

Treatment and Support Strategies that Work: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

Presented by _____

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Recording for Today's Session

Please note that we are recording the didactic portion of today's session. While we will not record any group discussions, the recording from today's presentation may be considered for posting on the CMHIS Learning Lab for public use and/or be made available to attendees.



**Please
write in
the chat**

Any questions you have
that you would like to see
addressed by the end of
our session.

Please feel free to
continue adding these
questions to the chat as
your new questions arise.

New Publication:
Cross-Systems Strategies to Support Children
with Complex Behavioral Health Conditions





Laying the foundation in assessing the restorative environment

- You can be the best therapist in the world, but if they are going home to hell, they are not going to be able to heal.
- You can be a “good enough” therapist, and if they have a restorative home life, there will be positive gains for the person...

Enemy Images



Why Do we care about Trauma?



Trauma and traumatic responses underlie many of the behaviors that challenge us the most.

Direct supporters are rarely trained on how to support people in recovering from trauma.

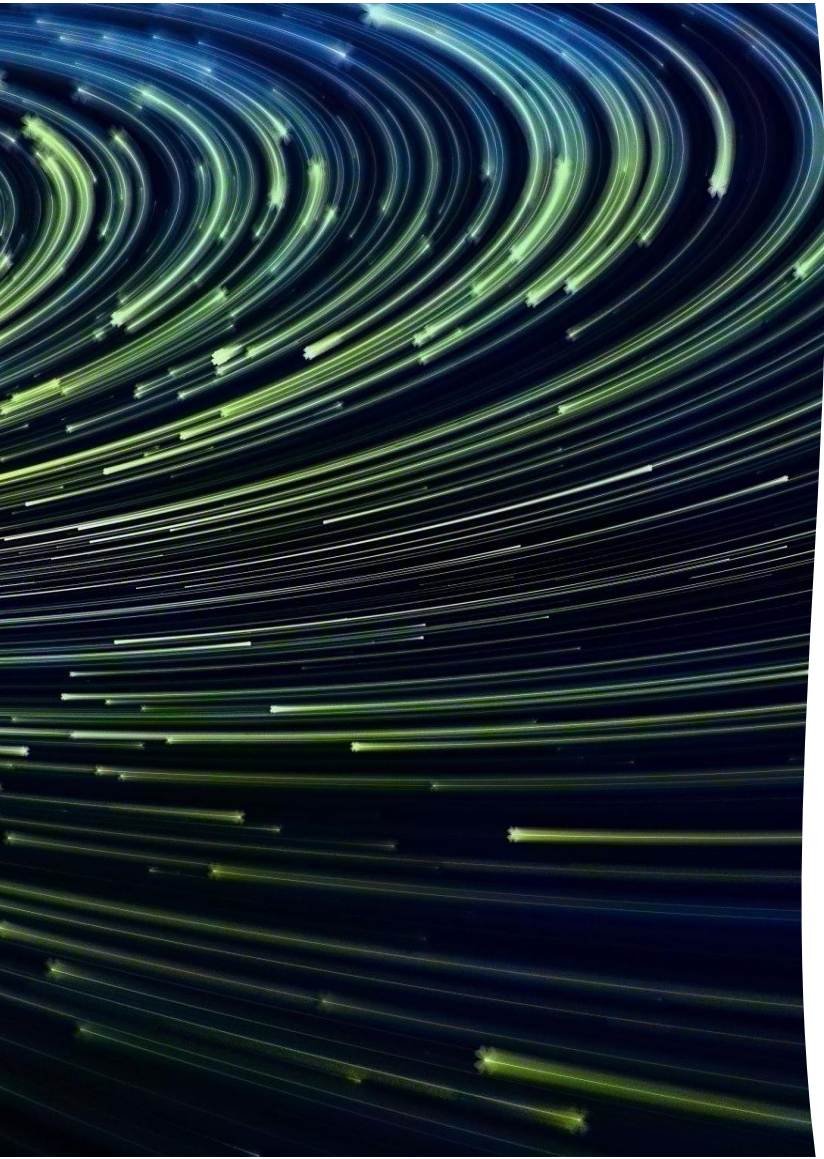
Agency/Governmental decision-making sometimes is incongruent with what we know about healing trauma. We accidentally make things worse.

