

EMDR: some advice on looking after yourself

Please note carefully:

The advice below is in addition to advice supplied by your therapist therefore ***the material below is not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive***. Above all ***your safety is a key principle***. If you have any questions, ask your therapist. You may wish to print this page out as a reminder.

During the EMDR session:

Safety starts in the session itself. Your therapist will help you ***develop 'resources' to promote safety*** such as resources to help control distressing images, control distressing emotions or promote anything that will help make your journey through EMDR – both in and out of the clinic – as easy and safe as possible.

After an EMDR treatment session:

The effects of EMDR treatment don't just stop immediately on leaving the clinic! EMDR generates a certain amount of 'momentum' to your thinking, emotions, and conscious awareness. You may also experience being slightly light-headed. Rest assured these experiences are quite normal response and fade fairly quickly. ***We advise you allow extra time after an EMDR treatment session*** before returning home or to work. ***Try to plan ahead***: for instance think how you will return home/to work, are you driving, going by train? ***Allow plenty of time***, after the treatment session - beware of crossing roads, and concentrate on what is happening 'now'. Unless your therapist advises differently, approximately half an hour should be sufficient to allow you to concentrate/reference your awareness, back in the present. ***It's strongly advised*** that you ***do not drive*** during this period as you may find your concentration wanders off easily. ***On no account put yourself in unnecessary danger***. Clients have reported being glad they were more aware than usual when merely crossing the road! ***Don't run to catch a bus or train*** either. The best way of spending the time is to concentrate on the present – be 'mindful' of the present. You could walk around the shops or listen or watch the sights in the city centre, get yourself a tea or coffee, or just sit and relax. York has plenty to be 'mindful' of!

Things that may (or may not) happen in the days that follow:

You may just experience a ***headache*** after the session. This could be down to not being sufficiently relaxed during the session itself. Remember eyes are moved by muscles and muscles tire easily. Another reason may be that headaches were involved in the target memories you are being treated for. ***Make sure you make your therapist aware***, extra time can be spent in 'the closure' phase to help relax you. Make use of any 'resources' developed in treatment and exercises particularly guided visual relaxation. Don't forget skills you may already have such as yoga, meditation, t'ai chi etc. Actually headaches are not as common as reports of ***increased dreaming*** after EMDR. This is nothing to worry about. If you recall your dreams it is likely that they won't make much sense, with reports frequently saying that dreams "seemed chopped up into pieces", but there seems little doubt that the frequency of dreaming goes up initially with reports such as "I dreamt from the moment I put my head on the pillow until the next morning". Other clients report no increased dreaming, indeed sometimes no dreaming at all. Again don't worry this doesn't mean the EMDR is not working! You may become aware of ***new insights***, this is a direct indication that processing is continuing between sessions. Similarly, ***emotionality*** can be regarded as important 'signposts' for your therapist. Try to keep a ***record or log***, of these events. Also good advice is to make your partner or significant other ***aware of any need for support***.