



# EMDR CLIENT HANDBOOK

Learn about EMDR Therapy and  
how it works

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Jessica Cody is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Oklahoma and Texas with extensive experience providing trauma-focused therapy to individuals of all ages. She is the owner of Redeeming Lives Counseling and Consulting Services, LLC, a private practice founded in Norman, Oklahoma. Jessica specializes in helping clients overcome challenges such as PTSD, anxiety disorders, depression, ADHD, and codependency.

As an EMDR Consultant-in-Training, Jessica is passionate about guiding clinicians on their path to mastering EMDR therapy. She offers individualized and group consultations designed to strengthen skills, deepen understanding, and support professionals in becoming EMDR-certified. Her consultations are collaborative and tailored to meet each clinician's needs, ensuring they feel confident and competent in utilizing EMDR therapy.

Jessica is known for her compassionate, faith-based approach and her dedication to empowering both clients and fellow therapists. In addition to her consulting work, she offers continuing education courses on EMDR-related topics, including treating ADHD, eating disorders, and relationship issues, as well as integrating play therapy and telehealth strategies.

Whether you are a therapist seeking advanced EMDR consultation or a client looking for effective, evidence-based trauma therapy, Jessica is committed to helping you achieve healing, growth, and restoration.

# EMDR Therapy Client Handbook



## Welcome!

Welcome to EMDR therapy at Redeeming Lives Counseling and Consulting Services, LLC! This handbook is designed to give you a thorough understanding of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, the science behind it, and what to expect throughout the process.

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## What is EMDR Therapy?

EMDR therapy is a structured, evidence-based approach that helps individuals heal from the emotional distress caused by disturbing life experiences or trauma. Unlike traditional talk therapy, EMDR focuses on processing unresolved memories that continue to cause emotional and psychological challenges. By addressing these memories, EMDR helps you experience relief and gain insight, leading to healthier responses and overall well-being.

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Watch these videos to learn more:

You can also find the videos in the About EMDR therapy tab on my website: [redeemingtherapy.com](http://redeemingtherapy.com).

Introduction to EMDR Therapy video:



<https://youtu.be/Pkfln-ZtWeY>

## How EMDR Works:



<https://www.youtube.com/embed/wQAUzUN0UGY?feature=oembed>

## What is Bilateral Stimulation (BLS)?

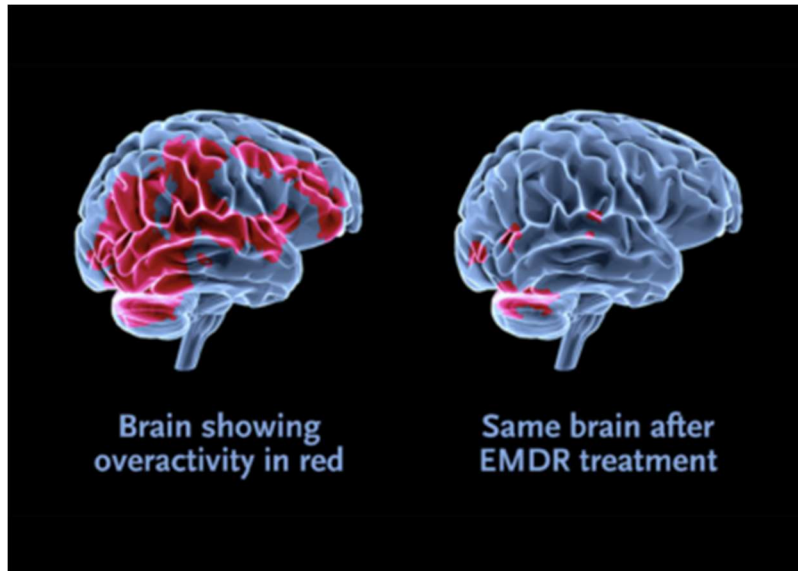
Bilateral Stimulation is a core component of EMDR therapy. It involves engaging both sides of the brain alternately, often through:

- Side-to-side eye movements.
- Tactile stimulation, such as tapping on your hands or knees.
  - Butterfly Hug: tapping your shoulders
- Audio stimulation, such as tones alternating between ears.

## How Does BLS Work?

BLS helps activate the brain's natural processing system, enabling you to access and reprocess traumatic memories in a controlled and safe way. This process reduces the emotional charge of those memories, making them less disturbing over time.