What do challenging behaviors tell us?



Behaviors we see in people with (and also without) IDD:

AGGRESSION
CURSING
SIB
“NONCOMPLIANCE”
crying
sexual
acting out
medication refusal
SMEARING FECES
screaming
“MANIPULATION”
eloping
RECTAL DIGGING
spitting
ARGUING
biting
compulsive behavior



Conditions That Affect The Impact Of Trauma



Being separated
from family

Being moved from
home

Disturbance of
typical neurological
pathways

Experiences of loss
and unresolved
grief

Being seen as
“different”

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) **ACES**

Physical abuse.

Sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse.

Physical neglect.

Emotional neglect.

Mental illness.

Divorce.

Substance abuse.

Violence against your mother

Having a relative who has been sent to Prison

And more...



Community violence

Natural disasters

Illness

Pain

COVID

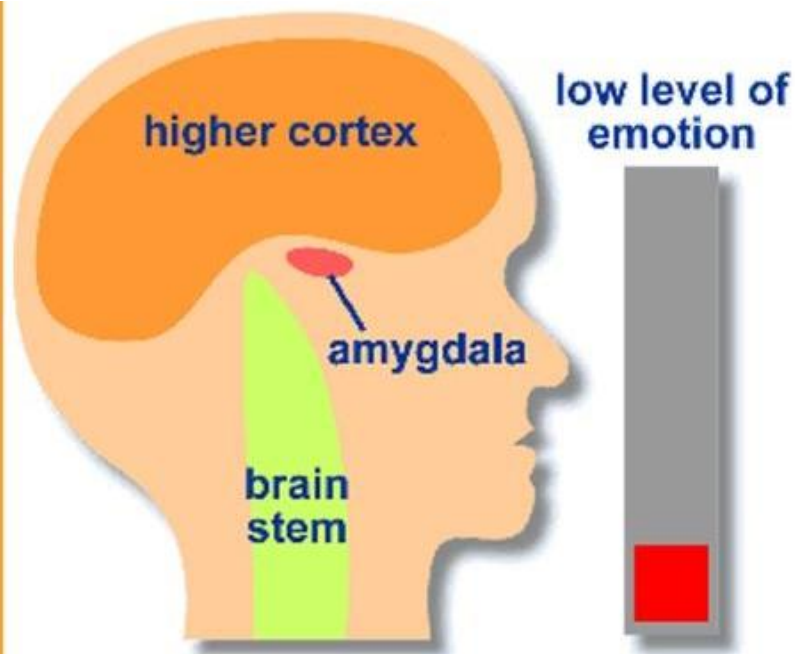
Why Adapted Trauma Treatment Matters

- Extremely high rates of trauma, abuse, and neglect in individuals with IDD
- Trauma often unrecognized due to diagnostic overshadowing
- Adapted treatment is necessary for justice and access
- Clinicians play a key role in cultural competence and access to treatment



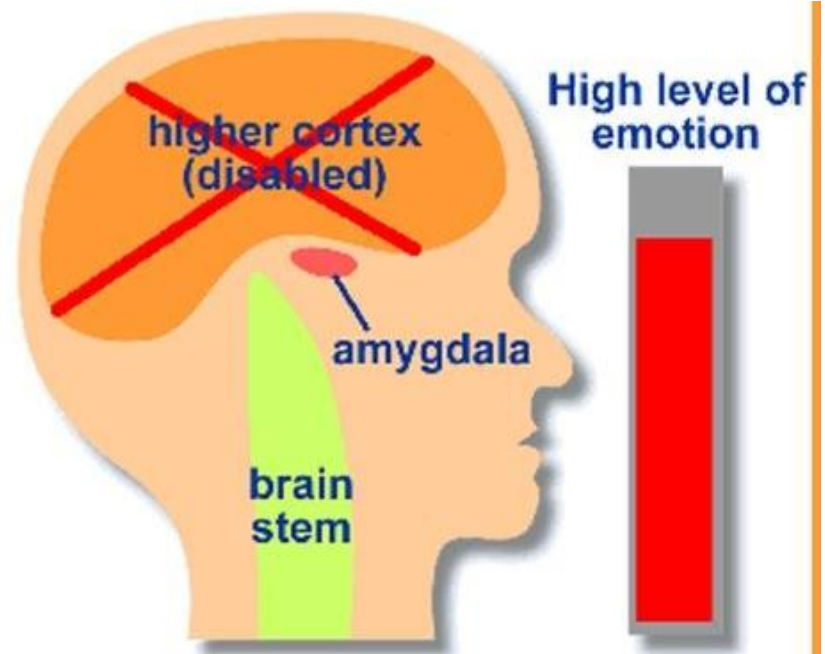
ANXIETY FROM A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE





