ADELPHOS HEALTHCARE

Your EMDR Healing Journey

A Week-by-Week Client Workbook

This workbook is your personal companion through Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy. Use it to record insights, track your progress, and understand each step of your healing process.

PHASES OF TREATMENT

1 History · 2 Prep · 3 Assess · 4 Process · 5 Install · 6 Body · 7 Closure

CLIENT NAME

THERAPIST

DATE STARTED

Welcome to Your Healing Journey

This workbook belongs to you. It is a private space to track, reflect, and grow.

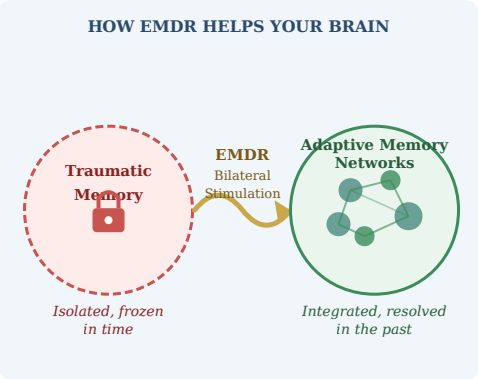
> **How to Use This Workbook**
>
> Each section of this guide corresponds to a phase or week of your EMDR treatment. Your therapist will let you know which section you are working in at each session. The writing spaces are for *you* — there are no right or wrong answers. Write whatever feels true in the moment.

What Is EMDR?

EMDR — **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing** — is a highly effective, evidence-based therapy specifically designed to help people heal from traumatic experiences, distressing memories, and the emotional wounds that can follow them.

Unlike traditional talk therapy, EMDR does not require you to describe your trauma in detail. Instead, it uses **bilateral stimulation** — typically eye movements, alternating taps, or sounds — to help your brain do what it naturally does: process, organize, and integrate difficult experiences.

Research has shown that EMDR is effective for PTSD, anxiety, depression, grief, phobias, and many other challenges. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Psychiatric Association both recognize it as a front-line treatment for trauma.



EMDR links isolated trauma memories to your brain's natural healing networks.

Your EMDR Journey: An Overview

Phase 1 **History Taking**

Your therapist learns about your life history, what brings you to therapy, and gathers information to plan your treatment.

Phase 2 **Preparation**

You'll learn what EMDR is, establish a safe place, and build the coping skills you need before processing begins.

Phase 3 **Assessment**

You and your therapist identify the specific memory to work on, how it feels in your body, and what beliefs it has created.

Phase 4 **Desensitization**

Phase 5 **Installation**

Your therapist helps you strengthen the positive belief you want to carry forward, making it feel true throughout your body and mind.

Phase 6 **Body Scan**

You'll scan your body from head to toe to check for any remaining tension or discomfort that needs attention before closing the session.

Phase 7 **Closure**

The actual processing phase — bilateral stimulation helps your brain reprocess the traumatic memory until the distress fades.

Each session closes safely, whether or not processing is complete. You'll leave with grounding and tools to manage anything that arises between sessions.

A note about timing:

Each person's EMDR journey is unique. Some phases take one session, others may take several. There is no "right" timeline — your brain heals at its own pace.

PSYCHOEDUCATION

Understanding Trauma & How EMDR Heals

A foundation for your healing work — knowledge is part of the cure.

What Is Trauma?

Trauma is not just what happened to you — it is what happened *inside* of you as a result. Trauma occurs when an experience overwhelms your nervous system's ability to cope. This can come from a single overwhelming event (a car accident, assault, or loss) or from repeated, ongoing experiences over time (neglect, abuse, or chronic stress).

KEY INSIGHT

"Trauma is not the story of something that happened back then. It's the current imprint of that pain, horror, and fear living inside the person." — Dr. Bessel van der Kolk

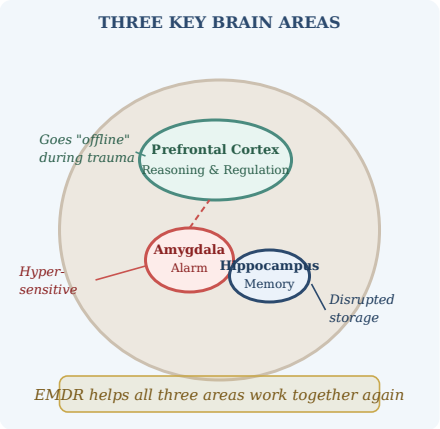
Your Brain on Trauma

When something frightening happens, three key brain areas activate:

The Amygdala (your alarm system) fires a distress signal, triggering fight, flight, or freeze responses. Under trauma, the amygdala can become hypersensitive — reacting to reminders of the past as if the danger is happening *right now*.

