviewed articles published in international and national journals, communications and posters related to both clinical and basic research; he is the editor of the Italian translation of "The pocket guide to the polyvagal theory. The transformative power of feeling safe" and "Clinical applications of the polyvagal theory", both by Stephen W. Porges. He is an EMDR Practitioner, integrating EMDR in his research studies and in his clinical practice.

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### **Cristina MASTRONARDI *Italy***

Cristina Mastronardi is a Psychologist and Psychotherapist, working in the Center of Research and Studies in Psychotraumatology of Varese (Italy). EMDR Europe Accredited Consultant, has studied the connection of the role of trauma with bullying, cyberbullying and risks related to new technologies. In this field, she works with perpetrators and victims of bullying, she coordinates prevention projects in several schools and she is a presenter at many National and International conferences.

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## Abstract

### **BULLYING AND NEUROBIOLOGY: A KEY FOR EMDR**

Andrea POLI & Cristina MASTRONARDI

Bullying is one of the most common violence forms, defined as a form of instrumental aggression that is proactive, and not a response to aggressive behavior demonstrated by a victim. Three types of victimization have been described: physical bullying, verbal bullying, and relational bullying. New forms of bullying have emerged, one of the most prominent is cyberbullying, defined as repeatedly communicating aggressive messages through digital media intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others. Relatively recent research has linked bullying to the risk of substance, behavioral and new technologies addiction. As a complex phenomenon involving biological, psychological and social systems, understanding bullying requires an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, focusing on its possible neurobiological markers may help the therapists to better understand the emotional experiences and behaviors of their patients and guide them to adequately identify the targets for EMDR intervention.

1) Technology addiction can be conceptualized as a strategy to manage post-traumatic symptoms. Dopamine activates the sympathetic nervous system and is an acute solution to avoid the experience of dorsal vagal states.

2) Being bullied may be experienced egosyntonicly by the victims. The existence of early attachment traumas that promoted the inhibition of the sympathetic nervous system, in order to preserve attachment and social inclusion avoiding the fight, should be investigated.

3) Bullying can be conceptualized as a strategy to manage trauma-related symptoms, as well. Aggression intensely activates the sympathetic nervous system, and, when facing relationships, becomes an obligated strategy to reduce the probability to experience dorsal vagal states in bullies.

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