

HAP

EMDR  
HANDBOOK  
FOR  
CLIENTS

## ***EMDR: What is it?***

By now, you have probably heard a great deal about Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and are wondering what it really is about and how it will help you. EMDR is an interesting and complex approach to psychotherapy that incorporates much of the wisdom of other therapies. Although most people have come to associate it with eye movement, the fact is that EMDR is a method that includes an eight phase approach and numerous procedural elements that contribute to its success. EMDR is used within a comprehensive treatment plan to promote your recovery from your difficulty/ies.

**The eight phases of treatment** are necessary to make sure that all of the dysfunctional elements of a problem are handled. It is why each phase is considered important and essential to the successful completion of EMDR treatment. A brief summary of the eight phases will help you understand the function of each phase and how you can support your own progress.

During **Phase One**, I will ask you questions concerning your problem, family, schooling, vocational, development, medical, psychological, and physical history. The idea is to find out about all aspects of you so that I -with your help- can best decide how to focus on beginning your recovery or healing process. When that is completed, we will draw up a treatment plan together and decide how we will go about this process.

**Phase two is the preparation phase and probably one of the most important parts of your treatment.** The idea of preparation is to make sure you have the resources you need to tackle your problem/s. When we talk about resources, we are referring to coping strategies. Resources are ways in which we soothe ourselves and handle distressing thoughts, feelings, or body sensations. This phase is crucial to an excellent resolution and may last one session to **as many as needed** to make sure you can handle whatever comes up for you. It is a way of winterizing your home so that when the storm comes, it is no big deal because you are prepared.

During this phase, the actual way of doing EMDR is introduced so that you know what to expect and can ask as many questions as you want. EMDR processing will not start until you and I are sure that you are ready.

The **third phase** is referred to as the **Assessment Phase**. This is when we clarify the problem we will work on by choosing the following: an image that represents it; how it leaves you thinking about yourself in a negative manner (negative cognition); how you would like to view yourself concerning this situation **now** (positive cognition); your emotions; and where the sensations are in your body. We teach you how to measure the emotions and the positive belief about yourself so that we can judge together where you are in the process of changing your thoughts and feelings about the situation and yourself.

**Desensitization** is the **fourth phase**. Here, we use bilateral stimulation to work out the target problem and any associated material that goes along with it. When the target event and associated channels are cleared, we move on to the next phase. The way we know this is by using two different scales; the Subjective Units of Disturbance Scale (SUDS) and the other is the Validity of Cognition Scale (VOC). The SUDS helps us measure your level of disturbance or discomfort with your problem and the VOC helps us evaluate how close you are to your goal. When the SUDS reaches 0 and the VOC reaches 7, we know that you are ready to move to the next phase. Sometimes, this phase moves rapidly and sometimes it moves more slowly. It depends on what you need to resolve this difficulty.

The **fifth phase** is referred to as **Installation**. Here we connect your positive cognition/resource with whatever is left of the past problem so that your positive resource is linked formally with the old problem.

In the **sixth phase** or **Body Scan**, we have the opportunity to check out if there is still some discomfort anywhere in your body. This is yet another way for us to check in and see if all the material that is related to this problem is worked through. In EMDR, I am checking at every level to see that this occurs. It is important to process all material associated with the problem to assist in putting it behind you. Then, you will be able to incorporate the learning from this issue into your personal knowledge base.

**Closure** is the **seventh phase**. We will do a formal closing of the session together by using one of your resources. I am interested in making sure that you feel OK before you leave. If you are having any type of discomfort, or feel disconnected from yourself and/or if you are unsure if that is the case or not, I want to know about it so I can help you feel

better or, at least, in present time/grounded before you leave my office. It is important for you to know that once EMDR is begun, you have opened the door to the processing of the material that you have been working on. With this in mind, I will ask you to note down any interesting or unusual changes in any part of your life during the time between sessions. For instance, are you behaving in different ways when presented to your problem or triggers for your problem? Has your mood improved? Are you engaging in new or different behaviors than you are used to? Sometimes, it might feel like you are back in the old problem. This is not a cause for alarm. This is part of the processing of the problem that you are working on. If you have any concerns or are very distressed due to material that arises during this time, please call me to let me know so that I can help you. You are not alone in this process.