The Hippocampus (your memory organizer) normally timestamps and stores memories. Trauma disrupts this process, leaving memories fragmented — without a sense that they are safely in the past.

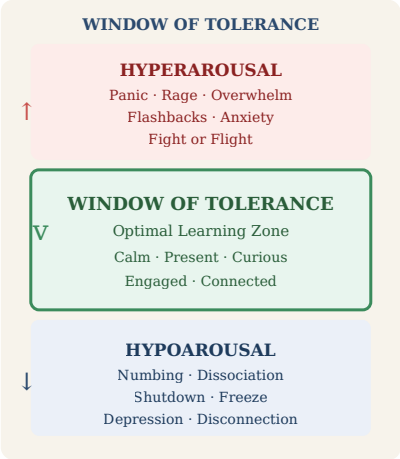
The Prefrontal Cortex (your thinking brain) helps you regulate emotions and understand that past danger is over. Under extreme stress, it goes offline — which is why trauma survivors often "know" they are safe but cannot *feel* it.



EMDR works with all three areas simultaneously, using bilateral stimulation to help the brain complete the processing it could not finish at the time of the trauma.

The Window of Tolerance

Everyone has a zone in which they can function well — not too activated, not too shut down. EMDR works best when you're within your **Window of Tolerance**. Your therapist will help you stay in this zone throughout treatment.



Too High (Hyperarousal)

When you're above the window, your nervous system is in survival mode. You may feel panicked, flooded, or unable to think clearly. Your therapist will use calming techniques to bring you back.

Just Right (Window of Tolerance)

This is where healing happens. You can feel the difficult emotion without being overwhelmed by it. You stay connected to the present moment while processing the past.

Too Low (Hypoarousal)

When you're below the window, your system has shut down to protect you. You may feel numb, disconnected, or foggy. Gentle activation strategies can help.

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE WHEN I'M IN MY WINDOW OF TOLERANCE?

WHAT ARE EARLY WARNING SIGNS THAT I'M LEAVING MY WINDOW?

How Bilateral Stimulation Works

Understanding the mechanism behind your healing.

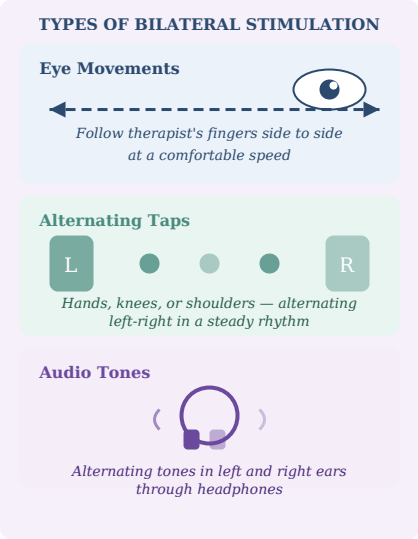
The "B" in EMDR: Bilateral Stimulation

The defining feature of EMDR is **bilateral stimulation (BLS)** — stimulating the left and right sides of your body in an alternating, rhythmic pattern. This can take different forms:

Eye Movements: The most common form. You follow your therapist's fingers or a light bar moving side to side. Research suggests this mimics the eye movements that occur naturally during REM (dream) sleep — a time when your brain naturally processes and integrates the day's experiences.

Tactile Taps: Your therapist alternately taps your hands, knees, or shoulders. You may also learn the "butterfly hug" — crossing your arms and alternating taps on your own shoulders.

Audio Tones: Alternating sounds in each ear through headphones. This option is helpful if eye movement or tapping isn't comfortable for you.



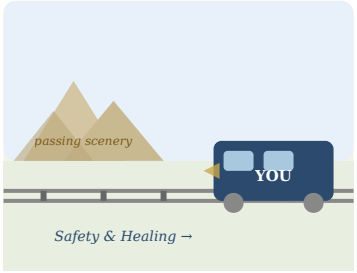
WHY DOES IT WORK?

