



EMDR Frequently asked Questions

What can I expect during EMDR therapy?

Each case is unique, but there is a standard eight phase approach that we will follow. This includes taking a complete history, preparing you for the reprocessing phase, identifying targets and their components, actively processing the past, present and future aspects, and on-going evaluation. The processing of a target includes the use of dual stimulation (eye movements, taps, tones) while you concentrate on various aspects of the target memory. After each set of movements you would briefly describe to me what you experienced. At the end of each session, you should use the techniques you've learned in preparation in order to leave the session feeling in control and empowered. At the end of EMDR therapy, previously disturbing memories and present situations should no longer be problematic, and new healthy responses should be the norm.

Helpful reading: ***Getting Past Your Past: Take Control of Your Life with Self-Help Techniques from EMDR Therapy*** by Shapiro

What if I feel overwhelmed during reprocessing?

Occasionally during processing clients will experience intense emotions and even physical sensations. The goal during reprocessing is to maintain dual awareness with "one foot" in the room with me and "one foot" in the memory as an observer. I will check in with you frequently (several times a minute at first) to assess what's happening and your comfort level. If the experience is too painful or overwhelming I encourage you to let me know via a pre-arranged signal indicating you want to stop. There are many ways to make the reprocessing less intense and we will decide together the best way to do this (put images on a screen and move it as far away from you as you need, make it in black and white, speed up the sequence of events).

Will I get stuck in reliving my traumatic memories?

You will leave each session with multiple ways to contain memories between sessions. There is no need to continue to experience the memory between sessions although once the memory is "opened" your mind continues to move toward healing, usually without your awareness. Some memories resolve in one session but many require additional sessions to fully process. Before you leave the session you will contain the memory and shift into a peaceful, calm state via various calming strategies. Your comfort is a primary objective for me as your therapist.

I feel really anxious about getting into traumatic memories. Will this hurt the process?

During the preparation phase we will address any anxiety or resistance to doing this work. It's quite natural for there to be a little resistance. We spend much of our lives trying to stay away from hurtful memories and feelings. It can feel scary to parts of us to actually shift gears and focus on those memories. We will work through any and all resistance with as much explanation as is required to feel more comfortable, planning a pace for treatment that feels comfortable, and teaching you those tools to use to calm fears. Interestingly, as

we've avoided going near these memories they've often taken on the perception of such power. As we open them up and allow them to reprocess in this new way, free of the blocks, they resolve quickly and the power shifts to you, the client.

How often should I come for EMDR sessions?

It is recommended that you commit to weekly sessions during reprocessing with EMDR to allow this process to proceed seamlessly. It can be done less frequently and we can talk about any special circumstances.

Is EMDR therapy an evidence based treatment for PTSD?

- EMDR therapy has been listed as an effective treatment by the American Psychiatric Association, Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, the World Health Organization, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and numerous other international agencies.
- More than a dozen studies support the use of EMDR therapy for trauma resulting from natural disaster and treatment of war- and terrorism-related trauma.
- With little modification, EMDR has been used successfully in response to a variety of mass-casualty events such as community homicide and can be integrated with educational formats.
- EMDR therapy has a positive impact on intrusive imagery (such as nightmares and flashbacks), numbing, and hyperarousal symptoms of PTSD, as well as on associated grief and depression.
- In several direct comparisons with cognitive-behavioral therapy, EMDR offers equivalent effects more quickly (fewer sessions and/or no homework), process analyses indicate less distress for individuals undergoing treatment.

For more information: <https://www.emdrhap.org/content/what-is-emdr/research-findings/>