

A Parent & Caregiver Guide for Getting Your Child Started in EMDR Therapy





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Dear Parents & Caregivers



Dear Parent or Caregiver,

Welcome. We're so glad you're here—
Helping your child means you're already near
To offering comfort, support, and care,
And letting them know you're always there.

If your child is feeling stuck or overwhelmed inside,
Or emotions seem tricky to manage or hide,
EMDR can help them begin to heal,
To make sense of big feelings and the things they feel real.

The tools you'll find here are gentle and kind—
Made with your child's healing in mind.
They support emotional regulation, connection, and play,
And can prepare them for EMDR in a nurturing way.

You'll find ways to calm, to talk, to draw—
To build trust and safety, the foundation of it all.
When you explore these tools together as a team,
You help their hearts heal and their confidence beam.

Healing takes time, it flows and it bends,
But it starts with connection—and you're where that begins.
So take your time, follow your child's lead,
You're planting hope, care, and the courage they need.

With warmth,
Eyesic & Eyela
EMDR For Kids



What is EMDR Therapy?



Hello from Eyesic and Eyela!



Hi there! We're Eyesic & Eyela, the EMDR Twins, and we love helping kids and parents understand how their brains and bodies heal from hard stuff.

EMDR stands for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (pew—big words, we know!). But really, it's a special kind of therapy that helps kids and grown-ups feel better after something scary, stressful, or confusing has happened.

Sometimes when things are too big or upsetting, our brains don't know where to put them. It's like the memory gets stuck in our heart, body, or brain—and shows up as worry, anger, sadness, or even big reactions we don't understand. That's where EMDR comes in!

How Does EMDR Work?

When something hard happens and gets "stuck," EMDR helps your child's brain and body know: "Hey, that was then, and I'm safe now."

During EMDR, a therapist helps your child gently focus on upsetting thoughts, feelings, or memories—but not for too long!—while using something called bilateral stimulation (that's just a fancy way of saying "back-and-forth movement").

It might look like:

- Moving eyes side to side
- Tapping on hands or knees
- Marching feet in place
- Listening to back-and-forth sounds
- Or holding little buzzers that gently buzz

What Can EMDR Help With?

We've seen EMDR help kids (and grown-ups!) feel stronger, braver, and calmer in their bodies. EMDR is used for lots of things, like:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Worries and anxiety | • Scary memories or trauma |
| • Trouble sleeping | • Grief and loss |
| • Big feelings or meltdowns | • Stress from medical stuff |
| • Feeling sad or stuck | • Struggles at school or with friends |
| • Pain that won't go away | • And so much more! |



Choosing the Right Child Therapist



Hi grown-ups!

It's Eyela—here to help you find the just right EMDR therapist for your kiddo!

When looking for an EMDR therapist for children, here's what to keep an eye out for:

- Experience with Kids – They should really know how to work with children (not just adults!) and understand how kids think, feel, play, and express themselves.
- Playful and Warm – A kid-friendly therapist uses games, art, play, and creativity to help your child feel safe and engaged in the process.
- Trained in EMDR – Make sure they're trained (or certified!) in EMDR—and ideally have extra training in using EMDR with kids and teens.
- Trauma-Informed & Gentle – They should move at your child's pace, explain things in a child-friendly way, and focus on safety and trust.
- Collaborates with Caregivers – The best EMDR therapists include you in the journey and help build stronger attachment and co-regulation between you and your child.
- The right therapist will make your child feel seen, supported, and a little bit braver every step of the way.

You've got this—and we're cheering you on!

With googly gratitude,
Eyela



EMDR THERAPY HELPS WITH...



BULLYING



MEDICAL PROBLEMS



ANXIETY & WORRIES



NIGHTMARES



SADNESS



EATING ISSUES



ANGER PROBLEMS



SLEEPING PROBLEMS



PARENTS DIVORCING



LOSING A PERSON OR PET



EXPERIENCING NATURAL DISASTERS



MOVING TO NEW COUNTRY



PARENTS ARGUING & FIGHTING



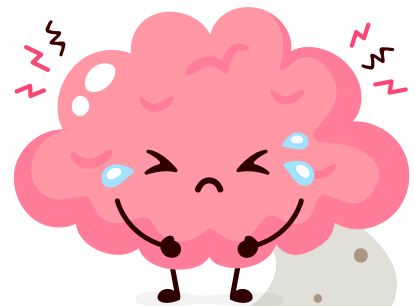
EXPERIENCING ABUSE (PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, SEXUAL) OR NEGLECT



WITNESSING VIOLENCE



& MUCH MORE!



