

# A Guide to EMDR

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There are many different forms of treatment and therapy that can be used to treat traumas. It's important that if you've experienced any type of trauma that you seek treatment.

With the right treatment, you can find healing. One of the emerging popular forms of treatment that can help with healing is EMDR. This practice was once used primarily for people who struggled with problems related to post-traumatic stress disorder.

But EMDR is now successfully used for anyone who suffers from the effects of any type of traumatic event – from an abusive marriage to an assault or accident. There are many uses.

## **What Is EMDR?**

The initials for EMDR stands for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. It's a type of psychotherapy treatment. Its purpose is one that's intended to relieve stress and other negative feelings that can be caused by traumatic memories.

This can be living through a traumatic event yourself or witnessing it happen to someone else. There are three different parts to the EMDR therapy that can be a help to people.

The first part is dealing with the events and memories that are responsible for the emotional problems you've been experiencing. In this first part of dealing with the events, you'll learn how to create new links that you can associate with the events and memories.

EMDR therapy works in that it can have you feeling safe and in control in your environment rather than afraid and feeling like the world is not a safe place for you to be in.

The second part that can help people who use EMDR techniques is targeting the present situations that might provoke your distress. During the sessions, while you're going through the phases, you'll be doing work designed to desensitize any external and internal triggers you may have.

Many people have certain triggers that will cause them to feel as powerless and scared as they were at the time the actual event took place. The person can feel like he or she is actual back in the event or seeing it again.

EMDR can help you overcome the emotions and issues that are connected with that. The third part involves using imagery. This imagery consists of picturing possible future events that can help you to obtain the skills necessary for reconstructing how you want to react to situations.

EMDR therapy helps you learn how to cope with a trigger that brings up old emotions. For example, if you were the victim of a fire, and the feel of heat from any kind of flame on your skin scares you because of that past experience, EMDR therapy can teach you how to cope with the feeling of terror that you may have when you feel heat in the present.

Working through triggers is a big part of healing with the use of EMDR therapy. It involves dealing with the past, with the present, and also with the future. This part of EMDR can help you so that the problems that you're experiencing currently won't always be with you.

If you have several triggers, make sure to mention them all to your therapist. It's important that you learn to work through each one so they don't bring on the painful or terrorizing emotions any longer.

When you're in an EMDR session, the therapist will lead you in various sets of eye movements. During this session of eye movements, what you'll be doing is focusing on the traumatic event.

At the same time, you'll also be focusing on any emotional problems or thoughts that are associated with the event. This back and forth eye movement will help you learn to alter your responses to memories or triggers associated with whatever it was that you went through.

While the same techniques are used, there can be slight variations. Some therapists will use music during EMDR sessions while some choose not to. The reason that music is used is because music is another way to stimulate your senses and help guide you to being able to alter your responses.

Other therapists will also teach certain body movements, like having you drum your fingers or tap your toes because these movements work to stimulate your senses. If you've lived through several traumatic events, the therapist will target each one of these separately to work through them.

By focusing on helping you with one at a time, you won't feel overwhelmed with emotion or receive a trigger overload. The therapist will then help you work through the remaining traumas.

When anyone experiences a trauma, it can cause several different emotional responses. What EMDR can help you do is process these events. By processing them, you gain a better way to deal with these different emotions.

EMDR therapy doesn't use the homework and other techniques used by other therapies. The purpose behind EMDR techniques is to help you leave the sessions feeling empowered by the traumatic events rather than terrified or afraid to face them.

The length of the sessions and treatment plan will differ by clients because of the wide range of emotional responses to different events.

### **What Problems Can Be Helped by EMDR?**

There are several problems and symptoms that can be handled by using the teachings of EMDR. Extremely traumatic events such as sexual and physical abuse can be successfully treated.

Rape victims can find relief from the traumatic memories through the techniques offered. Child traumas can also be treated by using EMDR. Experiencing the death of a loved one can be difficult.

Not everyone grieves in the same manner. Losing someone that you care about can be a traumatic event that can cause people to become stuck. EMDR can also help you overcome the trauma of losing someone that you love.

There are other traumatic events that can require the need for a treatment like EMDR. If you witness a terrible trauma or the abuse of someone else, it can affect you emotionally.

So can going through a natural disaster or even watching it unfold on television. Going through a short-term event can have long term emotional consequences. An example of this would be having a house fire or being in a car accident.

When you go through something like that, these events can bring on feelings of loss of control and fear. In some cases, if you experience a trauma that leads to the death of someone else, you can develop survivor's guilt.

These feelings can be worked through during EMDR. Emotional issues - such as depression, anxiety, overwhelming fears, phobias, and low self-esteem can also be treated with EMDR.

