

# Healing Through EMDR

Understanding EMDR: A Powerful  
Therapy to Help

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# Understanding EMDR: A Powerful Therapy to Help

## Understanding EMDR: A Powerful Therapy to Help Children Heal

As a parent, there's nothing harder than seeing your child struggle emotionally—and feeling unsure how to help. Whether your child has been through trauma, experiences anxiety, has trouble sleeping, or struggles with big emotions, finding the right support can be overwhelming.

One form of therapy that's making a real difference for children across Australia and around the world is called EMDR, short for Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing.

This guide explains what EMDR is, how it works, and why it's such a powerful tool for helping children recover from emotional distress and get back to thriving.

### What Is EMDR Therapy?

EMDR is a psychological therapy designed to help people heal from distressing or traumatic experiences. It was first developed in the late 1980s by Dr Francine Shapiro and is now backed by decades of research. It's widely used by psychologists and therapists in Australia and is endorsed by international bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Australian Psychological Society (APS).

What makes EMDR unique is that it helps the brain reprocess painful memories so they no longer cause distress. Children don't have to talk at length about their trauma—instead, EMDR taps into the brain's natural ability to heal by using gentle techniques such as guided eye movements or tapping.

In short, EMDR helps kids “unstick” from the past and feel more settled, safe, and confident in the present.

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## How Does EMDR Work?

Our brains are designed to process experiences in a healthy way—just like our bodies heal cuts and bruises. But when something overwhelming or traumatic happens, that process can get blocked. The memory may become “stuck”, and the child may re-experience the feelings, body sensations, or thoughts long after the event has passed.

That’s where EMDR comes in. Here’s a simplified version of how the therapy works:



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1. **Preparation & Safety:** First, the therapist builds a strong relationship with your child and teaches calming strategies to make sure they feel safe and supported.
2. **Identifying the Issue:** The therapist helps your child identify troubling memories or symptoms—such as fear, anger, bad dreams, or anxiety.
3. **Processing the Memory:** While the child focuses on the memory, the therapist uses bilateral stimulation (like eye movements, tapping, or sound) to activate the brain’s healing process. This helps the memory move from being “stuck” and upsetting to something that feels less intense and more manageable.
4. **Resolution:** Over time, the emotional charge of the memory fades. Children often feel more in control, more at peace, and less reactive.

One of the key benefits of EMDR is that it’s gentle but powerful—and it doesn’t require children to re-live painful experiences in detail.

## **Why Is EMDR So Effective for Children?**

Children and young people often respond quickly to EMDR because their brains are still growing and adapting. The therapy meets them where they’re at emotionally and developmentally, making it a perfect fit for their needs.

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Here's why EMDR is such a great option for kids:



- **It's gentle and child-friendly: There's no pressure to talk about everything. EMDR works even when kids don't have the words to describe what they're feeling.**
- It targets the root of the problem: EMDR doesn't just manage symptoms like meltdowns or anxiety—it helps heal the underlying cause.
- It's fast and effective: Many families notice a shift within a few sessions. It's one of the fastest and most evidence-based trauma therapies available.
- It helps kids feel in control again: Children who have felt overwhelmed, scared, or powerless often regain confidence, calm, and resilience.

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## What Can EMDR Help With?

EMDR is effective for a wide range of issues affecting children and teens, including:



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- Trauma and PTSD
- Anxiety and panic
- Fears and phobias (e.g. fear of the dark, dogs, needles)
- Bullying or school trauma
  
- Sleep disturbances and nightmares
- Emotional outbursts or behavioural issues
- Separation, divorce or family stress
- Accidents, medical trauma or hospital stays
- Adoption, foster care, or early attachment difficulties
- Grief and loss

If your child has been through something distressing—or is just not their usual self—EMDR may be able to help them recover and move forward.

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## What Do Aussie Parents Say About EMDR?

Parents often describe EMDR as a breakthrough. They notice their children become:



- More settled and emotionally balanced
- Less reactive or anxious
- More connected with others
- Better at sleeping and self-soothing
- Happier and more resilient

They also talk about feeling more hopeful as parents—knowing their child is healing, not just coping.

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## How Can I Access EMDR for My Child?

If you think EMDR might be right for your child, here's how to get started:



1. Find a qualified therapist: Look for a registered psychologist, counsellor, or mental health professional trained in EMDR, ideally with experience working with children. You can search through professional directories like the EMDR Association of Australia (EMDRAA).
2. Book an initial consultation: This session helps the therapist assess whether EMDR is appropriate for your child. They'll explain the process in more detail and answer your questions.
3. Support your child's journey: While most sessions happen one-on-one, your involvement matters. Ask your child about their feelings, encourage them, and celebrate their progress along the way.

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## **Final Thoughts: Healing Is Possible**

EMDR is giving hope to families across Australia. Whether your child has experienced a big trauma or is struggling with anxiety, grief, or emotional overwhelm, this therapy offers real healing—not just temporary relief.

With the right therapist and support, your child can move from surviving to thriving. EMDR helps kids let go of what's holding them back so they can move forward with confidence, calm, and courage.

# **Understanding EMDR:** **A Powerful Therapy to Help**

Understanding EMDR: A Powerful Therapy to Help Children Heal offers parents a compassionate guide to navigating their child's emotional struggles through EMDR therapy. This evidence-based approach gently helps children reprocess traumatic memories without the need for lengthy discussions, empowering them to regain control and confidence. With the right support, families can witness profound healing and transformation, enabling their children to thrive once more.

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