

When Relationships Hurt

Understanding EMDR in Pictures

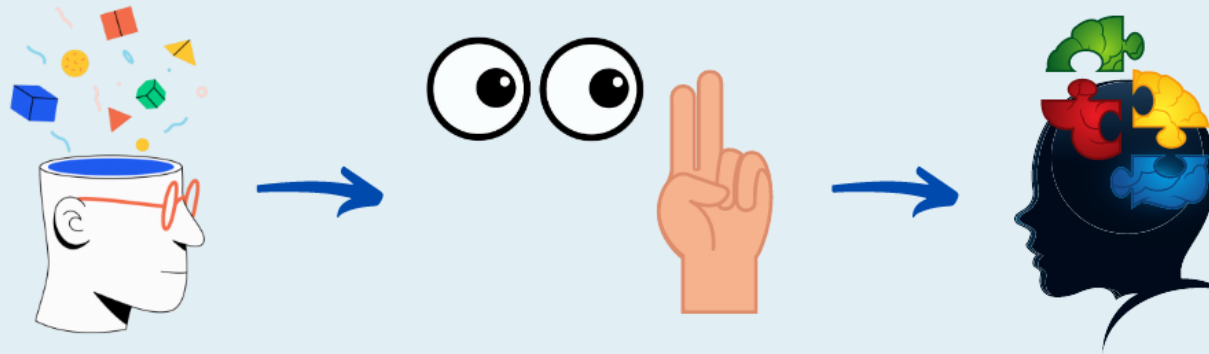
By Kathryn Spence
Psychotherapist
InnerFocus Therapy
www.innerfocustherapy.co.uk



INNERFOCUS THERAPY
COUNSELLING & PSYCHOTHERAPY

What is EMDR?

Eye Movement Desensitisation & Reprocessing Therapy



EMDR is a type of therapy, which helps activate the Adaptive Information Processing system of the brain and body, to help process painful memories and fears.

This natural coping mechanism normally occurs during dream sleep, when our eyes move back and forth.

We use Bilateral Stimulation in EMDR to re-create this process.

When the memory is processed it loses its emotional 'heat' and becomes a neutral memory of an event rooted in the past.



Trauma memories can be left unprocessed, leaving them fragmented, distorted and we feel like we're still in the past