Current research suggests that BLS activates an information processing system in the brain — similar to what happens during sleep — allowing traumatic memories to be reprocessed rather than remaining frozen and isolated. The bilateral rhythm appears to reduce emotional intensity while keeping the memory accessible.

The Train Metaphor: Creating Safe Distance

Your therapist may invite you to imagine yourself **on a train, watching scenery pass by**. The scenery represents whatever comes up in your mind during processing — images, thoughts, feelings, and body sensations related to the trauma.

You are not *in* the scenery. You are the *observer* — seated safely in the train, watching it pass. This dual awareness — being simultaneously in the present moment *and* observing the past — is one of the most powerful aspects of EMDR.



Remember This:

Whatever comes up during processing — images, emotions, physical sensations, new memories — is information. None of it is wrong. Your job is simply to notice and report what you experience. Let it come, let it go, and follow your therapist's guidance.

MY REFLECTIONS ON TRAUMA & EMDR — QUESTIONS OR THOUGHTS I HAVE:

WEEK 1 · PHASES 1 & 2

Building Your Foundation

History-taking, preparation, and creating safety before we begin.

What Happens This Week

The first phase of EMDR is about **getting to know you**. Your therapist will ask about your history, what brings you to therapy, and what experiences you would like to work on. This is also when you and your therapist will begin building the trust and safety that makes deep healing possible.

Phase 2 is about **preparation** — making sure you have the tools and stability you need before any processing begins. No trauma memories are processed in this phase. You are simply learning what EMDR is, how it works, and building coping resources.

You are always in control.

At any point during a session, you can raise your hand or use your agreed-upon stop signal and your therapist will pause immediately. You set the pace. You decide what feels right.

Your Stop Signal

You and your therapist will agree on a stop signal — a clear, non-verbal way to pause the session at any time. This is important because sometimes saying the word "stop" out loud may be part of what your mind needs to process, and using a hand signal is clearer.

MY STOP SIGNAL



MY AGREED-UPON STOP SIGNAL IS:

Your Safe Place

One of the most important tools you'll build in preparation is a **Safe Place** — a mental image of somewhere (real or imagined) where you feel completely calm, protected, and at ease. This becomes an anchor you can return to at any time during or between sessions.

MY SAFE PLACE IS:

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE IN MY BODY:

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

ONE WORD THAT CAPTURES THIS PLACE:

HOW I FEEL WHEN I VISIT THIS SAFE PLACE:

WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE:

Preparing for Your EMDR Sessions

Before Each Session

Eat a light meal or snack. Avoid alcohol 24 hours before. Wear comfortable clothing. Plan not to rush immediately afterward.

During Sessions

Trust the process. Notice what comes up without judging it. Remember you are the observer on the train. Your therapist is beside you the entire time.

After Sessions

Processing can continue after you leave. Be gentle with yourself. Stay hydrated. Note any new insights, dreams, or memories in this workbook.

SESSION 1 NOTES — WHAT I WANT MY THERAPIST TO KNOW ABOUT ME:

WEEK 2–3 · PHASE 3

Assessment: Mapping Your Experience

Identifying what we will work on and how it lives in you right now.

Common Belief Pairs

Trauma creates negative beliefs. EMDR installs the positive truth.

What Is Assessment?

Before processing a memory, your therapist will guide you through a structured assessment. This is not about analyzing or talking through what happened — it is about taking a *snapshot* of how the memory lives in you right now. This baseline helps track your progress as healing occurs.

You will be asked about a specific image, a negative belief about yourself, what you would prefer to believe instead, the emotions you feel, how disturbing it feels on a scale, and where you feel it in your body.

> **Why negative beliefs?**
>
> Trauma often leaves us with distorted negative beliefs about ourselves — "I am not safe," "It was my fault," "I am worthless." These beliefs are not the truth. They are the *imprint* of the trauma. EMDR helps replace them with something more true and more kind.

Negative Belief	Positive Belief
"I am not safe."	"I am safe now."
"It was my fault."	"I did the best I could."
"I am powerless."	"I have choices now."
"I am worthless."	"I am worthy of love."
"I am not enough."	"I am enough."

My Assessment Worksheet

Your therapist will guide you through this. Fill it in together during your session.