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## How Trauma Impacts the Brain

Trauma affects the brain in significant ways:

1. **Amygdala:** The "fear center" becomes overactive, signaling danger even when none exists.
2. **Hippocampus:** Responsible for memory, it struggles to correctly categorize traumatic events as "past," keeping them feeling current.
3. **Prefrontal Cortex:** The rational part of the brain becomes underactive, making it difficult to think clearly or regulate emotions.

This dysregulation creates trauma symptoms, which are the body and brain's attempt to cope with unresolved distress.

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## How EMDR Helps the Brain

EMDR uses BLS to stimulate the brain's natural healing process. When memories are reprocessed through EMDR, they are moved from the "fear center" of the brain to a more

adaptive, rational part. This reduces the emotional intensity and helps you view the trauma with more clarity and less distress.

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## Examples of Trauma Responses and Symptoms

Common trauma responses include:

- Hypervigilance (feeling "on edge" or "on guard")
  - Emotional numbness or detachment.
  - Intrusive thoughts
  - Flashbacks (remember past events or feeling like it is happening in the present)
  - Nightmares or sleep disturbances.
  - Difficulty concentrating.
  - Avoidance of reminders of the event.
  - Dissociating
  - Losing hope for the future
  - Anxiety
  - Agitation or irritability
  - Feeling Tense
  - Reckless or destructive behavior
  - Racing thoughts
  - Feeling guilt or shame
  - Fear of abandonment
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## Understanding the Fight, Flight, and Freeze Responses

These are survival mechanisms activated during perceived danger:

1. **Fight:** Reacting aggressively to protect oneself.
2. **Flight:** Attempting to escape the danger.
3. **Freeze:** Becoming immobile or dissociating when escape feels impossible.

While these responses are natural, trauma can cause them to be triggered even when no real danger exists.

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## Mental Health Issues Related to Trauma

Trauma can lead to various mental health challenges, including:

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
  - Complex PTSD
  - Personality Disorders
  - Anxiety disorders.
  - Depression.
  - Dissociative disorders.
  - Eating disorders.
  - Chronic pain or somatic symptoms.
  - Relationship problems
  - Substance use disorders.
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## Little “t” Traumas vs. Big “T” Traumas

- **Big “T” Trauma:** Major life-threatening events like abuse, accidents, or natural disasters.
- **Little “t” Trauma:** Smaller events that still cause emotional harm, such as bullying, rejection, or minor injuries.

Both types can disrupt the brain’s processing system and benefit from EMDR therapy.

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## What Can EMDR Help With?

EMDR is effective for a wide range of issues, including:

- PTSD and complex trauma.
- Anxiety and panic disorders.
- Depression.
- Phobias.
- Grief and loss.
- Chronic pain.



- Low self-esteem.
  - Codependency and unhealthy relationships.
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## Who Can Benefit from EMDR?

EMDR is suitable for individuals of all ages who struggle with unresolved distress or trauma. It is also beneficial for those who:

- Feel “stuck” in traditional talk therapy.
  - Experience persistent triggers or flashbacks.
  - Want to address the root causes of their symptoms.
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## The 8 Phases of EMDR Therapy

EMDR follows eight structured phases:

1. **History Taking and Treatment planning:** Reviewing your past and current concerns to create a treatment plan. Assess client’s internal and external resources.
  2. **Preparation:** Teaching coping skills and explaining the EMDR process.
  3. **Assessment:** Identifying specific events and the emotions, beliefs, and sensations attached to them.
  4. **Desensitization:** Using BLS to process the event and reduce distress.
  5. **Installation:** Reinforcing positive beliefs about yourself.
  6. **Body Scan:** Checking for any lingering physical tension or discomfort.
  7. **Closure:** Ensuring you feel safe and grounded at the end of the session.
  8. **Reevaluation:** Reviewing progress and addressing any remaining concerns.
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## What to Expect in an EMDR Session

1. **Initial Phase:** Your therapist will help you identify a specific event or negative cognition to focus on.
2. **Bilateral Stimulation:** You will follow a structured set of eye movements, taps, or sounds while recalling the image.
3. **Processing:** Memories may shift or change as you process them. You may feel strong emotions initially, but this usually subsides. There may be times it will get worse before it gets better.

4. **Integration:** The goal is to help you less distress by the time your session ends. However, there are times it could take a few sessions to process one event.
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## Preparing for Your EMDR Journey

The great thing about EMDR therapy is that it is not invasive. You will not be required to recall the event in detail. You will be asked to consider the image that represents the worst part of the event as you think of it now. Then you will be asked to consider which negative belief you have about that image as you think of it now. We will discuss emotions you are experiencing and where you feel that in your body.