VS



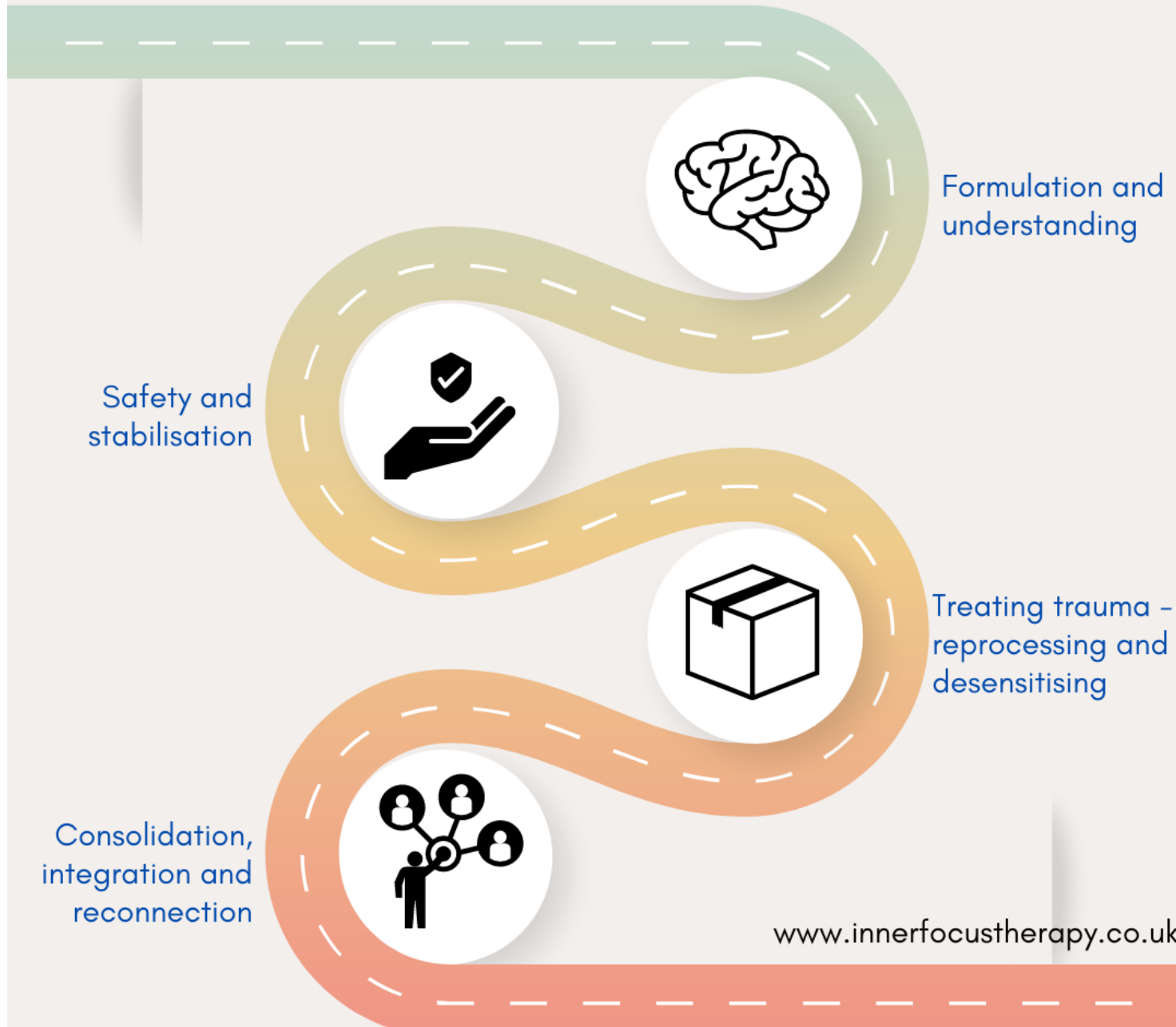
Emotional Back Brain

Rational Front Brain

When processed it's as if we've sorted out the cupboard & organised the memory, leaving it in the past



