Not sure where you would place this article perhaps an opinion article as it contains more than allowed word count in letter to editor section.

Am writing to share a small part of my personal journey recovering from PTSD in the hope that someone in our community may be encouraged and reach out for the help they so deserve. I believe society as a whole has very little understanding of brain disorders in general and any information that is shared will hopefully bring more awareness and compassion to all of us.

I am a senior who was recently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress. Only through word of mouth was I able to receive the appropriate counsellor to help facilitate the method of recovery I needed. I am so thankful for her and can now say that all the trauma events that were taking over my life negatively have no power over my thoughts or physical health anymore.

The treatment I am referring to is called EMDR, short for Eye Movement Desensitization and Processing. Don’t let the title keep you from researching and obtaining treatment.  This treatment has a direct affect on the way the brain processes information, emulating a process that happens naturally when dreaming in your sleep. It helps the patient see the disturbing events in a new, calm way and the body no longer reacts with fear, tension, pain.

This type of treatment is not accepted by a lot of professionals in the mental health field, unfortunately, most likely due to ignorance of the process. The field of research began in 1987 with Dr. Francine Shapiro and is a scientific based approach that involves realigning the central nervous system. The specialist facilitating this treatment must first have a masters in Psychology and then trains intensively for 2 more years to be certified in this field. They are required to complete on going studies to keep their certification updated.

Brain scans show the difference at the cellular level when a patient is treated with EMDR.  I have a doctor who is open and positive about such treatment, thankfully, and understands its benefits. It may not be the total cure for post traumatic stress and even if you aren’t the 1 in 4 who are completely better after therapy, studies show that eighty percent of symptoms can be alleviated. Those are pretty good odds I think (and by the way, I am one of those 1 in four... totally better in just 8 sessions!)

These sessions take 1 hour each and no preparation before hand is required. The counsellor facilitates the session and using one of three types of methods activates both sides of the brain as the patient goes through the process. It is completely painless process leaving the patient relaxed after each session.

I have had issues since early adulthood due to physical abuse in childhood which makes it almost 40 years of suffering for me so I am thankful I have a whole, wonderful life now. My body is pain free and my mind is peaceful.

Did you know brain health issues such as anxiety, panic attacks, PTSD, depression, etc. affect people in all walks of life. It is part of every financial demographic of society, every age group, from children to seniors, male and female. It is an insidious condition still not fully appreciated and totally misunderstood not only by the general public but by family, friends and work colleagues.  I think this is partly because it isn’t always physically visible to see in someone and because sufferers are very good at hiding their issues. I was one who denied and was an expert at hiding my problems until the panic attacks made me realize I had run out of energy to keep up this false persona and became desperate for answers. Even though I had come a long way in trying to get better, my body was showing symptoms I could no longer ignore.

I do hope that others who read this and are dealing with some sort of brain issue have the courage to seek help. EMDR has seen success in treating many brain health issues, not just PTSD. If you know someone that you think may be suffering from some sort of brain issue, please share this information and show your concern and support for them. We are not deserving of the shame that still perpetuates our society concerning mental health. Be part of the solution and start the conversation in your immediate circle of family and friends. Thankfully I have a wonderful supportive work environment, children, husband, doctor and counsellor who helped me overcome and be the person I am supposed to be.

I am an Educational Assistant, a mom, grandmother, wife. Just an average citizen who now knows I have a voice and have value. Don’t be like me and wait forty years to find yours.