Before we get started using EMDR therapy, we will consider your history and how that is currently impacting you. We will go over a timeline of events where you will have an opportunity to complete in your own time or in session.

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## Time Line Assignment

You will receive the assignment worksheet during the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> session. This is just for your review so that you can think about what you want to include.

### Time Line

To help better understand your life story, we will work on a timeline of your life journey. You will find a common theme among events you have been through where you received positive and negative messages. We want to use the positive messages as a resource to help build upon your strengths. We will use the negative messages as a guide to help determine what to process.

### Instructions:

1. On the “EMDR Timeline” worksheet, please identify experiences that have affected you negatively and positively. Be sure to label the event rather than describing what happened. We do not want you to be retraumatized by having to think about the details of the event.

### *Possible events to include:*

- A. **Life changes** births of children, life season changes that impacted you, marriages, divorce, going to school, starting a business.



# Psychoeducation

## Preparing for EMDR Therapy: Resources and Tools for Success

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy is a powerful tool for healing trauma, but it requires preparation to ensure clients have the emotional resilience to process distressing memories. Developing coping skills, understanding cognitive distortions, and identifying supportive resources are essential steps in this journey. This portion explores tools and resources that can help clients prepare for EMDR therapy effectively.

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## Coping Skills for EMDR Preparation

### 1. Safe Calm Place Visualization

The *safe calm place* technique is a foundational tool in EMDR therapy. It involves creating a mental space that evokes feelings of safety, relaxation, and comfort. This tool is used to help clients ground themselves during challenging sessions.

- **Practice Exercise:**

*Imagine a place where you feel completely at ease—this could be a beach, a forest, a cozy room, or any other setting. Describe the details of this place:*

- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- What do you smell?
- How does it feel to be there? What does it physically feel like? Is there a warm sun, do you feel a cool breeze? Are you on a soft couch or sturdy chair?

Write or draw your safe calm place below:

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### 2. Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness helps clients stay grounded in the present moment. Regular practice can enhance emotional regulation, reduce anxiety, and improve focus.

- *Practice Exercise:* Set a timer for five minutes. Sit in a quiet space and focus on your breath. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the sensation of your breath.

### 3. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

PMR is a method of tensing and relaxing muscle groups to release physical tension and promote relaxation.

- *Practice Exercise:* Starting with your feet, tense each muscle group for 5-10 seconds, then relax for 15-20 seconds. Move upward through your body, ending with your face and neck.
- 4. **Narrating Actions or Explaining What You're Doing**

For individuals who experience anxiety, narrating or explaining your actions aloud can help ground you. For instance, saying, "*I am washing dishes now. The water feels warm, and the soap smells like lemon,*" can anchor you to the present moment. Continue through the task by explaining, "*I am placing the plate in the dishwasher*". Or, "*I am washing the plate. I am rinsing the plate. I am drying the plate. I am putting the plate in the cabinet*".
- 5. **Light Stream Technique**

The light stream technique involves visualizing a beam of healing light flowing through your body, washing away tension or distress.

  - *Practice Exercise:*
  - Consider what emotion you are experiencing in this moment. Are you feeling tense, stressed, anxious, upset, hurt, etc.?
  - What color, shape, or texture would you give it?
  - Consider what you need in this moment, Is it peace, calm, happiness?
  - What color, shape, or texture is it?
  - Imagine a light entering through the top of your head, filling you with calm and peace as it fills your body with the emotion you need.
- 6. **Breathing Techniques**

Focused breathing can quickly reduce anxiety. Popular techniques include:

  - **4-7-8 Breathing:** Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 7 counts, exhale for 8 counts.
  - **Box Breathing:** Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts.
- 7. **Finding Resources**

Developing a "toolbox" of resources, such as soothing music, grounding objects (e.g., a stress ball or soft fabric), or calming apps (e.g., Calm, Headspace), can be invaluable.

### Which coping skills work best?

- Distractions: \_\_\_\_\_
- Calming: \_\_\_\_\_
- Support: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Identifying Your Support System

Having a support system is crucial during EMDR therapy. Supportive individuals provide encouragement, validation, and practical assistance when needed.

