



Chapter 7.1 - Detailed Progression of the Eight Phases of EMDR

The Eight Phases of EMDR are a distinctive feature of this therapeutic approach, meticulously designed to lead clients from recall to resolution and integration of traumatic memories. This structured process is a journey that moves clients through a landscape of healing and into a future of resilience and empowerment.

In the history-taking phase, the therapist and client collaboratively explore past events that have laid the groundwork for present trauma and dysfunction. Detailed accounts of the client's life story are gathered to identify specific targets for reprocessing. An example might be the uncovering of a seemingly innocuous childhood event that, upon exploration, reveals its significant impact on an adult client's current phobias.

The preparation phase is next, where clients learn about EMDR, its processes, and their roles in it. They are equipped with self-soothing techniques to ensure they can maintain equilibrium during the upcoming phases. Therapists often relate stories of the transformational shift that occurs in clients as they acquire these coping skills, like a client who found solace in simple breathing exercises amid panic attacks.

During the assessment phase, a target memory is activated along with a negative self-belief and related emotions and body sensations. The therapist guides the client in choosing a positive belief to replace the negative. For example, a client who has always believed "I am powerless" may choose "I am in control" as a replacement belief to work toward.

Desensitization brings the client to the core of their traumatic memory while engaging in bilateral stimulation. Progress is measured by the client's Subjective Units of Distress Scale

(SUDS), with successful sessions bringing these ratings down as processing unfolds. A therapist might recall how a client's SUDS decreased progressively from session to session, illustrating improvement.

In the installation phase, the positive belief identified previously is consolidated. Therapists use cases to highlight how clients begin to genuinely resonate with the new belief, replacing their old narrative with one that reflects growth and change.

Body scanning follows, with the client checking in with their body to identify any residual tension related to the targeted memory. This pivotal phase ensures no unprocessed somatic distress remains, often bringing to light subtler layers of the trauma not initially noticed.

Lastly, the closure phase secures the progress made within a session, ensuring the client leaves feeling better than when they came in, while the reevaluation phase, typically at the start of the next session, assesses treatment efficacy and guides future therapeutic direction.

Key Takeaways:

- The eight phases of EMDR provide a comprehensive framework for trauma processing.
- History-taking is crucial for identifying trauma targets for EMDR processing.
- Preparation equips clients with knowledge about EMDR and self-regulation skills.
- Assessment involves activating the memory, negative belief, and choosing a positive belief.
- Desensitization focuses on processing the traumatic memory while decreasing distress levels.
- Installation strengthens the new, positive belief, and body scanning checks for residual physical distress.
- Closure ensures client stability post session, and reevaluation helps assess progress and plan further treatment.