Low emotion

(calm, relaxed)



High emotion

(anger, fear, excitement, love, hate, disgust, frustration)

The Seed of Trauma



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“If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility” Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Biographical Timeline



Trauma history



Diagnostic history



Medications and treatments... what helped and what didn't



Wounds, Issues and Missed opportunities



Building an empathetic connection



Getting the cross-system team on the same page



Exploring the trauma context

Prevalence of Trauma experiences among people with I/DD

Learning from the person's biographical timeline

Information from caregivers and referral sources

Target approaches

Amping up our ability to “hang in there”.

Vicarious trauma



EMDR is a physiologically based phase model of trauma treatment... What distinguishes EMDR is that:



(1) it is an integrated model, involving aspects of cognitive, Gestalt, client-centered, body-oriented, hypnosis, psychodynamic, and behavioral therapies, and



(2) it employs bilateral stimulation of the brain, which encourages free association during the processing phase of treatment.

EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

WHAT IS EMDR? (EYE MOVEMENT DESENSITIZATION AND REPROCESSING)



An important focus on bilateral stimulation and reprocessing

An 8 step stage model for trauma recovery

“Works directly on physiological systems involved in processing information

“Multi modal components of EMDR work more effectively than therapies that only focus on some elements of the trauma memory.” (Shapiro,1995)



Why choose EMDR as a therapeutic modality choice?

Relevance and Adaptation

Some people can not speak or communicate their underlying issues

Some people can articulate, but don't have the experience/practice of describing how they are feeling or what they are going through

Power-over approaches have increased their hesitancy and silence

We have seen positive outcomes in verbal and non-verbal individuals using EMDR

The log across the stream metaphor



- Sometimes you have to shift the log
- Sometimes you just have to move some piled up branches



Calming first...might be the best you can do: Its still EMDR

- Breathing: Blowing out birthday candles
- Bilateral tapping
- Story telling
- Building trust by being trustworthy
- Calming, going through the body to help self-sooth



Adaptive interventions

More time invested in building a trusting rapport

Using the Breath to build trust (neurolinguistic therapy) a true compliment to build connection and to relax

Hypnotic devices tapped in to build trust and confidence.

More time building safety and calming techniques, i.e., favorite place, showing the sign for “stop”, favorite aspect or picture in the room, tapping or processing them in for stability

More verbal encouragement, emphasize successes

Relational storytelling

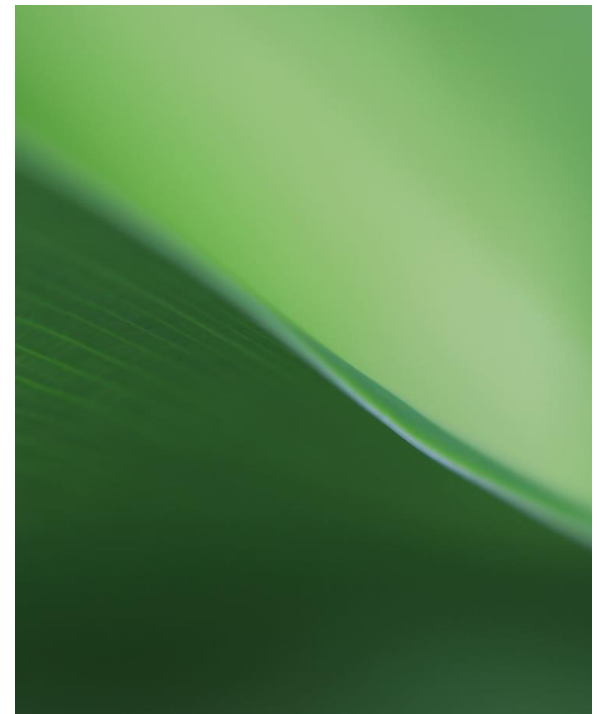


Adaptive interventions

Feeding into interests to connect the experience or the treatment in a positive light