Child Version of 8 Phases



PHASE 1: STORY & GOALS

DURING PHASE 1 OF EMDR, YOU SHARE YOUR STORY AND FIGURE OUT PARTS OF YOUR STORY THAT ARE CAUSING PROBLEMS FOR YOU. ONCE YOU FIGURE OUT THE PROBLEMS YOU WOULD LIKE TO WORK ON, YOU WORK WITH YOUR EMDR THERAPIST TO COME UP WITH GOALS TO HELP WITH THOSE PROBLEMS.

DURING PHASE 2, YOU WORK ON BUILDING TRUST WITH YOUR EMDR THERAPIST AND LEARN THE BASICS OF HOW EMDR WORKS. YOU ALSO LEARN NEW SKILLS TO CALM DOWN AND COPE WITH UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS THAT MIGHT SHOW UP DURING EMDR THERAPY.

PHASE 2: GETTING PREPARED

PHASE 3: ACTIVATING TARGETS

IN PHASE 3, YOU WORK WITH YOUR THERAPIST TO IDENTIFY (1) A TARGET PROBLEM, (2) AN IMAGE THAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF THE PROBLEM, (3) UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS, (4) HELPFUL THOUGHTS, (5) HOW TRUE THE HELPFUL THOUGHT FEELS, (6) THE EMOTIONS YOU FEEL, (7) HOW STRESSED OUT THIS PROBLEM MAKES YOU FEEL, AND (8) WHERE YOU FEEL THE STRESS IN YOUR BODY.

IN PHASE 4, YOU FOCUS ON THE TARGET PROBLEM WHILE DOING SOME TYPE OF BACK-AND-FORTH MOVEMENT WITH YOUR EMDR THERAPIST. THESE MOVEMENTS CAN INCLUDE MOVING YOUR EYES, TAPPING YOUR HANDS, DRAWING, DANCING, AND MUCH MORE! THE GOAL OF PHASE 4 IS TO HELP YOU MOVE AND SHAKE THE STRESS OF THE TARGET PROBLEM OUT OF YOUR BODY, HEART, AND MIND.

PHASE 4: DISCHARGING THE STRESS

PHASE 5: STRENGTHENING THE POSITIVE

PHASE 5 IS WHERE YOU FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING YOUR POSITIVE AND HEALTHY THOUGHTS SO THAT WHENEVER YOU ARE REMINDED OR THINK ABOUT YOUR TARGET PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE, YOU WON'T FEEL STRESSED OUT. FOR EXAMPLE, INSTEAD OF THINKING, "I'M NOT SAFE," YOU WILL THINK, "I'M SAFE NOW!"

IN PHASE 6, YOU WORK WITH YOUR EMDR THERAPIST TO RELEASE ANY UNHELPFUL MEMORIES THAT ARE STUCK IN YOUR BODY. IF YOU NOTICE ANY UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS IN YOUR BODY, YOU WILL LET YOUR EMDR THERAPIST KNOW SO YOU CAN KEEP DOING BACK-AND-FORTH MOVEMENTS TO RELEASE THE STRESS FROM YOUR BODY!

PHASE 6: INCREASING BODY AWARENESS

PHASE 7: FINISHING AND ENDING

ALL EMDR SESSIONS FINISH AND END IN THE SAME WAY: BY DOING SOMETHING CALMING OR FUN. YOUR THERAPIST WILL ALSO TALK TO YOU ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT IN BETWEEN SESSIONS.



