

What type of treatment is this?

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy is an individual therapy for PTSD in which you will focus on processing your memory of the trauma.

How does it work?

Trauma memories can be stored differently from other memories, making them hard to process or make sense of, but easy to be triggered by cues in your daily life. Trauma also can leave people with negative thoughts about themselves. EMDR helps you process the trauma, which can allow you to start to heal. In EMDR, you will pay attention to a back-and-forth movement or sound while you call to mind the upsetting memory and any thoughts or physical feelings that come with it. The back-and-forth movement helps you to stay in the present while allowing the brain to process information from the past and bring in new ways of feeling about the event. This will help you to see the trauma as a negative memory that is no longer so distressing. You also will start to identify more positive beliefs that can help you to feel better.



EMDR helped me regain my life, but more importantly, live. Because I wasn't living before, I was just drifting through life." MARLENE DIAZ, U.S. NAVY

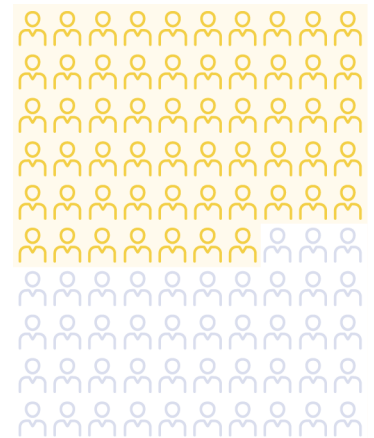
What can I expect?

During the first stage, you will learn about physical and emotional reactions to trauma. You and your clinician will discuss how ready you are to focus on your trauma memories in therapy. To prepare, you will learn some new coping skills. Next, you will identify the upsetting memory you want to focus on—including any negative thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations related to the memory. You will hold the memory in your mind while also paying attention to a back-and-forth movement or sound (like your clinician's moving finger, a flashing light, or a tone that beeps in one ear at a time) until your distress goes down. This will last for about 30 seconds at a time, and then you will talk about what the exercise was like for you. Eventually, you will focus on a positive belief and feeling while you hold the memory in your mind. Toward the end of treatment, your clinician will reassess your symptoms to see if you need to process other targets.

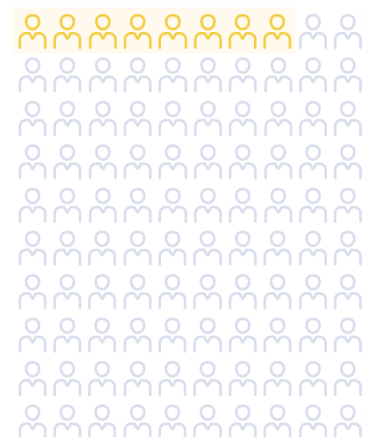
Is it effective?

Yes, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is one of the most effective types of treatment for PTSD.

57 out of every 100 people with PTSD who receive EMDR, CPT or PE will have meaningful symptom improvement after about 3 months.



8 out of every 100 people with PTSD who do not receive treatment will have meaningful symptom improvement after about 3 months.



What are the risks?

You may feel uncomfortable when focusing on trauma-related memories or beliefs. These feelings are usually brief, and people tend to feel better as they keep doing EMDR. Most people who complete EMDR find that the benefits outweigh any initial discomfort.

Group or individual?

EMDR is an individual therapy. You will meet one-to-one with your clinician for each session.

Will I talk in detail about my trauma?

No, in most cases you will not be asked to talk out loud about the details of your trauma. But you will be asked to think about your trauma in session.

Will I have homework?

No, EMDR does not require you to complete homework or practice assignments between sessions.

How long does treatment take?

About 3 months of weekly 50–90-minute sessions. But many people start to notice improvement after a few sessions. And the benefits of EMDR can last long after your final session with your clinician.

How available is this in VA?

Somewhat. EMDR is offered in many VA Medical Center specialized PTSD programs. It is more widely available outside VA.

Does VA have an app for that?

No, currently VA has not developed an app for EMDR.



See what Veterans have to say about EMDR

“After my therapy, I would leave the office and I would feel, each time, like a little weight had been lifted off of my shoulders. My body just felt different after therapy. ... And, finally, I got to the point where I did not feel that electric charge run through my body at all.”

ROGELIO “ROGER” RODRIGUEZ, JR., US AIR FORCE, U.S. NAVY

“Over time, the feelings associated with the sexual assault changed. I was no longer afraid of talking about it. I didn’t think that I would have a heart attack if I spoke about it. If I had a memory, it didn’t have to shut me down. I didn’t have to ruin the rest of my day. Like, I could have a thought, take time for me to do what I needed to do, take some self-care, but then continue on with whatever I wanted to accomplish that day.” YVONNE GRISSETT, U.S. ARMY