

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

What is EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is an evidence-based therapy approach that helps people heal from painful or distressing experiences. EMDR therapy was developed by Francine Shapiro in the late 1980s and is used to support individuals experiencing trauma, anxiety, stress, depression, PTSD, panic, phobias, and difficult life experiences.



How Does it Work?

EMDR is based on the Adaptive Information Processing (AIP) model, which says that the brain naturally works to process experiences and connect them with helpful, adaptive information. When a distressing experience is not fully processed, memories may remain connected to intense emotions, thoughts, physical sensations, or beliefs. EMDR helps the brain reprocess these experiences so that the memory can become less distressing and feel more connected to the present.



The 8 Phases of EMDR

1. History & Treatment Planning - Explore your past history, current concerns, symptoms, strengths, and goals
2. Preparation - Learn coping, grounding, and relaxation skills to support emotional safety
3. Assessment - Identify a specific memory, belief, emotion, and/or body sensation to target
4. Desensitization - Briefly focus on the target while using bilateral stimulation (BLS) to support processing
5. Installation - Strengthen a more adaptive, helpful belief about yourself or the experience
6. Body Scan - Notice and process any remaining physical tension or discomfort
7. Closure - End each session with stabilization and strategies for maintaining emotional safety between sessions
8. Re-evaluation - Review progress at the beginning of future sessions and determine what still needs attention

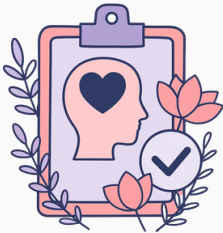


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Benefits

EMDR may help with:

- Reduced distress related to traumatic or disturbing memories
- Improved emotional regulation
- Reduced anxiety, panic, or fear responses
- Increased self-esteem and confidence
- Improved ability to respond to present situations rather than past experiences
- Greater sense of resolution and emotional relief



EMDR can sometimes bring up temporary increases in emotional or physical distress. Additional memories, emotions, sensations, or dreams may surface between sessions as processing continues. Your therapist will help you develop strategies for managing distress and maintaining stability.

Side Effects

Is it Right for Me?

EMDR may be helpful for people experiencing trauma-related symptoms, disturbing memories, anxiety, phobias, or other experiences that interfere with daily life. EMDR is not one-size-fits-all. Your therapist will assess your needs, readiness, current stability, and treatment goals to determine whether EMDR is appropriate.

References

American Psychological Association. (2017, July 31). Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy. American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/treatments/eye-movement-reprocessing>



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