

EMDR PROTOCOL FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS 0-18 YEARS OLD

1. INTRODUCTION

Before commencing the protocol, the memory, which is going to be worked on, has been determined and also avoidance behaviour and situations which the child avoids or endures with fear (for potential *future templates*).

Introduce the eye movements (with hands or light bar); put the chairs in position, taking into consideration the background, the speed and the distance of eye movements. If a different distracting task is used: demonstrate the use of the MP3 with headphones or 'hand-taps'. Everything has to be put in place beforehand.

Modify according to age level:

"In a moment I will ask you to tell me what you remember about what happened, from the beginning till the end. Then, I will ask you to pause the story at the image / picture (picture) that, at the moment, is the most disturbing (stressful or upsetting) to look at. I will ask you (to make a drawing of it and then I will ask you) some questions about that image / picture: what you are thinking, feeling and where you feel tension in your body. Then I will ask you to follow my fingers with your eyes. I will do this for approximately 30 seconds and then ask you what comes up / what do you notice. You may see images / pictures, thoughts or feelings might come up, or you might notice something in your body. You tell me (in one or two words) what you notice and then the eye-movements start again. We keep going on like this for a while. Just go with the flow of what comes up and don't try to control it. Whatever happens is ok, (you cannot make mistakes) because this is about your memories and the way you remember them. It is important you don't try to hold on to the image / picture that we started with. This image / picture is the starting point after which anything can and may come up. Every now and again we will go back to the original image / picture to check how distressing it still is to look at this image / picture. We will keep going until it is no longer stressful to look at the image / picture."

2. ASSESSMENT

2.1 Traumatic memory

Identify the negative memory which is going to be worked on.

With children age <12: make sure you have heard the story from the parents first, before you see the child alone.

a. Visual representation of the negative memory (movie/photo album).

*"Please tell me in short what you remember of what happened, like a movie. What matters is how you **now** see the story in your head, not exactly what happened."*

Let the child tell the complete memory and encourage if necessary by asking several times in a curious tone: "... *And how did it proceed?*" until the end of the memory is reached.

Check: *"Is this the whole movie/ story from the beginning to the end or did other things happen –on the same day – before or after, which you feel are part of the movie?"*

b. Target selection

*"Please look at the movie (in your head) and pause it on the image / picture (picture) that is the most disturbing to look at **now**. So - not the image / picture that was the most disturbing when it happened, but the image / picture you find the most disturbing **now**. It could also be an image / picture of what could have happened..... What does this image/ picture look like/what do you see?"*

If the child does not position himself in the image/ picture, while he is actively involved in the situation:

"Where do you see yourself in this image/ picture?"

Check:

"Just to be sure, is this the most disturbing image/picture for you to look at right now or does this image/ picture show what was the most disturbing back then?"

Optional: Give the image/ picture a name.

If there are several images/pictures:

'Look at both of these pictures in your head. Put them next to each other. Which is the most disturbing to look at one right now?'

The child needs to make a drawing if (s)he finds it difficult to imagine the image/ picture (make a mental representation), to pause the movie, and / or to communicate about the image/ picture.

Age 9-18:	description of mental image / picture
Age 6-8:	make a drawing
Age 4-5:	make a drawing, optionally with assistance of parents
Age 1-3:	Storytelling by parents (Storytelling-method)

Age 6-18:

"What is the worst / most awful picture to look at?" Please draw that quickly." It does not have to be beautiful, just as long as I can see where you are and where the others are.

Age 4-5:

“Please draw the most awful/ scary/ yucky picture from that story”. It does not have to be beautiful, just as long as I can see where you are and where the others are.

While listening to the story and looking at the selected target, try to figure out the domain of the (hypothesized) negative cognition (belief):

The domains:

- Control (e.g. "I am powerless / helpless; I cannot look at this picture")
- Safety ("I am - (subjectively) – not safe / still in danger")
- Self-Esteem (e.g. "I am a bad child, a loser, worthless, disgusting, weak, a coward")
- Responsibility & guilt / blame: (e.g. It is my fault")

2.2 Negative cognition (NC)

Age 6-18:

"We are going to find out why this image / picture is still so disturbing to look at now. Why is/ What makes this image / picture so disturbing for you now?"

