

EMDR

Moving your eyes until it's gone

You've come here because something bad happened to you that is upsetting you. It could be an accident or a fire, or maybe you were bullied or even physically abused, or had some other nasty thing happen to you. It could be something that happened once, but also something that went on for months or even years. A bad experience like that can make you feel different inside, and the stuff that happened can just keep playing over and over again in your head like a film. It can make you not feel like doing anything, but it can also make you lose sleep or lose your temper quickly or distract you and mess up your concentration.

EMDR *information*

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Many children find it weird that they suddenly react so differently. But that's all because of that experience. And the awful feelings and nasty thoughts that go with it. Luckily, something can be done to help you quickly. It's called EMDR.

Over quickly

EMDR is a therapy especially for children like you. To get EMDR therapy, you go to see what we call a therapist. A therapist is a man or lady who is there to help you feel better about yourself again. We know that EMDR works really well. Sometimes it works faster than other times. If

your bad experience happened just once, you will be finished with it before other boys or girls who had bad experiences for a long time. That's understandable. But even then, EMDR can really help you. A lot of children have said afterwards that they thought it was fun to do.

Tim, 11 years old:

"I feel much better now. I'm sleeping properly. I'm happy, and I want to do things again. I liked doing the eye movement stuff. It wasn't boring for a minute. It was fun."

What choice is there?

What happens during the therapy? Well, first the therapist will ask you to tell the story of what happened and to freeze the picture of the story that's upsetting you the most right now. The therapist may also ask you to draw a picture of it.

The two of you will work out a way for you not to feel bad anymore when you think about what happened back then. The way it works is this: you concentrate on the 'picture in your head' (or the drawing) and on what you're thinking and feeling about it. At the same time, you'll be doing something completely different. The therapist will choose one of these things to do:

- following the fingers of the therapist with your eyes, as they move them from side to side in front of your face, or
- listening to sounds on the headphones, or
- tapping on the hands of the therapist with your hands (or he/she can tap on yours)

Sophie, 9 years old:

"The first time, I thought: 'is this going to help me'? But the second time I knew for sure, because it gave me a nice, safe feeling. I'm not afraid to do things like before, and I'm really happy now."

Tickle

Once in a while, the therapist will ask: "What do you feel now?" or "What are you thinking?" Sometimes, pictures of what happened will pop up in your head. Or you suddenly think of something, like for instance that all was your fault. You can also feel sad, scared, or angry. Or you start to notice all kinds of changes in your body, like a tickle in your throat, or stomach aches, which you then tell the therapist about. And when it doesn't affect you anything anymore, you just say: "Nothing".

The therapy will go on until you can look at the 'picture in your head' or the drawing without it upsetting you. Until it doesn't affect you anymore. And that's what we want. The problems you came here for in the first place will then become smaller or go away completely.

Jamie, 5 years old:

"Everything just seems to fly out when you're drumming. It's like 'zap' – it just flies out of your head, in tiny little pieces. And once it's gone, it never comes back again."



Drawings: Natasha, 10 years old

