

10 Tips for a Successful Phase One: Advice from EMDRIA™ Members



1. Use Assessment Tools

"Phase One is the foundation of sound EMDR therapy. Utilizing structured assessment tools decreases the time spent in this phase and provides titration."

– Danyale Weems, LCSW, RPT-S

2. Ask About Intersectionality

"In addressing our clients' intersectionality (experiences of oppression) in Phase One, we can simply ask them what identities they are bringing to the table."

– Roshni Chabra, LMFT

3. Engage & Explore

"Engagement as you explore the presenting issues and window of tolerance."

– Deborah Almonte, LCSW

4. Assess Client Readiness

"Building a solid relationship allows both therapist and client to collaborate openly on present triggers, possible targets, and what might stand in the way of client reprocessing readiness."

– Susanna Kaufman, LPC Associate

5. Collaborative Treatment Plan

"Identify presenting problem, collect history, formulate AIP understanding of client's issues, and develop a treatment plan that is collaborative and ongoing."

– Allison Acton, LMFT

6. Build a Therapeutic Alliance

"It is crucial for building trust and establishing safety. Creating a strong therapeutic alliance lays the foundation for successful trauma processing and healing."

– Arielle Jordan, NCC, LCPC

7. Incorporate Your Style

"Phase One & Phase Two can be done according to a person's individual therapeutic style and perspective as long as the goals of these phases are maintained and accomplished."

– Francine Shapiro, 2009 EMDRIA Conference

8. Regarding Complex Trauma

"Chronological histories are rarely practical or feasible with complex trauma. Let the presenting issues lead you to a theme and let that then lead you to target selection."

– Jamie Marich, Ph.D.

9. Create a Timeline

"Ask (without details) for 3 to 5 'good' and 'not so good' events that happened during childhood, adolescence, & adulthood. Include experiences from their family/community to capture intergenerational resilience or trauma."

– Viviana Urdaneta Melo, LCSW

10. Family & Vulnerability

"Many clients have done past trauma work. Asking 'What did you learn from your family about emotional vulnerability?' can yield a goldmine of untapped targets."

– Heidi J. Dalzell, PsyD