**A Guide to EMDR Therapy: Helping Your Loved One Heal from Trauma**

**How to help a loved one who is Experiencing Trauma**

Recently someone told you that your family member or friend is undergoing EMDR Therapy. This can be surprising and confusing at first. Know that you are a trusted person in your friends life and they felt safe sharing with you. This guide to EMDR Therapy is to help address questions you may have as well as ways you can help your loved one heal from trauma.

**What is EMDR Therapy?**

[EMDR Therapy;](https://www.emdr.com/what-is-emdr-therapy-layperson/) Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy is an 8 phase therapy intervention that helps reduce symptoms of PTSD. The first two sessions are information sessions and resourcing which will help you create a timeline of the trauma. Phase two will also teach coping skills that can help ease your nervous system. These two phases can last anywhere from two months to six months. Not everyone needs to utilize skills from all 8 phases, For some people the first two phases of EMDR is enough to resolve symptoms.

Phases 3-8 involves reprocessing the traumatic memories. First the target is identified. Targets are a memory of the trauma, an image, a feeling or sensation. Your therapist will help you to identify the targets as well as what order to reprocess them. For a more in depth overview of the 8 phases click [here.](https://www.embraceauthentic.com/treatments/emdr-therapy/)

**Why EMDR to Heal Trauma?**

There are many reasons someone requests EMDR therapy.

1. Healing from past traumatic experiences, such as abuse or accidents.
2. Managing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
3. Addressing anxiety or panic disorders related to specific traumatic events.
4. Overcoming phobias or fears rooted in past experiences.
5. Enhancing performance or coping skills in various aspects of life, such as sports, academics, or professional endeavors.

**How can I support Them During EMDR Therapy?**

When your loved one starts EMDR Therapy they may be sharing things with their therapist from their past. One way to support them is to provide them space to share with you. You can also be a space to just spend time together and get relief from the stress of talking about trauma. You can ask them the following questions to help understand their needs:

*What do you need to feel supported through this?*

*How can I help you to relieve your stress?*

*What needs to change about our current schedule to make room/time for you to reprocess?*

*What are some things I can avoid saying or doing while you are reprocessing?*

**“I Don’t Want Them to Feel This Way, I Wish There Was More I Can do.”**

This is something I hear from loved ones of individuals suffering from mental illness often. You love and care so deeply for them and want them to get better.You may struggle to relate when things are good with the one you love. You feel helpless and wish you could erase the pain or take it from them. It is important to remember,

**You are Doing so Much More Than you Realize.**

Being a trusted family member or friend is a beautiful gift. It means you are someone that they trust and feel safe with. By continuing to be safe, and non-judgemental and taking the time to read and understand you are already giving your loved one the benefits of community, connection, safety, and trust, which helps the reprocessing and[builds resilience](https://www.mindfulsynergi.com/is-connection-really-the-key-to-healing-trauma/).

**Trauma is Not a Choice.**

Many of us have been exposed to trauma, whether through the news, hearing about events in our community, or direct experiences. When we encounter trauma, our brains often reprocess the information and store it in a way that doesn’t impact our daily lives. You may personally have an experienced that reflects this.

If we have been exposed to repeated traumas or if the trauma was highly disregulating, the brain struggles to reprocess and we get stuck in “[fight or flight”](https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/understanding-the-stress-response) mode. When the trauma gets stuck there is little we can do on our own or our loved ones can do to help us process. EMDR is a therapy that acts as a tool that helps the trauma get “unstuck” so your loved one can live a life unaffected by their trauma.

Supporting a loved one through trauma healing with EMDR can be a profound journey of understanding and resilience. By providing guidance and encouragement, you can play a crucial role in their healing process, fostering hope and renewal along the way. Together, you can navigate the path towards healing and restoration, paving the way for a brighter and more fulfilling future.