****

**How to prepare for EMDR**

**Before your EMDR Session:**

* Practice the calming and relaxation techniques your therapist introduced to you any time you feel stressed, overwhelmed, anxious, or not present in the moment. These techniques may also be used during your EMDR sessions if your body becomes activated. It’s important you know how to use these techniques appropriately and are putting them into practice daily.
* Practice grounding techniques to pull yourself back into the here-and-now if/when your system is feeling “spaced out or numb”. When your system feels this way, you may be experiencing some level of dissociation or depersonalization due to overwhelm. During EMDR it is important that you are as present in the here-and-now, as your brain needs to be able to focus on the bilateral stimulation (BLS).
* It is highly discouraged to approach your Intensive having used any substances (alcohol, drugs, subscribed substances) as these could alter your awareness and success.
* Be aware of your “Parts”. Please consider Parts of you that may be fearful of processing, worried about outcome, concerned about performance etc. We will utilize parts work as it comes up in the processing session. It will be important to be connected to Self during our time together, to be mindful and inclusive of Parts, but not let them hijack our time together due to fear, panic, or stress.
* Please let your therapist know if you are currently taking any Benzodiazepines! These are mostly prescribed for anxiety. The most well-known ones are Valium, Klonopin, Ativan, and Xanax, which fall under the controlled substances label. If you have such a prescription, please ask your prescriber if it would be safe for you to skip some doses - before, during, and after EMDR sessions - to make sure your brain can fully process the EMDR bilateral stimulation.

**During Your EMDR Session:**

* Bring cold water for hydration. Cold water can keep you more regulated by moving you out of your sympathetic nervous system and back into your social engagement system, which is where our processing work needs to take place. Because processing is a metabolic process (meaning we are literally ‘digesting’ material), you are encouraged to bring a healthy snack (fruit, nuts etc) to keep your blood sugar levels regulated.
* Bring anything into session that might help you feel calm and relaxed, such as lotion, essential oils, cold water bottle, fuzzy blanket, etc.
* Stay aware of your Parts as they arise…some of our parts will fight relentlessly to keep us safe. Understand that you are driving the bus in your healing process….you’re not alone, I am with you…together we will navigate through old memories and move toward a more adaptive way of your viewing them. The pace will be set by you and remember, there is no wrong way to do EMDR….just let whatever happens, happen!

**After Your EMDR Session:**

* Try to come into sessions as less stressed at possible, i.e., don’t schedule sessions at the start or middle of a hectic workday or when you know you might be subjected to triggers and stressors. Your brain will continue to process for the rest of the day, through the night, and over the next few days. Your processing evening is best spent relaxed, supported, and contemplative. After sessions you may have trouble focusing, feel very tired, emotional, overstimulated, and may easily get triggered. If we are working on complex PTSD symptoms, it may be best NOT work for the rest of the day. Your therapist will tell you to rest after the reprocessing session.
* Please keep a log of any triggers, images, cognitions, emotions and/or body sensations you experience after our time together. We will want to explore these for future targeting and or processing in our Intensive follow up session.
* Because your neural pathways will be open and processing a new narrative, it is important to practice self-care. To the best of your ability, do not drink alcohol or use substances for the remainder of your processing day as we want to keep the new narrative “awake”. Substance use can short circuit gains of your processing work. Engaging in a mindful walk may continue to allow your processing work through the organic bilateral stimulation process of walking.

**For EMDR Telehealth Services:**

* Make sure that you have a large monitor or screen available to access the bilateral stimulation platform. Your therapist will provide you with a link, which you can save and reuse for each session.
* Ensure the lighting and temperature in the room is to your liking. Often it’s a good idea to close the blinds.
* Turn of any electronic devices that could ring, beep, or have pop-up notifications. The computer you are using during BLS may also have notifications set up, please turn them off.
* Ideally wear a headset to make sure you can fully concentrate and be present in your EMDR session.
* Make sure you are in a space where nobody will interrupt you. Often it helps to put a sticky note on your door advising people not to interrupt you. If you have animals that usually roam freely in your space, consider if they can be in a different room to avoid you getting distracted.

~May your healing bring a peace and understanding of your past, while anchoring you into the present~ Jane Gray M.A., LPC