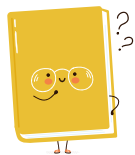
AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH EMDR SESSION, YOUR THERAPIST SEES IF YOUR PROBLEM HAS GOTTEN BETTER OR WORSE SINCE THE LAST SESSION, INCLUDING ANY TRIGGERS THAT MIGHT HAVE COME UP FOR YOU. YOU WILL SEE IF YOUR TARGET PROBLEM HAS BEEN SOLVED OR TALK ABOUT THINGS YOU STILL NEED TO WORK ON.

PHASE 8: REVIEWING AND REVISING

Parent Version of 8 Phases



Phase 1: My Story & Goals



During phase one of EMDR therapy, you and your child will share your story with an EMDR therapist to figure out what parts of the story that are causing problems for your child. Once your child figures out the problems they would like to work on, you will all work with your EMDR therapist to come up with goals to help with those problems.

Phase 2: Getting Prepared



During phase two, you & your child will work on building trust with an EMDR therapist and learn about the basics of how EMDR therapy works. You can help further explain EMDR to your child and help them practice new skills to calm down and cope to prepare for the uncomfortable feelings and emotions that might show up during EMDR therapy.

Phase 3: Activating Targets



In phase three of EMDR therapy, your child's EMDR therapist will help them identify 1) a target problem, 2) an image, 3) unhealthy thought, 4) healthy thought, 5) How true does the healthy thought feel? 6) Emotions and feelings, 7) How stressed this problem makes you feel and 8) Where do you feel the stress in your body?

Phase 4: Discharging the Stress



In phase four, you will focus on the target problem while doing some type of back and forth movement with their EMDR therapist. Back and forth movement can include moving your eyes, tapping your hands, drawing, dancing and much more! The goal of phase four is to help your move and shake the stress of the target problem out of their body, heart and mind. As a grown-up, you may be asked to join the session.

Phase 5: Strengthening the Positive



Phase five is where your child will focus on making their positive and healthy thoughts strong so that in the future when they are reminded or think about their target problem they will not feel as stressed out. For example, instead of thinking "I'm not safe," your child will think "I'm safe now!"

Phase 6: Increasing Body Awareness



In phase six, your child's EMDR therapist will help them check on how their body feels to see if it matches the positive and healthy thoughts they worked on strengthening in phase five. Your child will let their EMDR therapist know if there are any uncomfortable body sensations so that they can keep doing back and forth movement to discharge the stress from their body!

Phase 7: Finishing & Ending



Your child's EMDR therapist will help your child wrap up at the end of each EMDR session to help your child feel grounded and regulated just in case they felt uncomfortable and activated while working on their problem. Your EMDR therapist will also talk to you or your child about what to expect after an EMDR session.

Phase 8: Reviewing and Revising



At the beginning of each EMDR therapy session, your child's EMDR therapist will review how things have been since the last session. You or your child can share about things that have gotten better or worse since the last session. Your child's EMDR therapist may also discuss revising and updating goals as needed.

Tips for Parents in the 8 Phases

1-



PHASE 1: STORY & GOALS

WORK WITH YOUR CHILD'S THERAPIST TO SHARE ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S STORY AND PROBLEMS THAT HAVE BEEN COMING UP!

2-



PHASE 2: GETTING PREPARED

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND PRACTICE COPING SKILLS AND CALMING STRATEGIES THEY CAN USE THROUGHOUT EMDR AT HOME.

3-



PHASE 3: ACTIVATING TARGETS

YOU MIGHT HELP YOUR CHILD LIST AND NAME MEMORIES AND PROBLEMS THEY WOULD LIKE TO WORK ON IN EMDR THERAPY.

4-



PHASE 4: DISCHARGING THE STRESS

YOU MAY BE INVITED BY YOUR CHILD OR THEIR EMDR THERAPIST TO JOIN IN SESSIONS TO HELP YOUR CHILD WORK THROUGH A SPECIFIC PROBLEM!

5-



PHASE 5: STRENGTHENING THE POSITIVE

OFFER YOUR CHILD POSITIVE PRAISE AND AFFIRMATIONS TO HELP THEM BUILD THEIR SELF-ESTEEM & CONFIDENCE.

