

## EMDR FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

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**What is EMDR Therapy?** Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy is a treatment method aimed at resolving emotional difficulties caused by disturbing, difficult, or frightening life experiences. In 1989, psychologist Dr. Francine Shapiro began to research the ability of EMDR therapy to reduce the intensity of disruptive negative thoughts in treating adult victims of trauma. Since then, EMDR therapy has evolved through contributions of therapists and researchers all over the world.

**What does EMDR therapy look like?** At the heart of EMDR is the tool of Bilateral Stimulation (BLS). BLS can be done through eye movements, theratappers, or simply by tapping alternating sides of one's body with one's hands. In EMDR, clients are sometimes asked to use their imagination in ways that strengthen their sense of confidence and well-being, and also to help them navigate potential stressful situations. For example, clients may be asked to imagine a safe or protected place where they feel relaxed and comfortable, or to remember a time when they felt strong and confident, or to visualize moving through a future event in their life in an optimal way. These positive images, thoughts, and feelings are

**SAMPLE EMDR RESOURCING ACTIVITY: SAFE CALM PLACE:** "Safe Calm Place" is a classical resourcing activity that is used in many therapeutic modalities. However, in EMDR, we blend visualization with BLS in order to strengthen the positive impact of this activity on the nervous system.

**Instructions:** Find a comfortable position and take a few deep breaths into your body. Notice what you are sensing inside. Now, think of a place - real or imagined - where you feel completely safe and calm. As you let the image of your safe, calm place come into fullness, notice:

- What you see, hear, smell, taste, as well as textures you are aware of
- How you feel in your body

Now, as you imagine this place, begin tapping your left and right thigh or knee in an alternating way (or use another form of BLS - whatever you prefer) for about 30 seconds. Pause and notice what you feel.

If you were to give this place a simple 1-3 word title, what would it be?

Now, every time you say the title of your place, let the image of your place come into your mind. Begin BLS if you wish. After 1-2 minutes, pause and take a few deep breaths.

**Variation:** If this place could speak, what message does it want to offer to you right now?