The **eighth phase** occurs during the session following the EMDR session. This is called **Re-evaluation**. The idea here is to go over the information that you have gathered in-between sessions so that we can see if there is any new material we need to work on together. EMDR is an excellent tool for flushing out all the material that has to do with the problem that we are targeting.

So, these are the eight phases and they work very well to ensure that you get what you need throughout your EMDR sessions.

## **Why EMDR?**

We know that when something traumatic happens to you, your mind may continue to hold onto it in a way that includes the original picture, sounds, feelings, sensations and thoughts or any combination of the above. It seems like the trauma is locked inside and it can be triggered by many different things or people that you encounter throughout the day and/or night. These old experiences can still cause a great deal of discomfort. At times, you may feel helpless because you are not able to control what is happening in your mind or your body. That is because you are experiencing the affects and sensations that are connected with this old experience.

Dr. Francine Shapiro discovered by observation that when she had a problem moving her eyes back and forth in a sustained way, her negative thoughts and feelings diminished. She continued to experiment with this discovery, trying the eye movements with friends. When time and again, others reported a similar experience of having troubling thoughts disappear, Dr. Shapiro designed a protocol for using the eye movements and conducted an experiment. She worked with clients in psychotherapeutic settings and found that when she incorporated the eye movements into her way of doing psychotherapy, people began to work through their difficulties much better.

Dr. Shapiro says that she would now refer to this method of treatment as **Reprocessing Therapy**. This is because we have learned - since her original discovery- that it is not just eye movement but the bilateral stimulation or the activation of the right and left hemispheres of the brain that seems to make a difference in the processing of psychological difficulties. This means that we may use eye movement, hand taps, auditory tones and/or a combination of them to help you during this change process; we will try them out and you can decide what works for you the best.

To date, there are fourteen controlled studies that support the idea that EMDR works well in the treatment of trauma; this makes it the most thoroughly researched method ever used for these types of problems. In the most recent 5 studies, 84-90% of the people that have had to cope with rape, combat, loss of a loved one, accidents or natural disasters, no longer had post-traumatic stress disorder after only three treatment sessions. Another study underwritten by Kaiser-Permanente, a

California managed care company, found that EMDR was twice as effective in half the time when compared to the standard type of treatment.

These are exciting results and you are probably thinking that you can do this too! Well, sometimes, it is true and sometimes it may take a longer period of time. As with anything in life, it depends on what the problem is. For instance, people who suffer from Complex Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (the name for those folks who have been severely traumatized over a long period of time), EMDR will take longer and often will include an extended preparation phase. This is a normal response to a very complicated problem. What is important is to take the time you need for your own recovery or healing.

If you do not see your problem above, it does not mean that EMDR cannot help you with your difficulty. Many psychotherapists have been working with EMDR to assist people with many types of problems including pain management, addictions, problems that stem from early psychological problems from abuse or neglect, anxiety, depression and others. EMDR is also used to enhance performance. Although these have not been documented by research, they have been documented by clinician report.

### ***Where do we start?***

I like to begin with knowing what your life experiences have been. I will ask you for the 10 best and 10 worst memories in your life to help you and me understand you better. Please fill out the following sheets with this information so that you begin with the earliest one you remember in your life until the most current. If you find this exercise too troubling, I will be glad to complete it with you in the session.