Listen carefully to the themes and keep asking until the domain is clear to you, 'Control (route A) or 'Safety' (route B) or 'Self-esteem or guilt' (route C).

A. Control

If you believe, from the answers, the key-issue is about control: the helplessness / powerlessness from the past is again felt right now or the image is aversive to look at, then ask the key-question:

Age 6-18:

"Is it like you can't stand to look at the image/picture right now? Or " Do you think you are powerless / out of control again when you look at this image / picture?"

If this is correct, proceed to 2.5.: determine the emotion(s).

B. Safety

If you believe, from the answers, the key-issue is about feeling currently unsafe, then ask:

"Do you feel like you are in danger again right now, when you look at the picture/image?"

If this is correct, then proceed to 2.3.: determine the positive cognition.

C. Self-esteem and guilt

If you believe, from the answers, the image/ picture activates a negative belief about him/herself, then repeat your question:

"What makes this image / picture still so disturbing / awful for you now?"

If the answer is not an evaluation of the person, but a description of behaviour (like: 'that I stood there and did nothing'), then ask:

"Look at the image/picture: what do you believe about yourself?/ What statement about yourself fits the best?" (Active guidance therapist)

Helping questions if it remains unclear (age 12-18):

*"What does that say about you (that you did)?" "What kind of person are you then?"
"What do you think other people would call someone like that?"/"What would you call someone like that?"*

Check:

Age 12-18:

"Just to be sure: When you look at the image / picture and say to yourself: "I am (NC), is that affecting you the most ?"

Age 6-11:

"Just to be sure: Look at the drawing please. Does 'I am(NC)' give you the most awful feeling?"

If the child finds it difficult to choose between several options, say:

"Look at the image / picture and say to yourself: I am(NC1)....Now look at the same image / picture and say to yourself I am....(NC2)....Which one disturbs you the most at this moment?"

NC:

Age 6-8; skip if difficult

Age 4-5: skip

Age 1-3: skip

2.3 Preferred (positive) cognition (PC)

Age 12-18, 9-11 & 6-8:

"Look at the image / picture, what would you rather / want to believe about yourself now, instead of (NC).....?" (Active role therapist)

Domain

- o Safety (regarding this image!): "I am safe (now)/It is over. "
- o Self-esteem: "I am OK; worthy; precious, valuable, brave"

- o Responsibility & guilt / blame: "I did what I could (I can forgive myself); "It's not my fault"

Helping questions:

"What would you call someone like that? Do you know anyone who is not a(NC)?"

PC:

Age 6-8; skip if difficult

Age 4-5: skip

Age 1-3: skip

2.4 Credibility / Validity of Cognition (VoC 1-7)

Age 6-18:

"Please look at the image / picture, how true does it feel to say (PC), on a scale from one to seven, where one feels completely untrue and seven feels completely true?"

Or:

"Look at the drawing and say ... (PC) -, on a scale from one to seven, where one feels completely untrue and seven feels completely true, how true does that feel?"

(Age 6-8: measure VoC with hands or smiley and not smiley faces)

VoC:

Age 6-8; skip if difficult

Age 4-5: skip

Age 1-3: skip

Optional when using headphones or tactile stimulation:

"Close your eyes now"

2.5 Feelings

Age 12-18, 9-11 & 6-8:

"Look at the image / picture, say to yourself -NC- what feeling (for example scared, angry, sad or mixed) do you have at this moment?"

Age 4-5:

"Look at the drawing, what do you feel now? For example scared, angry, sad or mixed."

Age 1-3:

The story incorporates the child's feelings.

2.6. Level of Disturbance (SUD 0-10)

Age 12-18, 9-11 & 6-8:

*"Look at the image / picture/ drawing, say to yourself -NC-, how disturbing does it feel **now** (or: how much tension do you feel now), on a scale from zero to ten, where zero is not disturbing and ten the most disturbing or a number in between"*

Age 4-5:

"How awful / bad/ yucky is it to look at the drawing now?"

(Age 4-8: measure with hands or happy and sad smiley-faces).