6-



PHASE 6: INCREASING BODY AWARENESS

PLAY GAMES OR TALK ABOUT BODY SENSATIONS TO HELP YOUR CHILD KNOW HOW EMOTIONS AND STRESS MAY FEEL IN THEIR BODIES.

7-



PHASE 7: FINISHING & ENDING

HELP YOUR CHILD CONSISTENTLY DO SOMETHING CALM, RELAXING OR REGULATING AFTER AN EMDR REPROCESSING SESSION, THEY WORKED HARD!

8-



PHASE 8: REVIEW & REVISE

TAKE NOTES ON HOW YOUR CHILD RESPONDS AFTER EMDR SESSIONS AND COMMUNICATE THIS TO YOUR CHILD'S EMDR THERAPIST!

Helping With Hard Memories



SOMETIMES HARD MEMORIES
CAN GET STUCK IN OUR HEARTS,
BODIES & MINDS! HELP YOUR
CHILD IDENTIFY THOSE HARD
MEMORIES WITH SOME TIPS
BELOW!



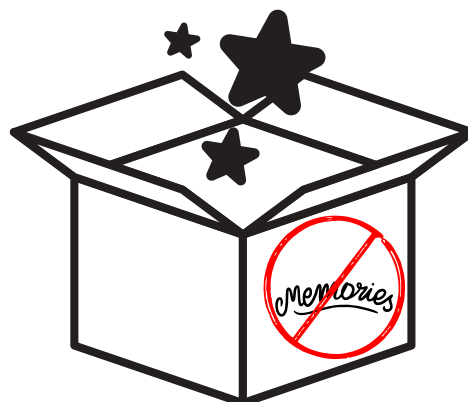
LISTEN TO YOUR CHILD WHEN
THEY WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE
SCARY OR UPSETTING MEMORY



ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO DRAW
THE SCARY OF UPSETTING MEMORY
AND THEN RIP IT UP OR THROW IT
AWAY!



HELP YOUR CHILD CREATE A COMIC
STRIP ABOUT THE SCARY OF UPSETTING
MEMORY AND WHAT THEY WISH
COULD HAVE HAPPENED INSTEAD



GET CREATIVE TO CREATE AN
"UNWANTED" MEMORY BOX TO
HELP YOUR CHILD KEEP THEIR
UPSETTING MEMORIES CONTAINED.

Help learn about feelings



Hey Grown Ups!

Eyesic Here.

One of the most important first steps in EMDR therapy is helping your child learn how to recognize, name, and express their feelings—and you play a big role in that process.

Before children can process difficult or “stuck” memories in EMDR, they need to begin tuning into what they feel—inside and out. When a child can identify emotions like “angry,” “sad,” “scared,” or “confused,” they begin to understand the connection between their body, mind, and past experiences. This self-awareness lays the foundation for healing.

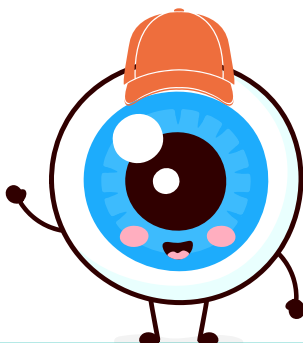
Here’s why building emotional vocabulary matters in EMDR:

- It helps your child make sense of big emotions and reactions.
- It gives the therapist important clues about what’s going on internally.
- It teaches your child to become curious about feelings instead of overwhelmed by them.
- It builds a sense of safety, control, and confidence—key ingredients in trauma healing.

