

What is EMDR? A Client-Friendly Guide

EMDR (**Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing**) is a structured and powerful therapy that helps people process painful or traumatic memories, so they feel less overwhelming and more manageable. If you're thinking about starting EMDR, here's a simple guide to help you understand what it's all about and what to expect.

- ✓ EMDR helps you work through tough or upsetting memories, so they don't have such a strong emotional hold on you.
- ✓ It uses something called bilateral stimulation—that might look like eye movements, tapping, or sounds—to help your brain "unstack" and reorganize the way it holds onto those memories
- ✓ Many people find relief from symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and more.
- ✓ It's not about erasing memories—it's about changing how they affect you emotionally and physically.

Preparing for EMDR: A Quick Checklist

Before we dive in, we'll take some time to make sure EMDR is a good fit and that you feel safe and ready.

- ✓ **Are You Ready?**
We'll talk through your history, current symptoms, and any concerns you have. My goal is to make sure this feels like the right approach for you.
- ✓ **Learning Coping Skills First**
Before we start processing any memories, I'll teach you tools to help you stay grounded and manage emotions, like:
 - Deep breathing
 - Mindfulness and grounding techniques
 - Visualization tools to create a sense of safetyThese help you stay centered—both during and between sessions.
- ✓ **Pinpointing What We'll Work On**
We'll identify specific memories or themes to focus on and explore the beliefs that came out of those experiences (like "I'm not safe" or "I'm not enough").
- ✓ **Creating a Safe Place**
We'll develop a calming mental image or memory that you can return to any time things feel too intense. This becomes your emotional "home base."
- ✓ **Getting Familiar with the Process**
Before we start, I'll show you how the bilateral stimulation works (eye movements, tapping, or sounds) and let you practice so you're comfortable

The 8 Phases of EMDR (What We'll Do Together)

1. **History & Treatment Planning** – We'll map out what's going on and where to focus.
2. **Preparation** – Learning coping skills to feel safe during processing.
3. **Assessment** – Identifying the specific memory, emotions, and beliefs to work on.
4. **Desensitization** – Processing the memory using bilateral stimulation.
5. **Installation** – Strengthening positive beliefs to replace the old, unhelpful ones.
6. **Body Scan** – Checking your body for any lingering distress.
7. **Closure** – Ending each session feeling grounded and stable.
8. **Reevaluation** – Seeing how things have shifted and what's next.

EMDR is a well-researched, effective therapy—but it's also a journey. I'll be with you every step of the way.

What to Expect During & After EMDR Sessions

In the Office (During Sessions)

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- Check-In**
We'll start each session by checking in on how you're feeling and anything that came up since the last session.
- Grounding First**
Before diving into memory processing, we'll do a quick round of calming techniques to help you feel centered.
- Processing the Memory**
You'll focus on one memory at a time, along with any thoughts, emotions, or body sensations that come up. You don't have to say everything out loud—just let me know what you're noticing, and I'll guide the process.
- Pausing & Checking In**
We'll stop occasionally to check in and make sure you're okay. If things feel too intense, we'll slow down or pause.
- Closing the Session**
If we don't finish processing the memory in one session, we'll wrap up with grounding so you leave feeling safe. We'll revisit it next time if needed.

Outside the Office (Between Sessions)

- You Might Notice...**
 - Feeling more emotional or thoughtful
 - Vivid dreams or unexpected memories popping up
 - Feeling tired or physically off as your body processes things
- How to Manage This**
 - Use your grounding tools (deep breathing, mindfulness, safe place visualization)
 - Journal thoughts or feelings that come up—it helps track your progress
 - Reach out to me if you're feeling overwhelmed or unsure
- Life After Sessions**
 - Some people feel lighter and more at peace right away
 - Others notice gradual changes in how they think, feel, and react
 - Give yourself space after a session—avoid intense emotional events right after if possible
- At Our Next Session...**
We'll check in on how you felt after the last session and decide if we need to continue with the same memory or move on to something else.

One Last Note

Starting EMDR—or any therapy—is a big, brave step. You're not alone in this process, and it's okay to take it one step at a time.

“You're doing something good for yourself. Healing isn't always easy, but it's absolutely worth it.”

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