TARGET MEMORY / ISSUE WE ARE WORKING ON

TARGET IMAGE (WORST OR MOST REPRESENTATIVE PART)

NEGATIVE COGNITION (WHAT I BELIEVE ABOUT MYSELF)

POSITIVE COGNITION (WHAT I WANT TO BELIEVE)

EMOTION(S) I FEEL WHEN I RECALL THIS MEMORY

WHERE I FEEL IT IN MY BODY

SUDS — Subjective Units of Distress (0–10)

"How disturbing does it feel right now?"



0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

None *Extreme*

MY STARTING SUDS: _____

VOC — Validity of Positive Cognition (1–7)

"How true does your positive belief feel right now?"

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Feels false *Feels true*

MY STARTING VOC: _____

WEEKS 3-5 · PHASE 4

Desensitization: Processing the Memory

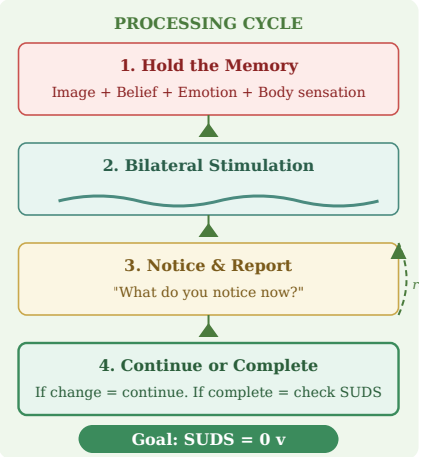
The heart of EMDR — letting your brain do what it does naturally.

What Happens During Processing

Desensitization is the phase where the actual healing takes place. You will hold the target memory in mind — the image, the negative belief, the emotion, and the body sensation — while following bilateral stimulation. Then your therapist will ask: *"What do you notice now?"*

What comes up may surprise you. People experience a wide range of things during processing:

- New images or memories surfacing
- Shifts in how the memory feels — often less intense
- Physical sensations (tension releasing, warmth, tingling)
- New insights or realizations about what happened
- Temporary increases in emotion (normal — let it pass)
- A sense of peace or neutrality replacing the distress



YOUR BRAIN IS DOING THE WORK

You do not have to figure anything out or make anything happen. Your only job is to notice and report what comes up. Trust your brain — it is moving toward healing.

Processing Session Log

Use this tracker after each processing session. Fill in your SUDS score at the start and end of each session.

Session	Date	SUDS Start	SUDS End	What I Noticed / Insights
1		___ / 10	___ / 10	

2	___ / 10	___ / 10
3	___ / 10	___ / 10
4	___ / 10	___ / 10

WEEKS 5–6 · PHASES 5 & 6

Installation & Body Scan

Anchoring what is true and listening to what your body knows.

Phase 5: Installation

Once your SUDS reaches 0, processing isn't quite finished. The next step is **installation** — using bilateral stimulation to actively strengthen the positive belief you identified earlier, connecting it to the original memory so it becomes something you can genuinely feel, not just know intellectually.

Your therapist will ask you to hold both the memory and your positive cognition together, and then do sets of BLS until the positive belief feels completely true — a VOC of 7.

What Installation Feels Like

Many clients describe a sense of *settling in* — the positive belief moving from the head down into the heart and body. Where "I am safe" was once just words, it now becomes something felt as deeply true.

Tracking My Positive Cognition

MY POSITIVE COGNITION:

VOC Progress (circle your score after each set):

Session 1: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

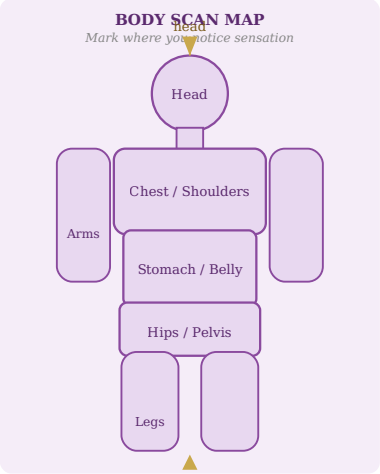
Session 2: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Session 3: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Goal: VOC = 7 (feels completely true)

Phase 6: Body Scan

After installation, your therapist will guide you through a **body scan** — a head-to-toe check for any remaining tension, discomfort, or unusual sensation. EMDR recognizes that trauma is held not just in the mind but in the body, and the body scan ensures nothing is left unresolved.