Age 1-3:

skip

2.7 Location of bodily sensation

Age 12-18 & 9-11:

"Where in your body do you feel this bad feeling / stress the most?"

Age 6-8 & 4-5:

"Where do you feel that in your body?"

Age 1-3:

The story incorporates the child's bodily feelings.

3. DESENSITIZATION

-If using eye-movements: put your hand in front of the eyes.

"Look at my fingers"

Optional when using headphones or tactile stimulation: "Close your eyes now"

-If using headphones: if necessary, ask the child to put the headphones on again

-If using tactile stimulation (hand taps): put the child into position

a)

6-18:

"Look at the image / picture

Say to yourself -NC-

Feel the disturbing feelings in your - (location of bodily sensation) –

Have you got that? (If using clicks you might say: "Close your eyes and concentrate on the image / picture...etc.")

If the child drew the image, remove the drawing from the child's eyesight.

Age 4-5:

Look at the drawing, feel the bad feeling in your - (location of feeling) -. OK?

If the child drew the image, remove the drawing from the child's eyesight.

Age 1-3:

Story-telling by the parents with continuous distraction (tapping).
Allow the child some time to concentrate.

"Follow my fingers" or "Concentrate on the clicks and wait what comes up"

Set of eye-movements, clicks or hand-taps for approximately 30 seconds.

b)

"What comes up" / "What do you notice" / "And now?"

Ask one question at a time, don't ask further questions and don't start a dialogue!

"Continue/ concentrate on that" / "Stay with that" / "ok keep going"

Set of eye-movements, clicks or hand-taps etc. Continue until the child does not report any new changes (end of the chain of associations).

3.1 Back to target

a.

Age 6-18

*"Look at the original image / picture (you might use the title) as you see it now (**WITHOUT REPEATING THE NC**), how disturbing does it feel **now** (or: how much tension do you feel now), on a scale from zero to ten, where zero is not disturbing and ten the most disturbing, or a number in between" (Ask the child to rate the stress level)*

Age 4-5:

"How awful / bad is it to look at the drawing now... a lot - a bit – or not at all?"

(Age 4-5: measure with hands or happy and sad smiley-faces).

Age 1-3:

Skip

b.

Age 6-18

"What part of the image/ picture makes it a.....(number). "What is the most disturbing now?".

"What do you see?"

Age 4-5:

"Look at the drawing, Can you please show me / point out in the drawing what is still the worst part?"

Age 1-3:

Skip

c.

Age 4-18

"Concentrate on that aspect / Stay with that.... Okay, have you got that?"

Sets of eye-movements, clicks or hand-taps until there are no more changes, or at least every 5-10 minutes, then back to target (a).

Age 1-3:

Skip

Repeat 'Back to target' procedure until SUD=0. If SUD=0:

"Are you sure there is no more stress / disturbance in your body when you look at the image / picture? Not even a tiny bit? Try to let it affect you.

If necessary continue the desensitization until the original image / picture feels completely neutral (SUD=0). Then continue with installation (step 4).

NB: If you need to end the session with SUD>0 then go to 'positive closure' (step 7).

4. INSTALLATION (INTEGRATION) OF PC

a.

Test VoC (with PC and image)

If PC was in the domain Control, the determination of the PC was skipped before. Install the following PC in this phase: I can look at the image/ picture.

Age 6-18:

"Look at the original image / picture (you might use the title) as you see it now, how true does it feel to say -PC- right now, on a scale from one (completely untrue) to seven (completely true)? (Age 6-8: measure VoC with hands or happy and sad smiley-faces)

b. Instruction: (even if VoC is 7 straight away):

"Look at the image / picture. Say to yourself -PC. Keep the image and those words together. Have you got that?"

c. New short set of eye-movements clicks or hand-taps.

Do not ask for associations!

Continue with a,b and c until VoC=7.

NB: VoC<7 at the end of a session: go to 7 (positive closure)

Age 4-5: skip

Age 1-3: skip

5. BODY SCAN

a.

Age 6-18

"Look at the image / picture please and say to yourself -PC-. Try to let it affect you. Check whether somewhere in your body a bad feeling comes up. Scan your entire body, from head to toe, and feel if this picture is causing any stress / physical tension anywhere. Do feel any tension?"