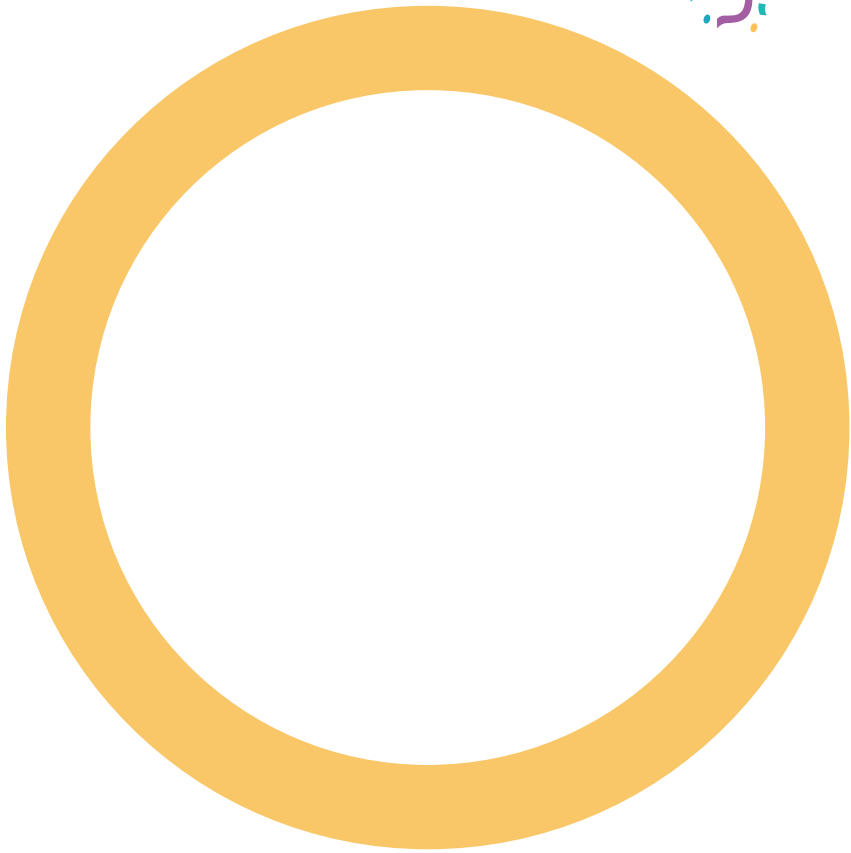
I encourage you to check in with your child’s EMDR therapist to learn new approaches and interventions to help your child identify and express their feelings! You may choose to use the feelings chart on the next page or create your own!

thanks for walking alongside your child with so much love.

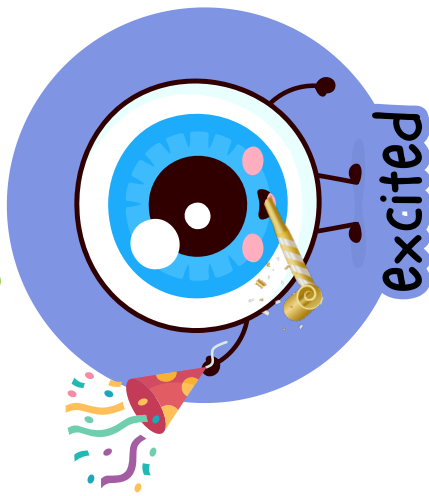
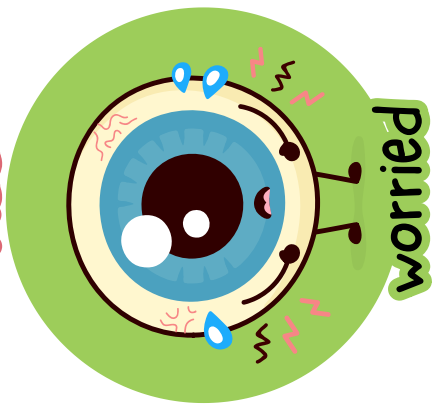
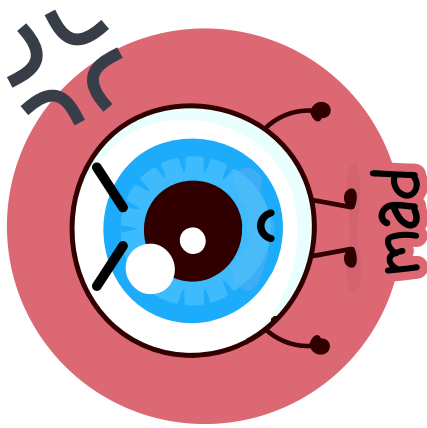
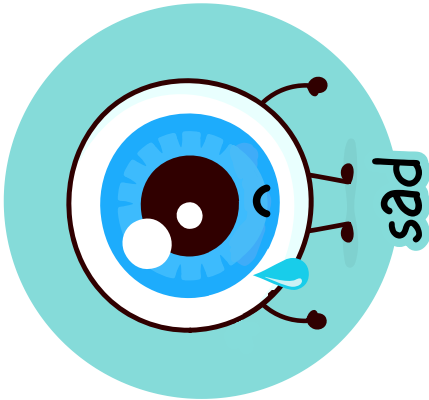
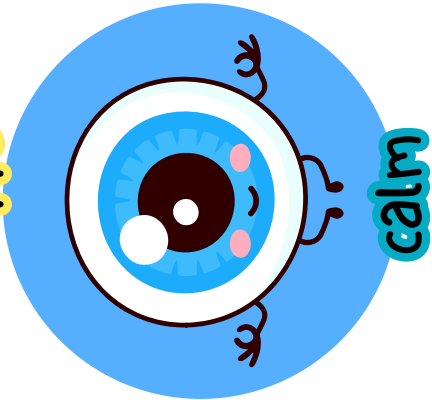
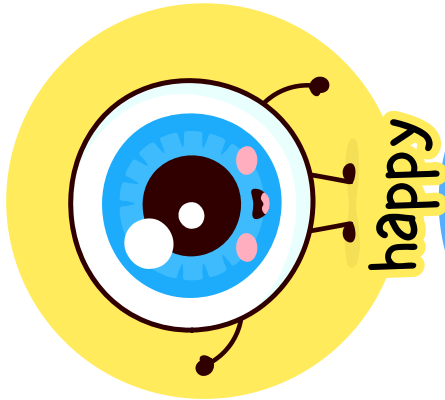
Cheering you on,
every blink of the way.
Eyesic



