

INTRODUCTION TO
EMDR

WITH WELLNESS COACH-NIKI B





Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR)

EMDR?

EMDR stands for **Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing**. It is an evidenced based (this means it is supported by a large amount of scientific research), effective form of therapy for people who have been through difficult, frightening or traumatic experiences. It can also help with other problems such as phobias (reacting with extreme fear about a situation, living creature, place or object) particularly when a memory of something from the past is causing difficulties now.

What is trauma?

When we experience something very frightening, sometimes our brains do not process what happens in the same way as a normal experience. Usually, memories are sorted and “filed away” in our minds but during a traumatic experience the brain is in “survival mode” and this does not happen. Instead, the memory might stay as broken parts in our minds and the emotions stay feeling very raw and current.

Our brains might try to sort and process the memories by showing them back to us at random times which can be very upsetting. It is common to experience some or all of the following difficulties following a traumatic event:

- Flashbacks, where you feel as though you are 'back there' and it is happening again
- Nightmares and difficulty sleeping
- Feeling 'cut off' or disconnected from feelings
- Feeling 'on edge' and jumpy • Feeling tearful or easily upset
- Struggling to concentrate • Wanting to avoid things that remind you of the event
- Children may become 'clingy' or act younger than their age

Often these difficulties get better with time. However, if you are still struggling several months after the event, EMDR therapy may be helpful.





Sorting through the Junk Drawer

Is it impossible to predict when anxiety and panic might strike, leaving you feeling trapped as if the past trauma is happening all over again..... Despite efforts to move forward, those emotions unexpectedly resurface!

Lets understand why: When you experienced the trauma, your brain struggled to process it as usual. Instead of organizing the memory properly, it was tucked away into a mental "junk drawer" - a place where things get stored without much order.

The problem with this storage method is that these memories retain the same intensity of thoughts, feelings, and even physical sensations from when the event occurred.

As a result, any triggers resembling the trauma can bring back these emotions and sensations, sometimes even in dreams or flashbacks where the memory feels as real as the first time.

EMDR therapy aims to reprocess emotionally charged memories, moving them from that cluttered "junk drawer" to a more organized place in your mind. The event becomes a part of your history rather than a defining moment that still grips you emotionally.

While you'll remember what happened, the distressing emotions will lessen significantly after treatment. EMDR can also address negative self-beliefs that contribute to anxiety and depression symptoms.

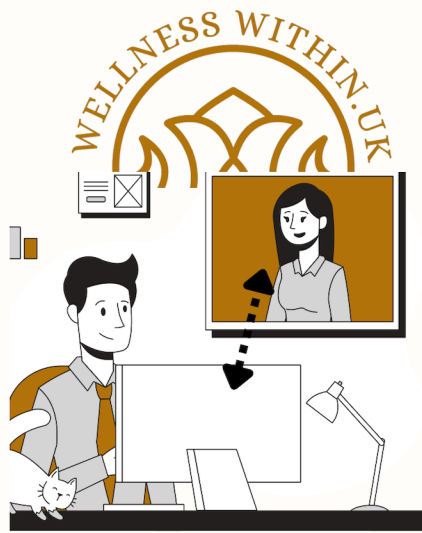


Theory & Science

EMDR therapy is rooted in several theories and principles that have been supported by scientific research:

- **Memory Processing:** One key aspect of EMDR therapy is its focus on how memories are processed in the brain. When we experience a traumatic event, the memory may not be fully processed and can become stuck, leading to distressing symptoms. EMDR aims to help the brain reprocess these memories so they can be integrated more adaptively.
- **Bilateral Stimulation:** During EMDR therapy, bilateral stimulation (such as eye movements, taps, or sounds) is used to facilitate memory processing. This process is thought to mimic the natural rapid eye movement (REM) sleep phase, which is associated with memory consolidation and emotional processing.
- **Adaptive Information Processing (AIP) Model:** EMDR is based on the Adaptive Information Processing (AIP) model, which suggests that our brains have a natural capacity to heal from psychological wounds when given the right conditions. EMDR aims to activate this innate healing process by facilitating the reprocessing of traumatic memories.
- **Neurobiological Changes:** Research using neuroimaging techniques has shown that EMDR therapy can lead to changes in brain activity and connectivity. For example, studies have demonstrated alterations in regions of the brain involved in memory and emotion processing following EMDR treatment.
- **Effectiveness:** Numerous clinical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of EMDR therapy in treating conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, and other trauma-related symptoms. EMDR has been recognized as an evidence-based treatment by organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Psychological Association (APA).

Overall, EMDR therapy is grounded in scientific principles and supported by a growing body of research. It offers a structured and effective approach to addressing trauma and distressing memories, with the goal of promoting healing and recovery.



What to Expect Initially?

Before moving forward with any form of therapy, I encourage you to schedule a consultation with several therapists or EMDR consultants.

I welcome the opportunity to explore the possibility of working together and offer a Free complimentary Discovery Call.

During this call, we'll have the chance to connect and start exploring your needs and goals. This conversation will help us determine if we're a good fit for working together and if EMDR therapy aligns with your current situation and objectives.

Please feel free to reach out to book your free Discovery Call. I'm here to support you in making an informed decision about your path to healing.

My goal is to provide you with a secure and calm experience throughout the process, starting from our initial conversation. If you choose to continue with EMDR therapy with me, in our initial sessions together, we'll delve into your reasons for seeking treatment and create a roadmap for our work together.