## **EMDR - TEN MOST POSITIVE MEMORIES (Phase 2)**

- **POSITIVE MEMORY 1:**

**Positive Image**

**A positive thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

**Emotions and sensations that go with this memory**

- **POSITIVE MEMORY 2:**

**Positive Image:**

**A positive thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

**Emotions and sensations that go with this memory**

- **POSITIVE MEMORY 3:**

**Positive Image:**

**A positive thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

**Emotions and sensations that go with this memory**

- **POSITIVE MEMORY 4:**

**Positive Image**

**A positive thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

**Emotions and sensations that go with this memory**



- **POSITIVE MEMORY 5:**

**Positive Image:**

**A positive thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

**Emotions and sensations that go with this memory**

- **POSITIVE MEMORY 6:**

**Positive Image:**

**A positive thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

**Emotions and sensations that go with this memory**

- **POSITIVE MEMORY 7:**

**Positive Image**

**A positive thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

**Emotions and sensations that go with this memory**

- **POSITIVE MEMORY 8:**

**Positive Image**

**A positive thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

**Emotions and sensations that go with this memory**

- **POSITIVE MEMORY 9:**

**Positive Image**

**A positive thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

**Emotions and sensations that go with this memory**

- **POSITIVE MEMORY 10:**

**Positive Image:**

**A positive thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

**Emotions and sensations that go with this memory**

## **Resources**

You have put together 10 of the most positive memories you have had in your life. In keeping with the idea that it is important to use and/or develop the resources you need to cope with life and the problem/s that has brought you to seek help, please list the resources that you have already.

## **Your Resources**

Now, what other resources do you need to handle the processing of your problem/s? Let us build them together through a process called Resource Development. Psychotherapies have used this idea for a long time. The idea here is to help you figure out what you need to help you with your problem and work with you to develop these attributes before we begin to process your problem.

- **Resource Development**
- **Safe comfort Place**

Think of a place that feels comfortable or safe for you. It can be a real place or a place that you think up.

- **People Resource**

Remember a time that you received nurturing, guidance or support from a family member, a teacher, a peer or any other positive person in your life.

- **Religious or Spiritual Resources**

Remember a symbol or image that reminds you of the resource that you need. It may be from your dreams, daydreams, art, movement, books, movies, television or cartoons.

- **Positive Symbols or Images as Resources**

Think of a symbol or image that helps you see, feel and hear yourself as "the you" that you want to be. This may be your own image of yourself, an abstract symbol from nature or an archetype that is meaningful to you.

- **Other Resources**

Add any other resources that do not fit into the above categories.

## **EMDR - TEN MOST DISRURBING MEMORIES (PHASE ONE)**

**Only do this by yourself if it feels comfortable, otherwise  
we will do them together**

- **MEMORY 1**

**Worst Image**

**A negative thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (negative cognition)**

**A positive thought that you would like to have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

- **MEMORY 2:**

**Worst Image:**

**A negative thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (negative cognition)**

**A positive thought that you would like to have about yourself when you think about this situation  
(positive cognition)**

- **MEMORY 3:**

**Worst Image**

**A negative thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (negative cognition)**

**A positive thought that you would like to have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

- **MEMORY 4:**

**Worst Image**

**A negative thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (negative cognition)**

**A positive thought that you would like to have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

- **MEMORY 5:**

**Worst Image**

**A negative thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (negative cognition)**

**A positive thought that you would like to have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

- **MEMORY 6:**

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**A negative thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (negative cognition)**

**A positive thought that you would like to have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**



- **MEMORY 7:**

**Worst Image:**

**A negative thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (negative cognition)**

**A positive thought that you would like to have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

- **MEMORY 8:**

**Worst Image:**

**A negative thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (negative cognition)**

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- **MEMORY 9:**

**Worst Image:**

**A negative thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (negative cognition)**

**A positive thought that you would like to have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

- **MEMORY 10:**

**Worst Image:**

**A negative thought that you have about yourself when you think about this situation (negative cognition)**

**A positive thought that you would like to have about yourself when you think about this situation (positive cognition)**

## What next?

We have just completed the preparation phase for EMDR and we are ready to move into the Assessment and Desensitization phases. There are some things to keep in mind as you begin the process of EMDR.

### **Teamwork:**

The first rule of thumb is to know that we are working together to accomplish your goal. Therefore, it is important that we agree at the outset how we will work together as a team. Please discuss any concerns, difficulties or fears with me at anytime.