How do you



feel today?



Helping your Child Post-EMDR



We're so proud of your child for doing the brave work of EMDR therapy. Whether they just had a session or you're prepping for the first one, your support makes a huge difference in their healing journey.

After an EMDR session, your child's brain and body might still be "processing." That means their system is working hard to sort, organize, and release feelings or memories—even after therapy ends.

What to Watch For After a Session

You can share these observations with your child's EMDR therapist to help guide the next session. Every child is different, and there are no wrong reactions—just clues we can use together!

- ⚡ Big emotions (sadness, anger, extra sensitive feelings)
- 😴 Tiredness or extra energy
- 😵 Trouble sleeping or vivid dreams
- 🤔 New thoughts, memories, or questions that pop up
- 🧸 Regressive behaviors (wanting more comfort, clinginess, etc.)
- 😐 Numbness, zoning out, or quietness
- 🗣️ Wanting to talk more (or less!) than usual

If you notice any of these—or even if your child seems totally fine!—jot it down or share it with your child's EMDR therapist. You can use the next page to help keep track of what you observe after your child's EMDR Session. These are all part of the process and help us understand how your child is healing.

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Tips for Activities After EMDR



A lot can happen for your child when they are working on a hard memory or problem with EMDR therapy! It is helpful to come up with a list of activities that can support your child's nervous system after a tough EMDR session.

Here are a few tips of things you can try to support your child!

- Breathing Together – Try belly breaths or blowing bubbles to reset the body.
- Feelings Check-In – Use a feelings chart or draw how they feel inside.
- Cozy Time – Snuggle with a blanket, stuffed animal, or read a calming story.
- Creative Expression – Drawing, painting, or playing with clay to explore feelings.
- Nature Time – A short walk, time in the sun, or cloud-watching can be very soothing.
- Movement & Music – Gentle dancing, stretching, or listening to a calming playlist.
- Tapping or Butterfly Hugs – A slow and self-soothing back-and-forth motion your child might already use in session.
- Visit our EMDR for Kids Youtube Channel for helpful videos & exercises



Remember:

You don't have to "fix" anything after EMDR. Just being present, curious, and calm is more than enough.

Thanks for walking alongside your child and trusting this process. You're doing amazing—and we're blinking our biggest, happiest eyeball blinks in your honor!

With warmth and wonder,
Eyesic & Eyela