Drawing pictures or finding a picture to represent the problems

Have trusted other present to provide updates





Adaptive Interventions

Process current/recent traumatic events instead of traumatic events from childhood

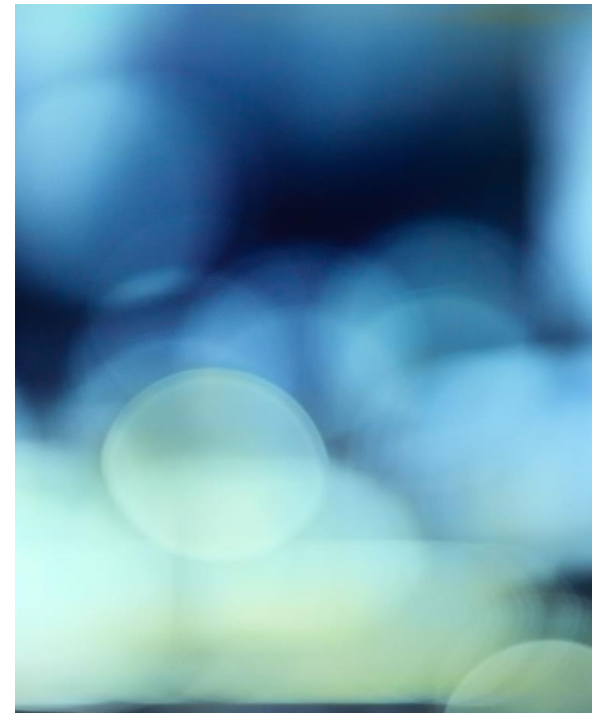
Instead of eye movement, use tapping, auditory, and or vibrational bilateral stimulation

Alter scales to be congruent and less confusing

Treat parents with EMDR if they have experienced trauma, before the identified person

Visualize the current situation and “flip the switch” onto another track

Create stories from the biographical timeline, illustrating their hero's journey





The multi colored
and faceted stained
glass window
approach

A House Falling Down

Just add fancy windows
and shutters?



Brain and Body: Support the Gut-Brain Axis



Be nutritionally focused	Health fats	Healthy Proteins	FIBER!
Fruits	Vegetables	Drinking clean water and healthy liquids	Fermented foods
	Chew your food	Get the full range of vitamins and minerals in the food eaten daily	



**EMDR international
EMDRIA
<https://www.emdria.org/>**

<https://www.emdria.org/find-an-emdr-therapist/>

References and resources



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State Break Out Discussions



- How can you establish, sustain, or grow EMDR in your state?
- What are the needs in your state?
- What data sources do you have?
- What more do you need to know about the needs of your communities?

State Break Out Discussions



- Reflections from breakout discussions
- 3 teams willing to share something that stood out from their discussions or share something that might resonate with other state teams

Upcoming Sessions



Treatment and Support Strategies that work:

July 10, 2026

- Understand the practice of Neurofeedback and its benefits for children with complex conditions and dysregulated behavior, including children with Autism.
- Explore application and adoption in state programs.

Presenters: Nathan Brown, Ph. D and Lou Moore,
Executive Director, Forestall **Treatment and Support Strategies that work:**

July 31, 2026

- Understand the benefits of Equine Assisted Therapy for children with complex conditions, including trauma.
- Learn about somatic/body-based practices to reduce trauma that can be implemented as part of the children's routines.
- Explore application and adoption in state programs.
- Presenter: Hela Baer, LCSW, E-RYT, PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning: Masterson Method Equine Specialist



How to fund services and provider capacity development:

Aug. 7, 2026

- Learn how various federal funding streams can support providing a "Place that is Safe, Treatments to Heal and Opportunities to Grow."
- State successes and challenges: An opportunity for participating states to present their efforts and challenges and to exchange strategies.

State implementation successes and challenges:

Aug. 21, 2026

State implementation successes and challenges:

Aug. 21, 2026

- An opportunity for participating states to present their efforts and challenges, to bring questions and to exchange strategies.

