

EMDR DEBRIEFING SHEET

EMDR supervision handout 8.15 © David Blore 2011

Debriefing advice: After your EMDR treatment sessions

Please note carefully: The material below is **in addition** to advice supplied by your therapist in your specific case. Therefore the material below is not comprehensive nor is it exhaustive. If you have any doubt about what to do, contact your therapist promptly on (telephone number or email address)

The first half hour or so after an EMDR treatment session:

EMDR is not like other therapies. Treatment generates a certain amount of 'momentum' to your thinking and conscious awareness. In other words treatment doesn't just stop immediately on leaving the session. You will have already been reminded of this when your therapist suggested allowing an extra half an hour at least after an EMDR treatment session. It is best if you aim to 'waste' this half an hour. Actually it isn't being wasted at all. It is time to yourself to allow you to 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. **Do not 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 half hour is to **reference yourself properly in the 'present'** such as being mindful of what you are doing minute by minute. This can be achieved by being mindful of reading a book or magazine, talking to a friend, walking around the shops or watching what is going on around you such as observing some particular activity: how someone is walking, the effect of wind in the trees or birds coming and going, or listening to sounds. Other helpful things are to do a relaxing activity such as drinking a tea or coffee, going window-shopping or relaxing in a local park and so on.

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

You may just experience a headache after the session; this is most likely to be down to not being sufficiently relaxed during the session itself. Remember muscles move eyes and muscles tire easily - you may have used your eyes more than you are used to!

The answer to headaches: the simple answer is 'prevention'. This means making use of any relaxation exercises your therapist has taught you, particularly your 'safe/ calm or peaceful place image, but don't forget skills you may already have such interests 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 the 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 well become aware of new **insights** about what is being treated, this is a direct indication that processing is continuing between sessions. Similarly, **emotionality** can be regarded as important 'signposts' for your therapist, so try to keep a **record** of what is happening, as trying to recall what happened, when it happened, and in what order, can be very difficult at a session a week or more later. In the meanwhile make your partner or significant other aware of your need for support. If you are still worried do not hesitate to contact the following number:
