Nature and purpose of EMDR therapy:

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy is a simple, efficient form of therapy utilizing Bilateral Stimulation (BLS) usually in the form of eye movements, tapping, or auditory tones in order to increase the brain’s natural ability to process and heal a troubling memory, thought, feeling, phobia, etc. BLS produces the same eye movements which occur during Rapid Eye Movement (REM) or dream sleep. BLS causes different parts of the brain to work together to help “digest” a memory and store it in a healthier way. This often happens with very little talking, without the necessity of pharmaceuticals, and does not require homework in between sessions. Completing all phases of EMDR therapy typically reduces the effects of triggers and improves functioning, but it may not eliminate all trauma symptoms or complications. EMDR treatment must be administered by a licensed mental health professional with EMDRIA-approved training. You can view an introductory video at https://www.emdria.org/about-emdr-therapy/

Benefits of EMDR therapy:

* Some clients can experience relief or positive effects in just a few sessions. EMDR therapy is effective in reducing trauma-related symptoms, whether the traumatic event occurred many years ago or yesterday.
* EMDR therapy helps the brain reintegrate the memory and store it in a more appropriate place in the brain. The client’s own brain reintegrates the memory and does the healing.
* The memory is remembered, but the painful emotions and physical sensations or disturbing images & thoughts are no longer present.
* There is no known adverse effect for interrupting EMDR therapy; therefore, a client can discontinue treatment at any time.

Risks of EMDR therapy:

* Some clients experience emotional or physical reactions during the treatment sessions that neither they nor the EMDR clinician anticipated. After the treatment session, processing may continue and vivid dreams, memories, flashbacks, or physical symptoms may surface in between sessions. This is common for clients who have experienced multiple childhood traumas.
* Distressing unresolved memories may surface through the use of the EMDR procedure. Traumatic material retrieved in any psychotherapy may or may not be historically accurate and all memories are subject to contamination. EMDR therapy does not guarantee the historical accuracy of the retrieved memory, but is simply helping the brain process the trauma.
* EMDR therapy may result in the sharpening, fading, or blurring of memories and emotions related to these memories. Clients involved in a legal case who need to testify must discuss this with their therapist before starting EMDR treatment, as treatment may shift memories that are the basis for testimony.
* Since EMDR therapy normally takes more than one session, it may initially increase cravings or urges for drug and alcohol use, compulsive gambling or sexual compulsions, eating disorders, or self-injury. Your therapist will teach you tools to help you cope with distressing thoughts and feelings to reduce the likelihood of relapse, but it is necessary to disclose your full history of these behaviors to your EMDR therapist and develop a safety plan before starting trauma-processing.
* EMDR therapy may not be appropriate for people with certain limiting medical conditions (pregnancy, heart condition, seizure disorders, etc.) Anyone in a fragile medical state should consult with a medical professional about the risks of EMDR therapy before starting treatment.
* Certain medications such as benzodiazepines and narcotics for pain, medical cannabis or even moderate alcohol use may reduce the effects of EMDR therapy, as processing requires an emotional charge and release. Medications that interfere with emotional intensity will likely interfere with the EMDR process. Clients should inform their therapist and may need to consult their psychiatrist or medical doctor regarding the use of these medications prior to starting EMDR therapy.

Discontinuing EMDR therapy:

* Clients may stop treatment at any time before, during, or after any EMDR therapy session.
* Clients may postpone EMDR therapy for any period of time and resume the treatment as needed.
* EMDR therapy can cause clients to become more connected with the traumatic memories that have been stored in the body. If you stop EMDR therapy before completing all phases of the treatment, it may feel as though symptoms have gotten worse, but EMDR does NOT increase illness or pathology. You are simply feeling all the “old stuff” that is resurfacing.
* More than one EMDR therapy session is usually necessary in the treatment.After starting the trauma-processing, you should attend least one follow-up session with your therapist, even if you have decided to discontinue the EMDR treatment.

Refusing EMDR therapy and reasonable alternatives:

* EMDR therapy is not for everyone, especially people who have difficulty tolerating strong emotions or have a tendency to dissociate. You have the right to decline and there are no negative consequences for refusing this treatment.
* People can improve *without* EMDR using traditional therapeutic approaches (like cognitive behavior therapy), group therapy, medication, or other traditional or holistic approaches (e.g. yoga, meditation, acupuncture, traditional medicine). These approaches are often much less intense but also can take longer. If you don’t feel EMDR is right for you, ask your provider about other options that will help you feel better.

Expectations:

* I agree to keep a record of any major disturbances that happen between sessions so I can process them with my therapist. I agree to use the coping strategies I learned in therapy. If I am having difficulty tolerating symptoms in between sessions, I will call my therapist or the New Mexico Crisis Access Line at 1-855-NMCRISIS (662-7474) after hours.
* I have disclosed my history of drug and alcohol abuse, compulsive gambling or sexual compulsions, eating disorders, or self-injury. I have developed a plan to use other relaxation and coping techniques as an alternative to these behaviors.
* I have disclosed all medical conditions or diseases to my therapist and have gotten the necessary professional input about the medical risks of EMDR therapy.
* I have considered all of the above and I have obtained whatever information or professional advice I deemed necessary or appropriate. By signing this document, I hereby consent to participating in EMDR treatment and acknowledge my consent is free from pressure from my therapist or anyone else. I agree to hold harmless my EMDR clinician and Synapse Integrated Psychology for any unpleasant or unexpected effect which may arise from my experience.

Client/ Guardian Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_