

FOR EMDR PRACTITIONERS + INTENSIVE CLIENTS



What is EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a type of therapy designed to help people heal from distressing memories, trauma, anxiety, and other mental health issues. It's different from traditional talk therapy and is especially useful for individuals who have experienced trauma or have memories that continue to affect them in negative ways.

How Does EMDR Work?

EMDR helps your brain reprocess painful or traumatic memories. When something traumatic happens, it can become "stuck" in the brain and continue to cause emotional reactions, as though the event is still happening. EMDR helps "unstuck" these memories so they become less distressing and can be remembered without overwhelming emotions.

During EMDR, you'll focus on a specific memory while engaging in **bilateral stimulation**, which might involve:

- Eye Movements: Following a therapist's finger or light bar back and forth.
- Tapping: Alternating taps on each side of your body (usually hands or knees).
- Sounds: Listening to tones alternating between your ears.

This process helps the brain reprocess the memory, reducing its emotional impact.

How is EMDR different than other therapeutic modalities?

EMDR therapy does not require clients to discuss the distressing issue in detail or complete homework between sessions. Instead of directly working to change emotions, thoughts, or behaviors related to the distressing experience, EMDR therapy enables the brain to restart its natural healing process. EMDR is designed to address and resolve unprocessed traumatic memories and often allows clients to achieve results in fewer sessions than other forms of psychotherapy.

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What to Expect in EMDR Therapy

EMDR therapy follows a structured, 8-phase approach:

1. History and Treatment Planning: Your therapist will learn about your history and identify memories or issues to target in EMDR.
2. Preparation: You'll learn relaxation and coping skills to handle any intense feelings that may come up.
3. Assessment: You'll choose a specific memory to focus on, identifying images, thoughts, feelings, and sensations related to it.
4. Desensitization: While recalling the memory, you'll engage in bilateral stimulation (like eye movements) to reduce the memory's emotional charge.
5. Installation: Your therapist will guide you in linking positive beliefs with the memory to replace any negative beliefs (e.g., "I am safe now" instead of "I am powerless").
6. Body Scan: You'll observe any remaining physical tension or discomfort related to the memory and continue processing if needed.
7. Closure: Each session ends with grounding techniques, so you leave feeling safe and centered.
8. Re-evaluation: In following sessions, your therapist will check to see how you're feeling about the processed memory and any other issues.

Who can benefit from EMDR therapy?

EMDR therapy helps children and adults of all ages. Therapists use EMDR therapy to address a wide range of challenges:

- Anxiety, panic attacks, and phobias
- Chronic Illness and medical issues
- Depression and bipolar disorders
- Dissociative disorders
- Eating disorders
- Grief and loss
- Pain
- Performance anxiety
- Personality disorders
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other trauma and stress-related issues
- Sexual assault

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Who can benefit from EMDR therapy? cont'd

- Sleep disturbance
- Substance abuse and addiction
- Violence and abuse
- Low Self-Esteem and Negative Beliefs

Common Client Questions about EMDR:

1. Do I need to talk in detail about my trauma?

No. EMDR doesn't require you to discuss every detail of a traumatic memory. You'll briefly recall the memory, but the focus is more on the emotions and body sensations you experience during the session.

2. Is EMDR painful or emotionally intense?

EMDR can bring up strong emotions, but your therapist will guide you through techniques to manage them. The goal is to help you feel less distress over time.

3. How many sessions does it take?

The number of sessions varies. Some people see significant improvement in a few sessions, while others with more complex histories may need more time.

4. Who can benefit from EMDR?

EMDR is effective for people with PTSD, trauma, anxiety, panic, phobias, grief, low self-esteem, and other issues related to past distressing events.

5. What is bilateral stimulation, and why is it important?

Bilateral stimulation involves activating both sides of the brain through eye movements, tapping, or alternating sounds. It helps the brain process and reframe traumatic memories, allowing them to feel less disturbing over time.

6. How is EMDR different from traditional talk therapy?

Unlike talk therapy, which focuses on exploring emotions and behaviors in depth, EMDR primarily targets specific distressing memories and reprocesses them without extensive discussion. EMDR also uses bilateral stimulation, which is unique to this approach.

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Common Client Questions About EMDR cont'd:

7. Do I need to do homework between sessions?

EMDR generally doesn't require homework between sessions, as the processing primarily occurs within the therapy sessions. However, some therapists may suggest mindfulness or grounding techniques for added support.

8. Are the results of EMDR long-lasting?

Yes, EMDR provides long-lasting results for many people by changing how the brain stores traumatic memories. This often reduces the emotional impact of those memories, even after therapy ends.

9. Is EMDR safe for everyone?

EMDR is generally safe, but it may not be suitable for everyone, especially individuals with certain dissociative disorders or severe mental health conditions. Your therapist will evaluate if EMDR is a good fit for your needs.

10. Can I try EMDR if I'm already in other therapy?

Yes, EMDR can often be integrated with other therapies. Many clients use EMDR alongside traditional talk therapy for a comprehensive approach to mental health.

Benefits of EMDR

- **Faster Symptom Relief:** Many people notice reductions in symptoms quickly.
- **Less Talking Required:** For those who find talking about trauma difficult, EMDR can be an alternative.
- **Long-Lasting Results:** EMDR changes the way your brain processes the memory, helping it to stay less distressing even after treatment.