Age 4-5:

"Look at the drawing please. Do you still feel any bad feelings in your body?"

b.

Age 4-18

If there is tension: *"Concentrate on that"*.

Set of eye-movements clicks or hand-taps

"What comes up? / What do you notice / and now"

Continue until the feeling has gone and/ or nothing comes up.

Check: repeat step a, and if necessary followed by step b.

Age 1-3: skip

6. FUTURE TEMPLATE

The future template is an image / picture of a future situation in which the child is doing what he is now avoiding. Only after **all** the relevant memories have been desensitized, the future template can be used. It is only appropriate if the child avoids certain situations. First inquire if there are situations (related to the desensitized memory / memories), which the child has been avoiding until now or perceives as very stressful. Ask the child to describe these situation(s), and possibly make a hierarchy!

Age 12-18 & 9-12:

"What situation(s) do you currently avoid and/ or make you very afraid?"

Ages 6-8 & 4-5:

"What do you find difficult to do? What do you rather not do? What do you want to do more easily?"

Optionally make a hierarchy. Make sure there are no catastrophic elements in the picture!¹

¹ If there are catastrophic elements, let the child describe the worst picture of this horror movie/disaster script and treat it as a regular memory representation (flash forward) and start

a. Ask the child to imagine or draw a picture of a future situation in which the child is doing what he is now avoiding.

Age 12-18 & 9-12:

"Make an image / picture in your mind where you are doing what you did not do before or what made you very scared." (name the situation the child mentioned). What picture have you got in mind? What do you see on the picture?"

Age 6-8 & 4-5: Optionally

"Make a drawing where you are doing what you stopped doing or what you did while feeling scared". What did you draw?"

Age 1-3: At the end of the storytelling, situations are described where the child does, what was previously avoided.

b.

Age 4-18:

"Look at this image / picture please and say to yourself: 'I can do it', Okay, have you got it?"

c.

Set of eye-movements, clicks or hand-taps.

d.

Age 6-8 & 9-18:

"Look at this image / picture again please. On a scale from one to seven, how much do you think you can really do it? One meaning: 'I really cannot do it', and 7 meaning 'I am sure I can do it'."

Age 4-5:

"Look at the drawing. Do you dare to do it already... totally, a bit or not yet?"

Measure in concrete visualized way.

e.

Install with distracting stimulus until VoC doesn't increase anymore (similar to installation of PC)

Do not ask for SUDs or associations!

7. POSITIVE CLOSURE (at the end of every session; this is separate from the target image / picture)

Age 12-18, 9-11, 6-8 & 4-5:

again with phase 3 (desensitization) . Standard NC is: *I cannot stand to look at the picture*. When SUD=0, install PC: *I can stand to look at the picture*. Then check if future template is still necessary.

- a. *"What is the best/ most positive about this session today that you take home with you?" Or: "What was the best/ most positive you learned about yourself in this session today?"*
- b. If necessary: *"What does that say about you?" Or: "What do you call someone like that?"*
- c. Optional: *"Can you show me how someone who is..... sits?"*
- d. Set of eye-movements, clicks or hand-taps
- e. *"Any other positive things that come up?"*
- f. Install with sets of eye-movements, clicks or hand-taps, until there are no further (positive) changes. Alternative: use concentration/ imagination instead of distraction.

Give an explanation about what the child can expect in the next (three) days, possibly in the presence of the parent. Discuss using a diary, email, contact information, etc.

8. REEVALUATION (NEXT SESSION)

- a. Finish the target you were working on:
 - If SUD>0 at the start of the session: use 'back to target' to get started (without using the NC!).
 - If SUD target image/ picture=0 and VoC PC <7: continue installation of PC (procedure from 4a on).
 - If SUD target image/ picture =0 and VoC PC=7: ask the child to play the whole 'movie in his head and pause if there is still a disturbing image/ picture. If there is, start a new EMDR-procedure with this new target (with new NC/PC), if there's enough time left.
- b. If the child still has trauma-related symptoms: search for the targets causing these problems and start again (2).