SENSATIONS OR AREAS I NOTICED DURING BODY SCAN:

WEEK 7+ · PHASE 7

Closure & Integration

Completing each session safely and carrying healing forward.

Phase 7: Closure — Every Session Ends Safely

Closure happens at the end of every EMDR session — whether processing is complete or not. Your therapist will always make sure you leave the session feeling grounded and stable. You will never be left "in the middle" of something difficult.

If the Session IS Complete (SUDS = 0, VOC = 7)

> Your therapist will share a closure message: processing may continue after the session. You may notice new insights, dreams, or memories in the days ahead. Simply observe them — take a mental snapshot — and note them in this workbook. You can discuss them next time. If things feel difficult, use your Safe Place.

If the Session Is Incomplete (Still Processing)

> Sometimes sessions end before processing is fully complete — this is normal and expected. Your therapist will help you gently close what was opened, bring you to a grounded state, and you will return to the work next time. **Healing does not require completing everything in one session.**

Before leaving, your therapist may guide you back to your Safe Place or offer another grounding technique to ensure you feel steady before heading out into the world.

Between Sessions

EMDR is unique in that **processing can continue after the session ends**. Your brain may keep integrating the work for hours or days afterward. This is a good thing — it means healing is happening.

You may notice between sessions:

- → New insights about the memory or yourself
- → Vivid dreams or different sleep patterns
- → Related memories surfacing
- → Emotional sensitivity — more feelings than usual
- → A sense of things "settling" or feeling clearer
- → Physical sensations releasing — tension, lightness

WHAT TO DO

Simply notice. You do not have to analyze or fix anything. Keep a brief note so you can share it with your therapist next time.

Between-Session Tracking Log

Use this space to capture anything notable between your sessions. Snapshots — what you saw, felt, thought, and what triggered it.

Date	What Triggered It	What I Noticed (image, feeling, thought, sensation)	How I Coped / What Helped

RESOURCE PAGE

Your Coping & Grounding Toolkit

Skills to use between sessions when things feel difficult.

EMDR can stir things up between sessions. Having a toolkit of coping strategies means you are never without support. Practice these *before* you need them — so they are ready when you do.

Grounding

5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Notice **5 things you see** · 4 you can touch · 3 you hear · 2 you smell · 1 you taste. This brings you back to the present moment.

Safe Place Visualization

Close your eyes and visit your safe place. Notice the details — sights, sounds, sensations. Stay until you feel calmer.

Butterfly Hug

Cross your arms over your chest so your hands rest on your upper arms or shoulders. Alternate gentle taps — left, right, left, right — at a slow, comfortable pace.

Breathe slowly and focus on something calming as you tap. This is a form of self-administered bilateral stimulation that can help regulate your nervous system.



Breathing

Box Breathing

Inhale for 4 counts · Hold for 4 · Exhale for 4 · Hold for 4. Repeat 4 times. This activates your parasympathetic nervous system.

Extended Exhale

Breathe in for 4 counts, out for 6–8 counts. A longer exhale signals safety to your nervous system and quickly reduces anxiety.

My Personal Coping Plan

WHEN I FEEL OVERWHELMED, I WILL TRY:

PEOPLE I CAN CALL FOR SUPPORT:

MY THERAPIST'S CONTACT FOR BETWEEN-SESSION SUPPORT:

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES THAT WORK BEST FOR ME:

SIGNS THAT I NEED TO REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT:

ONE THING THAT ALWAYS HELPS ME FEEL SAFE:

ONGOING

My Healing Progress

Tracking your growth session by session — healing is real, and it shows.

Session-by-Session Reflection

After each session, take a few quiet minutes to reflect. These entries are for you — honest, private, unedited.

Session #	Date	Phase	SUDS / VOC	How I Feel / What I'm Taking With Me
1			___ / ___	
2			___ / ___	
3			___ / ___	
4			___ / ___	
5			___ / ___	
6			___ / ___	
7			___ / ___	
8			___ / ___	

Closing Reflection

BEFORE EMDR, I BELIEVED ABOUT MYSELF:

AFTER EMDR, I KNOW TO BE TRUE ABOUT MYSELF:

"Healing is not about erasing what happened.
It is about no longer being defined by it."