During our first few appointments, I'll create a space for you to freely express yourself at a pace that is right for you. It's essential for me to understand what's bothering you the most right now and what motivated you to seek help.

Additionally, I'll inquire about your childhood experiences, family dynamics, and your current relationships. This comprehensive understanding will guide us in developing a tailored treatment plan & learning about your goals for treatment. Whether you're seeking relief from specific symptoms, healing from past traumas, or improving relationships, your goals will shape our therapeutic approach.



Building on Your Resources

Preparing resources before reprocessing in EMDR therapy is crucial to ensure that you feel safe, grounded, and supported throughout the healing process. Here's why we focus on building resources before diving into reprocessing:

- **Establishing Safety:** EMDR therapy can bring up intense emotions and memories. By preparing resources, we create a sense of safety and stability that helps you feel more secure when addressing difficult experiences.
- **Enhancing Coping Skills:** Resources can include relaxation techniques, visualization exercises, and grounding tools that empower you to manage distressing emotions effectively. These skills provide a sense of control during challenging moments.
- **Increasing Emotional Regulation:** Building resources helps regulate your emotions and strengthen your capacity to handle emotional triggers. This enables you to approach reprocessing with greater emotional stability and resilience.
- **Building Resilience:** Resources act as building blocks for resilience, nurturing your inner strength and adaptive coping strategies. They serve as a foundation for processing and integrating challenging memories.
- **Creating a Supportive Environment:** Having a toolbox of resources enhances your ability to self-soothe and navigate emotional challenges both in and out of therapy. This fosters a supportive environment for deep healing and transformation.

In essence, preparing resources before reprocessing in EMDR therapy is about equipping you with the necessary tools and skills to navigate the therapeutic journey effectively. By cultivating a strong foundation of resources, we optimise the healing process and empower you to achieve meaningful and sustainable results.



Reprocessing

So let's now talk about how reprocessing works in EMDR therapy. It's a fascinating process that can really shift how your brain handles difficult memories and experiences.

First, together we **identify** specific memories or issues that are causing you distress or holding you back. These could be past traumas or negative beliefs about yourself. Notice I highlighted **Identify**, rather than full disclosure, I only need to understand enough to support **symptom reduction** without the pressure of recounting traumatic events in great detail.

During sessions we will always resource before we bring up these memories in a structured way, while using bilateral stimulation. This could involve following my fingers with your eyes or feeling gentle taps on your hands or knees, I will stop the finger/tapping action at times and ask what you noticed. You might notice changes in the memory, images, thoughts, feelings or body sensations.

There is no right or wrong and the most important thing you can do is to just notice whatever comes up for you. You will also agree a "stop signal" to help you feel in control of the processing. It might seem a bit unusual, but this stimulation helps activate your brain's natural healing processes and is a sign that your brain is reprocessing the memory.

Over time, the emotional intensity associated with the memory begins to lessen. You might start to see things from a new perspective or feel less overwhelmed by the memory. It's like your brain is updating old information with healthier responses.

Towards the end of every session, we'll make sure you feel grounded and calm. We'll discuss any insights or experiences that came up during the reprocessing. This helps bring the session to a positive conclusion.

By engaging in this targeted reprocessing, we can help you process and release the emotional weight of past experiences, paving the way for greater emotional well-being and resilience. I'm here to support you every step of the way through this process, feel free to reach out.

Common Questions


Do you go into a trance when you have EMDR? No. EMDR is not the same as hypnosis and you will remain fully awake and in control at all times.

Can I do EMDR therapy while pregnant? While past beliefs discouraged EMDR during pregnancy due to stress concerns, current research indicates it's likely safe. EMDR can even help expectant mothers bond with their child by addressing underlying traumas.

Can I do EMDR therapy if I have a history of seizures? EMDR currently in the UK cannot be offered to an individual with seizure history. The primary concern with using EMDR therapy in individuals with a history of seizures is the potential to trigger seizure activity. The rhythmic bilateral stimulation used in EMDR could potentially induce neurological changes that may increase the risk of seizures in susceptible individuals.

What about EMDR for addictions? I specialise in EMDR therapy for addiction recovery. While it can be effective, I may not proceed if someone is medicated during early recovery. Having a strong support network is essential if undergoing EMDR therapy during recovery.

Can Young Children have EMDR ? With some adaptations, EMDR can be successful for younger children as well as teenagers. Parents may be asked to be involved in sessions for younger children. The therapist may work with parents to develop a “story” of the traumatic experience which can be read to the child while a parent taps the child on each shoulder or knee. They may also be asked to draw their memories or feelings.



It's important to recognise that EMDR therapy can sometimes bring up difficult emotions when processing memories. Think of it like driving through a dark tunnel—you might want to speed through to reach the other side quickly, but stopping midway means staying in the darkness. I'll be here to help you navigate through any challenging feelings that arise and support you as we move through the tunnel together. You have the power to use your "STOP sign" at any time, signaling when you need a break before continuing forward.

Together, we'll work through the process at a pace that feels manageable and supportive for you. Remember, you're not alone in this journey.

Thank
you



Thank you so much for taking the time to explore EMDR with me and if you would like to explore further please visit my website to book your free Discovery call with me..

www.wellnesswithin.uk



All the Very Best

Niki Baggs

WWuk Wellness Coach and Therapist