

EMDR FAQs

Why EMDR?

EMDR is helpful because it can help your brain target and process disturbing experiences in a way other treatment modalities cannot. Verbal processing alone doesn't always provide an effective avenue for resolution of a traumatic experience. For example, there may be an issue or incident that you've processed in therapy, yet it still has significant emotional charge. EMDR can help the brain process the experience and reduce the level of disturbance that it holds for you.

What is EMDR?

EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) is a method for treating disturbing experiences that underlie many life issues. When a disturbing event occurs such as a car accident, the loss of someone you love, a relational betrayal etc., it can get locked in the nervous system of the body. The memory is there with the original images, sounds, thoughts and feelings associated with it. EMDR accesses this information and provides an avenue for it to be reprocessed in a way that takes the 'charge' out of the memory and allows the person to integrate it into their life story in a more healthy way. Through bilateral stimulation (eye movements, tactile or auditory) of the brain, EMDR unlocks the nervous system and allows the brain to process disturbing experiences.

What is an EMDR session like?

An EMDR session is typically 75 minutes and is focused on a particular target memory. You will provide a snapshot of the target memory that represents the greatest level of disturbance, which serves as the starting point. That target snapshot is like a hub and often there are several memory channels that stem from it. While I facilitate sets of bilateral stimulation you will focus on the target memory and then notice whatever comes up in your mind or body without intentionally focusing on any particular thought or idea. The bilateral stimulation helps to bring up the thoughts and feelings related to the memory that need to be processed.

What will I experience during and after an EMDR session?

Everyone's EMDR experience is different, but it's not unusual for intense feelings to come up during a session. That's part of processing of the memory. Often old feelings associated with the original event have become stuck in the body and are stored with the memory. The processing allows those feelings to come up, be felt and move through you. The brain may continue to process after an EMDR session, which means that you may experience feelings or thoughts associated with the memory during the days following a session. It is also possible that other related memories will come up that are triggered by the original memory that was targeted in the session.



Does EMDR really work?

Research studies have consistently found that EMDR effectively decreases or eliminates trauma symptoms for the majority of clients. References and a research bibliography, as well as much more information on EMDR, can be found on the website for the EMDR International Association, www.emdria.org.

How many EMDR sessions will I need?

The number of EMDR sessions that are needed to process a targeted memory varies from person to person. Occasionally, a memory can be processed in one session, but often it takes 2-3 or more, depending on the complexity of the issue being targeted. EMDR is utilized throughout the therapy process, but isn't necessarily done every session.

Can I see you for EMDR if I have another therapist?

I do see clients for EMDR only and work closely with their primary therapist. Usually clients come to see me to process specific memories/issues that they're working on with their primary therapist. The starting point would be an initial session for you and I to meet and to evaluate whether EMDR would be the best treatment for you at this time.