- **Who is your support system?**

- Family: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Friends: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Therapists or counselors: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other supportive individuals: \_\_\_\_\_
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## Importance of Cognitive Distortions and Core Beliefs

Cognitive distortions are irrational thought patterns that can perpetuate negative emotions and behaviors. Common distortions include:

- **All-or-nothing thinking:** Viewing situations as entirely good or bad.
- **Catastrophizing:** Expecting the worst-case scenario.
- **Overgeneralization:** Applying a single negative experience to all areas of life.

*Core beliefs* are deep-seated perceptions about ourselves, others, and the world. Negative core beliefs, such as "I am unworthy" or "The world is unsafe," can fuel distress and hinder progress in therapy.

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## Steps to Address Cognitive Distortions

1. **Identify the distortion:** Write down negative thoughts and determine which distortion applies.
2. **Challenge the distortion:** Ask yourself, *What evidence supports or contradicts this thought?*
3. **Replace it with a balanced thought:** For example, instead of thinking, *"I failed; I'm a failure,"* replace it with, *"This experience didn't go as planned, but I can learn from it."*

For more information on Cognitive distortions review the Cognitive Distortions worksheet.

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Preparing for EMDR therapy involves building coping skills, identifying support systems, and addressing cognitive distortions. These tools help create a strong foundation for healing and resilience. Regular practice of these skills outside of therapy enhances their effectiveness during sessions, ensuring clients can process memories safely and successfully.

If you are beginning your EMDR journey, work closely with your therapist to personalize these techniques and create a supportive environment for growth and healing.

# Cognitive Distortions

## Cognitive Distortions Worksheet

### Understanding Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are unhelpful thinking patterns that can negatively influence how you perceive situations, yourself, and others. Identifying and challenging these distortions can help you develop healthier thought patterns and improve your emotional well-being.

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### Step 1: Learn About Common Cognitive Distortions

Below are examples of cognitive distortions:

1. **All-or-Nothing Thinking:** Seeing things in extremes; no middle ground.  
*Example:* "If I don't do this perfectly, I'm a failure."
  2. **Overgeneralization:** Applying one negative experience to all situations.  
*Example:* "I failed this test, so I'll fail everything in life."
  3. **Mental Filtering:** Focusing only on the negatives and ignoring positives.  
*Example:* "I made one mistake, so the entire project is ruined."
  4. **Discounting the Positive:** Downplaying achievements or positive feedback.  
*Example:* "Anyone could have done what I did—it's not a big deal."
  5. **Catastrophizing:** Expecting the worst-case scenario to happen.  
*Example:* "If I make a mistake, I'll lose my job and never recover."
  6. **Emotional Reasoning:** Believing emotions reflect reality.  
*Example:* "I feel anxious, so something bad must be happening."
  7. **Should Statements:** Rigid rules about how you or others *should* behave.  
*Example:* "I should always be available to help others."
  8. **Personalization:** Taking blame for things outside of your control.  
*Example:* "It's my fault my friend is upset—they must be mad at me."
  9. **Mind Reading:** Assuming you know what others are thinking.  
*Example:* "She didn't text back because she's mad at me."
  10. **Fortune Telling:** Predicting the future negatively without evidence.  
*Example:* "I just know this presentation will be a disaster."
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### Step 2: Recognize Your Cognitive Distortions

Think about a recent challenging situation or upsetting event. Write down your thoughts and identify any distortions.

## **Situation Your Thought Cognitive Distortion(s)**

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### **Step 3: Challenge Your Cognitive Distortions**

For each distortion you identified, ask yourself the following questions:

- **Is this thought based on facts or assumptions?**
  - **What evidence do I have to support or refute this thought?**
  - **Am I seeing the full picture, or just focusing on the negatives?**
  - **What would I tell a friend if they had this thought?**
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### **Step 4: Replace the Distorted Thought**

Rewrite your original thought in a more balanced and realistic way.

**Original Thought    New Balanced Thought**

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### **Step 5: Reflect on the Outcome**

After practicing this exercise, reflect on how you feel and whether your perspective has shifted. Write down your insights.

- **How do you feel after challenging this thought?**
  - **What can you do differently next time you notice a cognitive distortion?**
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### **Tips for Managing Cognitive Distortions**

- Practice mindfulness to catch distorted thoughts in real time.
- Keep a journal to track and reflect on recurring distortions.
- Seek feedback from a trusted friend or therapist to challenge unhelpful thoughts.

Remember, changing thought patterns takes time and practice. Be patient with yourself!



