

Preparing for EMDR Therapy: A Guide for Clients

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What is EMDR Therapy?

Welcome to EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) therapy! This guide is designed to help you understand what to expect and how to prepare for EMDR sessions. Whether you're new to therapy or have previous experience, this resource will provide you with a roadmap to navigate the process confidently. ✨😊✨

This therapeutic approach is especially beneficial for individuals dealing with trauma, anxiety, or other emotional distress. EMDR helps clients work through challenging experiences by tapping into the brain's natural ability to heal. Through this guide, you'll learn about the phases of EMDR and how to prepare for a successful and meaningful journey. ✨🌿✨

EMDR therapy is an evidence-based approach to healing trauma and other emotional distress. It works by helping your brain process difficult memories so they no longer feel overwhelming or stuck. EMDR incorporates bilateral stimulation (like eye movements, taps, or tones) to activate your brain's natural ability to heal. 🌿💡🌿

Unlike traditional talk therapy, EMDR focuses on processing specific memories and the negative beliefs tied to them. This helps reduce the emotional charge of those memories while promoting healthier thoughts and behaviors. Clients often report feeling lighter, freer, and more in control after EMDR therapy. 🌸✨🌈

The 8 Phases of EMDR Therapy

Phase 1: History Taking and Treatment Planning

What to Expect: We'll discuss your history, current challenges, and goals for therapy. Together, we'll identify the memories, experiences, or patterns you want to work on. 

How to Prepare: Reflect on any life experiences that feel unresolved. Be honest about your goals and what's most important to you in this process.

This phase lays the foundation for your therapy. By understanding your history and identifying specific targets for EMDR, we ensure that each session is purposeful and focused. 

Phase 2: Preparation

What to Expect: We'll focus on building safety and trust. I'll explain how EMDR works and teach you techniques to manage emotions between sessions. 

How to Prepare: Be open to learning grounding tools like deep breathing, visualization, or mindfulness practices. These will help you feel secure during and after sessions.

This phase also involves creating a safe space for you to return to emotionally. Learning these tools early on will empower you to handle any discomfort that may arise during processing. 

Phase 3: Assessment

What to Expect: We'll identify a specific memory to target, along with related negative beliefs (e.g., "I am not safe") and positive beliefs you want to adopt (e.g., "I am safe now"). We'll also explore associated emotions and body sensations. 

How to Prepare: Think about the thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations connected to challenging memories. Journaling or reflecting on these may help.

By breaking down each memory into manageable components, we ensure that the processing feels structured and intentional. This sets the stage for effective healing. 

Phase 4: Desensitization

What to Expect: Using bilateral stimulation, we'll process the target memory. You may notice changes in how you feel or think about the memory as it becomes less distressing. 

How to Prepare: Trust the process, even if strong emotions arise. Remember that processing these feelings is part of healing.

As distress reduces, you'll likely experience a greater sense of relief and clarity. The intensity of negative emotions tied to the memory begins to fade, creating space for new perspectives. 

Phase 5: Installation

What to Expect: We'll strengthen a positive belief (e.g., "I am capable") to replace the negative belief tied to the memory. 

How to Prepare: Focus on the positive belief you're working toward. Notice how it feels in your body to hold this belief.

This phase helps you anchor positive changes, making them feel more natural and integrated into your daily life. Reinforcing these beliefs can have a profound impact on self-confidence and emotional resilience. 

Phase 6: Body Scan

What to Expect: We'll check if any residual tension or discomfort remains in your body. If so, we'll process it further. 🔎🌟

How to Prepare: Pay attention to physical sensations during the week and share any patterns or lingering discomfort.

By addressing physical sensations, we ensure that healing occurs on both emotional and somatic levels. This helps you feel more grounded and in tune with your body. 🌱🌈

Phase 7: Closure

What to Expect: We'll end the session by ensuring you feel grounded and stable. I'll guide you in using the tools we've practiced to stay calm.



How to Prepare: Practice grounding techniques regularly to feel comfortable using them outside of sessions.

Closure helps you leave sessions feeling safe and secure, even if the processing is not yet complete. It's an essential part of pacing the work and honoring your well-being. 🌙🌟❤️

Phase 8: Reevaluation

What to Expect: At the start of the next session, we'll review progress and determine if additional processing is needed. 🔍🌈

How to Prepare: Reflect on any changes you've noticed in your emotions, thoughts, or body sensations since the previous session.

Reevaluation ensures that progress is measured and celebrated, while also addressing any remaining areas of concern. It's an ongoing process of refinement and growth. 🌟🌸

Tips for Success in EMDR Therapy

Be Patient with Yourself: Healing takes time, and it's normal to experience ups and downs along the way. 

Remember, each step of the journey contributes to your overall healing. Your progress is worth celebrating! 

Journal or Reflect: Writing about your experiences or changes you've noticed can help deepen your understanding and track progress. 

Take Care of Your Body: Rest, hydrate, and nourish yourself, especially after sessions, as processing can sometimes feel physically demanding.

Communicate Openly: Share any concerns, feelings, or reactions with me so we can adjust the process to meet your needs.

Practice Grounding Techniques: Tools like deep breathing, body scans, or connecting with your senses can help you stay calm during processing.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will I have to relive my trauma?

No, you won't need to share every detail of your trauma. The goal is to process how the memory feels and shift how it impacts you. You are in control at all times. 

What if I feel overwhelmed?

This is normal during EMDR. We'll use grounding techniques to ensure you feel safe and supported throughout the process. 

How will I know it's working?

Many clients notice reduced emotional distress around specific memories and a greater sense of calm or clarity in their daily lives. 

EMDR is a collaborative journey, and your feedback is invaluable. Together, we'll work toward the outcomes you're hoping to achieve. 

What to Bring to Sessions

A willingness to engage in the process
Any grounding items that help you feel safe (e.g., a comforting object or scent)

An open mind and honesty about how you're feeling 

Bring your courage and trust in the process. Each session is a step closer to the healing and freedom you deserve. 

Thank you for trusting me with your healing journey. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out. Together, we will work toward your goals and create a path to lasting healing. 🤝❤️🌟

Below you'll find three great resources that explain EMDR further:



Thank you!

Kimberly Reese, MSW, LCSW
Therapist, Speaker, and Coach
The Reese Collective, LLC.
(704) 428-9003
www.thereesecollective.com
www.kimberlyreeselcsw.com

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