



ONLINE EMDR THERAPY SESSIONS – GUIDANCE TO CLIENTS FROM THE EMDR ASSOCIATION UK

Introduction

The EMDR Association of the UK is the lead organisation for promoting the safe and effective use of EMDR therapy in the UK. We recognise that in response to Covid-19 that the majority of NHS and independently provided psychological therapy will be provided remotely (telephone or video call platform) for the foreseeable future and this includes the provision of EMDR therapy.

Background

Many services and therapists have now moved over to a wholly remote based therapy provision and the Association have been supporting EMDR therapists in the transition to Online EMDR therapy, based on the experiences of many EMDR therapist that have been carrying out EMDR therapy online for years very effectively. There has also already been a study of Internet-delivered EMDR for PTSD in 2013 that showed promising results (Spence et al, 2013).

Importantly, Online EMDR therapy **IS** EMDR Therapy and we know how powerful and transformational this approach can be for clients. The main thing is talk through your anxieties with your therapist.

This document should help provide you with some practical information to help you understand what to expect with online EMDR Therapy sessions and provide some tips to make sure the process runs smoothly.

It might feel scary or uncertain to have some sessions online, but they can be as effective as meeting face to face (sometimes more so). Long before Covid-19 many EMDR Therapist were using Online EMDR safely and effectively and since the crisis much knowledge has been shared about this way of working amongst the EMDR therapist community. The priority of your EMDR therapist is to create a safe and contained space to work with you.

Opportunities

Working online can remove barriers to EMDR Therapy. It enables us to offer therapy to those who could not otherwise access it.

People who live far from a therapist, people who are agoraphobic, or people who find meeting people face-to-face so anxiety provoking that they can't get to a clinic. It's often easier for children and young people to access therapy online. It enables therapist to be more flexible because it is easier to vary session length when working online, including very short sessions for children. It can take the pressure off as not being in a clinic room means that people can be present in the session with less pressure. Children can be in the room whilst their parents talk, but they don't have to be sitting next to them listening. Parents can be around whilst their children have therapy, but again, without sitting right next to them.

If it's a choice between no EMDR and EMDR online, then certainly EMDR online is the better option.

Platform

Discuss with your therapist what platform you or they wish to use. Many therapists use Zoom as it is free, easy to use and encrypted. However, there are other services available and you may prefer to use one that you are familiar with. Some clients are worried about security especially when certain platforms receive negative press in the media. The reality is that nothing can be guaranteed to be 100% secure, that includes your phones, computers, tablets, landlines, voice mail, electronic mail, post, office spaces, cars, smart speakers etc. All we can do is enable as much security as we can, and your therapist should configure their settings to maximize this. It is important to have these discussions before any EMDR processing as it will help ease your fears and help minimize technical challenges that might come up along the way.

TIPS

Please make sure that:

1. You have your computer or mobile set up with Zoom, Skype or WhatsApp before the session commences. This includes having your microphone and video turned on.
2. Your computer or mobile is positioned at a sensible height so that I can clearly see your face and that the camera is at eye level. If several people will be participating, please make sure that your therapist can see everyone clearly.
3. It is very easy to hear background noises e.g. animals and washing machines and kettles etc. so please make sure you are in a quiet location.
4. You will not be disturbed for the duration of the session and that the door to the room you are sitting in is closed.
5. If you are using your computer, you have your mobile out of reach and with the sound muted so that it is not a distraction.
6. You do not have your back to a window or light – this can make it very hard for the therapist to see you clearly.
7. That there is adequate lighting in the room you are in.
8. You have a box of tissues nearby.
9. You have a glass of water nearby.
10. You have not been drinking alcohol or taking drugs before any sessions where they may still be in your body.
11. Neither client or therapist record the sessions UNLESS this has mutually discussed and agreed, and a consent form has been signed with the therapist.
12. You join the meeting at the agreed time.

Sometimes people use headphones during online sessions. It has also been observed that if one person has headphones and the other doesn't, then this can make the sound less effective. So probably, either both use them or neither use them but using headphones can create a more intimate and powerful connection.

With some courage and a willingness to embrace Online EMDR it can work very well and be a rewarding experience for you in amongst much of the uncertainty that life is throwing at us all at this time.