### **Safety first:**

I want you to feel safe at all times. It is important for you to know that we can stop EMDR at anytime. Just put your hand up in the stop position and I will know that you want to stop. If material is just too overwhelming, it is OK to stop and re-stabilize yourself. Often strong feelings and sensations come up while using EMDR, if you feel that it is too much, please let me know and we will work together to get you more grounded. On the other hand, if you can handle what is happening, please continue.

### **Be comfortable:**

Be sure that where you are seated is comfortable. Sometimes it is helpful to take some time to assure your comfort.

### **Bilateral stimulation:**

Bilateral stimulation can occur in many ways. It is up to you and me to find the best way for you. However, please know that you are welcome to change your choice, or I might suggest it to help make the process work even better. If you want me to use a faster or slower pace, please let me know. Your comfort during this process is essential.

### **Metaphors:**

Often I will use a description to remind you that the Desensitization phase of EMDR is one where you just sit back and let the experience happen to you. Some people may feel that they have to control the process but this is not true. The great thing about EMDR is that you can sit back and let the process happen. It is like being on a train and watching the scenery go by, or, sitting in the movies and watching a film. Some people like the idea of sitting at home and watching their VCR, knowing

that they can use their pause or stop button at any time they choose. Which metaphor works for you? Can you think of one that suits you better?

### **Assessment:**

When you start in the very beginning with your target image, negative cognition and emotions and sensations, I will ask you to keep all of those things in mind. However, you may think that you must hold onto the beginning image, emotions and feelings throughout the process but this is not the case! The image, the cognition, the feelings and sensations all may change, LET THEM CHANGE! That is a sign that the process is moving. Just allow yourself to sit back and let the material move itself with you as the interested spectator.

### **Sharing information:**

EMDR is different than talk therapy. During the EMDR session, I will encourage you to talk LESS! Yes! The idea here is to keep the process moving! Of course, if you need to tell me something, please do. However, the general principle here is that less is more! I just need to know that your process is moving. I will stop you at intervals to ask you where you are in the process. You can tell me an abbreviated version of what has happened if you choose to or just that something changed. In fact, you do not have to tell me about the content at all if it feels to embarrassing or for issues of confidentiality. The only reason I would need to more is if you get stuck; then, we can keep it to a minimum.

### **Getting stuck:**

Getting stuck occurs when nothing is moving or the same image, thought, feelings and/or sensations keep coming up again and again. This is not unusual; just let me know and we will do something to get the process moving again. The object is to keep the process moving.

### **Reality:**

When you are processing information during your EMDR session, it often feels like whatever you are experiencing is happening in present time. It is not! You are safe in my office with me. I will talk to you during the Desensitization phase to remind you that I am here like an anchor, keeping you grounded in the present. Sometimes, it will feel so much like "the old stuff" is happening in the present that you may get disheartened,

this is the time that you need to let the process of EMDR move you along or ask for my assistance. Remember, we are a team.

### **EMDR SESSION LOG - Assessment Phase through Body Scan Phase**

The EMDR session log is to give you a place to record what you have worked on in your EMDR session. It is formatted to allow you to write in all of the different elements of the process. (See following page),

**Insert Excel session log**

## What should I expect after my EMDR session?

It is important to know that your brain continues to work on your problem and the related information after your EMDR session is completed. Therefore, it is helpful to note what your experience is after the session and during the time that elapses until your next session. You may have new insights and/or new disturbing information may come to your attention in the form of images, thoughts, affect or sensations. **THIS IS NORMAL!** Jot it down on the sheet in the handbook or on a piece of paper and we will discuss it when you come in next time. When you write down your positive and/or negative experiences, remember to include any of the following that you notice:

Image

Belief/s

Feelings

Sensations

SUDs (if it makes sense to do so).

If things feel overwhelming or extremely uncomfortable, please do not hesitate to call me. Often, the change that occurs is so subtle that you may not notice the change at first! However, when we talk about it in the Re-evaluation phase, the changes come to light!

Sometimes, you will be tired at the end of your EMDR session. Please schedule your session with me so that you can have time to rest afterwards.