Phases of Trauma Focused Therapy



www.innerfocustherapy.co.uk



EMDR uses a three-pronged approach to address the past, present and future

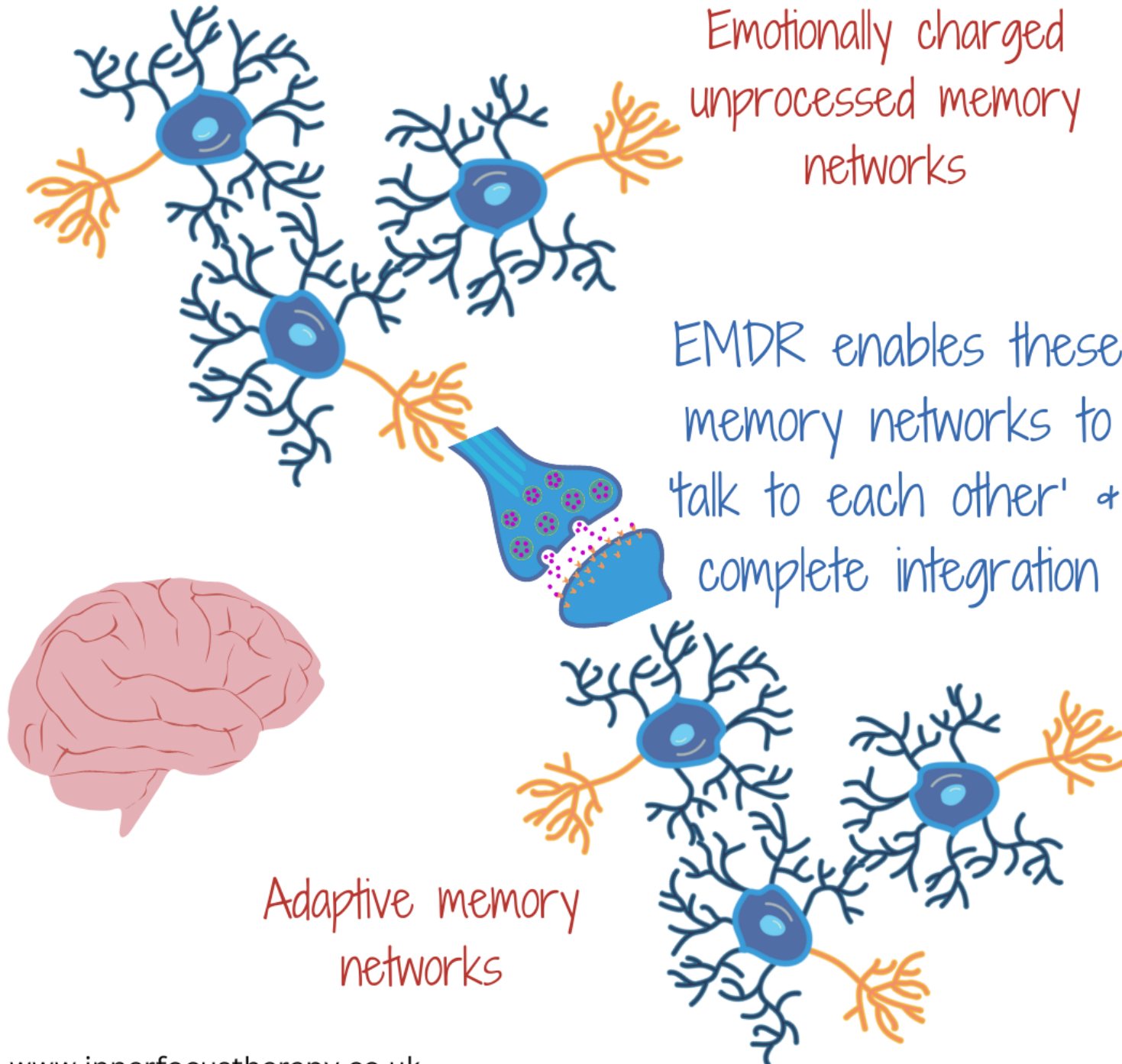


The Past - EMDR Therapy addresses people's past experiences that are causing current symptoms.

The Present - current triggers (which have not been resolved by addressing past experiences) are then targeted.

The Future - we encode in memory future templates to help meet the demands we may face in the future.





BEFORE EMDR



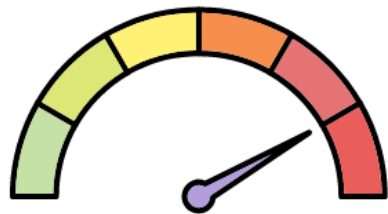
AFTER EMDR



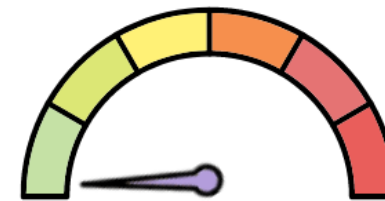
Feels like the Past



Feels like the Present



Distress



Relaxed

Calm Place

Visualise a safe,
calm peaceful
place...

What can I see,
hear, smell, taste,
touch?

Before starting EMDR we
install positive resources
to help with coping
between sessions.

This helps activate our
'rest and digest' safe
system, so we can
better regulate our
emotions.



Attachment Figure

Visualise someone who is caring, who shows you're important, believes you, supports you, protects you...

When we grow in an environment where we don't have a secure and safe attachment we may be unduly harsh or uncaring towards our self.

An attachment figure can be used during processing or between sessions to help provide perspective, comfort and help.



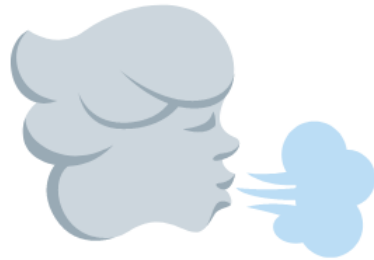
4 Elements Grounding Exercise



Fire up your imagination
Imagine a place where
you can feel calm,
peaceful and safe.



Earth - ground
yourself in the safety
of your current
surroundings.



Air - focus on your
breath and long exhales
- calm your body.



Water - create saliva in
your mouth - gently bite
the sides of your tongue
with your molars.



EMDR Reprocessing Session



Memory - visual image, negative core belief, emotions, distress level, sensations, preferred adaptive belief & rating

1

2

Dual Attention to Bilateral Stimulation whilst you allow yourself to observe and notice what comes up



Therapist stops and checks regularly on progress, helping you when you get stuck until you feel no or very little distress towards the memory



