

EMDR Client Handout

This handout belongs to: _____

What is EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is a therapeutic approach designed to help individuals process distressing memories and experiences. Developed by Francine Shapiro in the late 1980s, EMDR has since gained recognition as an effective treatment for various mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and phobias.

What are the Phases of EMDR Therapy?

1. **History Taking:** Your therapist will gather information about your current symptoms, past experiences, and treatment goals.
2. **Preparation:** You will learn relaxation techniques and coping skills to help manage any distress during the processing phase.
3. **Assessment:** With your therapist, you will identify specific memories or experiences to target during the EMDR process.
4. **Desensitization:** This phase involves recalling the targeted memories while simultaneously engaging in bilateral stimulation (e.g., eye movements, tapping) to facilitate processing.
5. **Installation:** Positive beliefs and emotions are reinforced to replace negative beliefs associated with the targeted memories.
6. **Body Scan:** You will be guided to notice any residual tension or discomfort in your body and learn techniques to release it.
7. **Closure:** Each session ends with a review of progress and strategies to maintain stability between sessions.
8. **Re-evaluation:** Progress is monitored, and any remaining distressing memories are addressed in subsequent sessions if necessary.

What is the theory behind EMDR Therapy?

Shapiro's (1995) Accelerated Information Processing model evolved into the Adaptive Information Processing (AIP) model (Shapiro, 2001, 2018), proposing humans possess an inherent system to process experiences adaptively. Memories are organized in linked networks around the earliest related event, containing thoughts, emotions, and sensations.

If distressing experiences aren't fully processed, they can lead to dysfunctional reactions and mental disorders. EMDR therapy aims to process these memories, linking them with adaptive information, facilitating learning, and appropriate emotional responses for future guidance.

What are the side effects of the therapy?

Adverse effects of EMDR therapy may include a temporary increase in distress, as distressing memories and unexpected emotional or physical sensations may emerge during sessions, with further processing of incidents potentially occurring afterward, leading to additional dreams, memories, or feelings surfacing.

Is EMDR right for you?

EMDR therapy can be beneficial for individuals who have experienced traumatic events, disturbing memories, or distressing symptoms that interfere with daily life. However, it may not be suitable for everyone. Your therapist will assess whether EMDR suits your needs and circumstances.

What are the benefits of EMDR?

- Relief from distressing symptoms
- Improved emotional regulation
- Enhanced self-esteem and confidence
- Lasting resolution of traumatic memories

EMDR therapy benefits individuals of all ages, addressing various challenges, including anxiety, panic attacks, phobias, chronic illness, depression, PTSD, sexual assault, substance abuse, and other trauma-related issues, as well as personality disorders and sleep disturbances.

It offers hope and healing for individuals struggling with the aftermath of traumatic experiences. By engaging in the process with a trained therapist, you can reclaim control over your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and embark on a journey towards a more fulfilling life.

Notes:

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>
- EMDR Institute. (2019). What is EMDR? [EMDR.com](https://www.emdr.com/what-is-emdr/). <https://www.emdr.com/what-is-emdr/>
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