The problems you have don't have to be extreme to use EMDR for treatment. You can seek out EMDR if you're dealing with problems like a bad temper or excessive worrying. You can find help for working through relationship problems.

You can also learn how to overcome things like test anxiety or panic attacks. If you feel that you have something that's holding you back in your personal or professional life, you can contact an EMDR therapist about it.

With these, you might feel a lack of motivation or have a fear of being alone. EMDR can help you deal with these issues. Many people find that EMDR is successful in helping deal with the underlying issues that can lead to eating disorders.

Part of what makes EMDR so effective for those suffering from difficult events is the way that it explores positivity versus negativity. During EMDR treatment, you'll learn how to look at yourself through a different light.

### **What Are the Phases of EMDR Therapy?**

EMDR focuses on treatment through the use of phases. These phases that EMDR focuses on are the past, the present and the future. The overall treatment plan has a total of eight phases.

Each one of these phases is uniquely designed to help you work through the problems and symptoms you're dealing with. The first phase that you'll learn how to deal with involves your past.

You'll meet with your therapist and have an in-depth discussion about your problem and what caused the problem to occur. The therapist will also determine if you're ready for EMDR and what the best possible plan is to work with you.

A lot of the focus during the first phase is on any troubling and frightening memories you have and on any present situations that are triggering these memories. The age that you were when the trauma took place will be taken into account.

If you're a victim of an adult trauma rather than a childhood trauma, your treatment plan may be slightly different. If you're a victim of multiple traumas instead of just one, your treatment plan may be longer.

For the second phase of EMDR treatment, the therapist will teach you different techniques to help you deal with stress and external and internal triggers. These techniques will then be used in further sessions and you can use them in between sessions whenever you need them.

The third phase deals with assessing and reprocessing. Part of the assessing involves the therapist asking you to verbalize how you feel about the traumatic events. You may also be asked about how your body reacts to external and internal triggers.

The fourth phase that you'll go through is desensitization. During this phase, the therapist will focus on disturbing sensations or emotions you have related to the traumatic events or your sensations and emotions with internal and external triggers.

You'll be asked to rate how you feel about current situations and past traumatic events on a scale of one to ten, also called the Subjective Unit of Distress Scales (SUDS). During this phase, the therapist will teach you to use eye movements that have changes in focus or shifts until you can positively lower your rating from a ten to a one or zero.

The fifth phase works to help you replace negative beliefs you have about yourself with positive ones. Because of the desensitization in the previous phase, you will be able to look at the traumatic event from a different point of view.

For example, if the traumatic event happened to you when you were a child, you'll be able to look at it from the perspective of a strong adult instead of the helpless child you once were.

After the positive beliefs have been instilled, the sixth phase will have you revisiting the traumatic event again. You'll be asked to determine if your body has any tension or residual negative feelings associated with the event.

If you do, you'll go through more EMDR therapy. If you don't, you'll move on to the next phase. The seventh phase is closure. This takes place over a few or several therapy sessions.

Your therapist may teach you more techniques, especially ones dealing with ways that you can practice self-calming. During this phase, your therapist will help you remember that you're in control - both in and out of the sessions.

You may be asked to keep a journal during this time, depending on the treatment plan that you and your therapist have worked out. The eighth and final phase is reevaluation. Your therapist will ask you at the beginning

of each session about residual feelings you have about the traumatic event and will ask you to rate your feelings about the event.

It's important that you're honest about your ratings. If they start climbing up again, you'll need more therapy. You should leave the sessions feeling better than you felt when you walked into them.

### **How Does EMDR Work?**

EMDR helps you work through traumatic events and process them in a new way. For many people who experience a trauma, they don't actually deal with it. Instead, what they do is to compartmentalize the traumatic event or events.

This is a method of survival and people do this in order to be able to cope at that moment. Often, during a traumatic event, shock will set in that will prevent the person from being able to process the event.

It isn't until after the event is over that the person has the time to realize what happened and how traumatic the even or events actually were. Those who are victims of childhood abuse will sometimes repress those emotions and feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness.

It isn't until they're adults and have the freedom to explore these feelings that they're suddenly faced with having to learn how to cope with them. EMDR works by going back into the past and learning how to deal with those emotions and feelings on a better level.

You're able to access your traumatic memories in a safe environment and the treatment allows you to forge new links between the memories and your present environment. The ultimate goal of EMDR is to help those who have been through traumatic events to lead healthier and more positive lives.

It works to help eliminate stress associated with the traumatic event and teaches you how to overcome triggers and negative thoughts and feelings you have about yourself. You can use EMDR in conjunction with

traditional talk therapy to help you live a better, more fulfilled life without anxiety.



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