Install the positive belief until it's strongly held

3

4

Body scan to check for any remaining tension



Free Association in EMDR



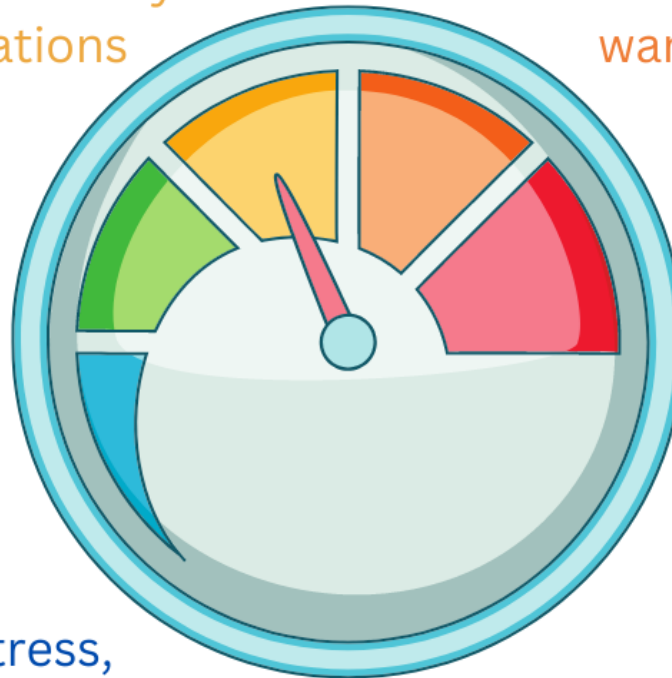
Subjective Units of Distress (SUDs)

0 - 10

5 - anxious,
noticeable body
sensations

8 - scared, can't
think clearly,
wanting to escape

2 - slight
distress,
nervous



10 - panic,
unable to
think, not
present

0 - no distress,
calm, relaxed

This scale helps to
identify the level of
distress you feel towards
a past memory



Validity of Cognition (VOC)

1 - 7

This scale helps to identify how much you believe a new more realistic thought



1 - No way, I don't believe it at all, totally untrue

4 - It's very possible and I believe it when I'm not feeling bad

7 - I know it to be true in my mind and body

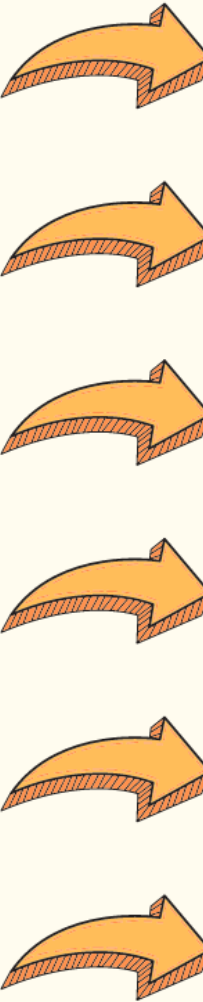


Negative Core Beliefs



Adaptive Beliefs

- I'm abandoned
- I'm unimportant
- I have to be in control
- It's my fault
- I should have done something
- I'm unlovable
- I'm not good enough
- I'm powerless
- I'm vulnerable
- I'm going to die
- I'm overwhelmed
- I'm not safe
- I'm bad
- I'm weak



- I'm worthy
- I have value
- I can control what I can
- I've learned from it
- I did what I could
- I'm okay as I am
- I'm good enough
- I can control what I can
- I can protect myself now
- I survived
- I can get through it
- I'm safe now
- I did what I did to survive
- I'm capable



After EMDR

First Half Hour after a Session...

Processing continues after the session ends, so you need some time to reference your awareness back in the present. Go for a walk, watch the sights, get a cup of tea or coffee, listen to music.



In the days that follow...

You may or may not notice new insights, thoughts, memories or dreams. Stay out of the way of any reaction you may have - don't try to understand it. You can jot it down in a log.

Use relaxation or grounding techniques and practice self-care.

We are social creatures and seek out connection, spend time with those who are supportive.



Safe Place



Therapy Endings

IT CAN BE HARD TO SAY GOODBYE AT THE END OF THERAPY. IT CAN ACTIVATE MEMORIES OF LOSS, NEGATIVE ENDINGS FROM OUR PAST, OR ATTACHMENT ANXIETIES.



HOPEFULLY YOU WILL FEEL READY TO LEAVE

IT CAN GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO CELEBRATE HOW FAR YOU'VE COME

IT'S A PLANNED ENDING AND CAN GIVE YOU A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE OF ENDING



Sources

Disclaimer – I have been a therapist for many years and thus cannot reference where I have learned all theories and aspects that I have covered in this book, however, I have listed key texts and sites which have shaped my thinking.

- Francine Shapiro. (2001). Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy: Basic Principles, Protocols, and Procedures. Guilford Press.
- Images and graphics – Canva www.canva.com

With special thanks to Ben, Katie, Carrie and Angela

© Copyright Kathryn Spence 2023

Permission to share openly with clients and for your own personal or therapy use. This document should not be shared with other professionals or made public in anyway.

www.innerfocustherapy.co.uk

innerfocustherapy@outlook.com