

# TOP 10 TIPS

## for EMDR Therapists Working with Chronic Pain

1

### Cultivate an Expectation of Hope

This activates adaptive neural networks. Therapist confidence and rapport can create hope that EMDR therapy might ease the distress around pain.

2

### Include Pain and Health in History Taking

Phase 1 questions about the client's history of pain, injury, medical issues, as well as current health status and challenges will help with case conceptualization.

3

### Phase 2 Resourcing Invaluable

Using Safe/Calm Space, Container, the Butterfly Hug, and/or Light Stream exercises can establish felt-sense safety, widen the client's Window of Tolerance, and build confidence for soothing pain and distress at home between sessions. \*

4

### Reprocessing Targets

Could include events of underlying trauma: when body was injured, first incidence of pain, inability to function optimally, reactions of others to client pain. \*

5

### Targeting Pain Itself

If client can't see the relationship between past events and current pain, the therapist can facilitate targeting pain sensations directly to create awareness and facilitate neural connections.

\*Shapiro, F. (2018). *Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy* (3rd Ed.) (pp. 243, 251). New York, NY: Guilford Press.



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6

### Be Thoughtful About the Positive Cognition

The positive cognition (PC) may not be clear or may feel unbelievable while setting up the target. Highlight change that is gradual: "I can cope" vs "Pain is gone." If client has difficulty identifying the PC during Assessment phase, consider identifying it later during Installation phase.\*\*

7

### Utilize Future Template

This helps address pain-associated fears, future concerns and encourages a new relationship with pain by preparing the client to cope with future scenarios when pain may be experienced, or even worsen.

8

### Explore Areas of Responsibility in Relation to Pain

Look into beliefs around responsibility, low self-worth, control, and the sense of self and feelings in relation to chronic pain.

9

### Stay Attuned to Small Changes

Get curious and help clients notice small body/pain sensation changes. This helps expand the brain's idea of what pain "is/can be," opens space for feeling more control, and disconfirms previous neural expectations.

10

### Encourage Calming Coping Strategies

Coping strategies that increase relaxation can calm inflammation responses: deep breathing, meditation, yoga, and improved sleep quality.

\*\*Grant, M. (2023). 10 EMDR Pain Protocol Variations. *Go With That Magazine*, 28(1), 23-32