

EMDR Clinician Preparation Toolkit

Simple illustrated guides for thoughtful preparation



Clinicians

Understand the process



- Treatment phases and goals
- Shared language and scales
- Questions and informed choices

Prepare together



- History and preparation
- Resources and pause signals
- Individual readiness discussions

Prepare the workspace



- Telehealth planning
- Visual and audio comfort
- Privacy and equipment checks

Close and review



- Unfinished work and closure
- Between-session support
- Reevaluation and next steps



A useful reminder

Educational review draft. Use alongside clinical training and individualized care.

Educational review draft • Awaiting qualified clinical review. Not formal EMDR training, an individualized treatment plan, or emergency care.

Selected framework references

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

EMDRIA • Experiencing EMDR Therapy

emdrdot.com/resources/preparation

Phase 1: history and treatment planning

A shared plan before target work



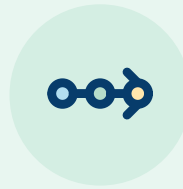
Clinicians • Phase 1

Start with today



- What brings the client in?
- What change would matter?
- How is daily life affected?

Understand the context



- Relevant past experiences
- Development, culture, and strengths
- Current safety and support

Map the treatment plan



- Past experiences
- Present triggers
- Future situations and goals

Choose the next step



- Discuss preparation needs
- Agree on pace and priorities
- Document the clinical rationale



A useful reminder

History taking is a conversation, not a demand for every detail.

Educational review draft • Awaiting qualified clinical review. Not formal EMDR training, an individualized treatment plan, or emergency care.

Selected framework references

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

Phase 2: preparation and stabilization

Build understanding, choice, and usable support



Clinicians • Phase 2

Explain the process



- Describe the phases simply
- Invite questions and concerns
- Discuss choices and consent

Explore resources



- Try a tolerable support
- Notice what helps or does not
- Adapt to the individual

Practice pausing



- Agree on a clear signal
- Rehearse with neutral content
- Check present connection

Plan together



- Review readiness over time
- Reserve time for closure
- Agree on between-session support



A useful reminder

Preparation may take several sessions—and can be revisited.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

Window of tolerance

Notice activation and connection together



Clients + Clinicians • Phase 2

More activation



- Feeling keyed up or agitated
- Racing thoughts or tension
- Notice the person's own signs

Connected engagement



- Aware of the present
- Able to communicate needs
- Some flexibility and choice

Less connection



- Feeling distant or numb
- Reduced engagement
- Check rather than assume why

Respond with support



- Pause and orient together
- Try an agreed support
- Adjust the pace and reassess



A useful reminder

A teaching metaphor, not a diagnosis or a readiness score.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • Experiencing EMDR Therapy
EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

emdrdot.com/resources/preparation/window-of-tolerance

Calm or safe place

An optional resource, shaped by the client



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Choose something tolerable



- A place, sound, or object
- Real or imagined
- Neutral or mildly pleasant

Explore gently



- Notice a few sensory details
- Keep eyes open if preferred
- No need to force an image

Check the response



- Helpful, mixed, or uncomfortable?
- Notice present connection
- Stop if discomfort increases

Adapt the resource



- Try a non-imagery option
- Choose a simple reminder
- Review its usefulness later



A useful reminder

The resource should fit the person. Visualization is optional.

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EMDRIA • Experiencing EMDR Therapy

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

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Container exercise

Temporarily set aside—not erase



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Explain the purpose



- A way to postpone attention
- Not erasure or suppression
- Agree to return in therapy

Choose a container



- A box, folder, or symbol
- Client-chosen boundaries
- A non-imagery option is okay

Check comfort



- Do not rehearse trauma details
- Notice whether it helps
- Adapt or stop if it does not

Make a return plan



- Reorient to the room
- Agree when to revisit
- Clarify support if material returns



A useful reminder

A container supports a plan; it does not replace closure or safety assessment.

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EMDRIA • Experiencing EMDR Therapy

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

emdrdot.com/resources/preparation/container

Grounding and present-moment orientation

Small ways to reconnect with the present



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Look around



- Notice a neutral object
- Name a color if useful
- Orient to the current room

Notice support



- Feel the chair or floor
- Choose a tolerable contact point
- Respect pain and sensory needs

Keep the choice



- Eyes can stay open
- Breathing is not required
- Skip what feels uncomfortable

Check and adapt



- Does this help connection?
- Slow down if distress grows
- Choose another support together



A useful reminder

Grounding is collaborative. There is no single exercise for everyone.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • Experiencing EMDR Therapy
EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

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Resource development and installation (RDI)

Develop access to personally meaningful resources



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Choose a quality



- Steadiness or connection
- A sense of competence
- Use the client's own words

Find a resource



- A small lived experience
- A relationship or activity
- A tolerable symbol or support

Notice the response



- Check emotion and body
- Watch for mixed associations
- Do not force positive feelings

Use your training



- Adapt resource-development methods
- Monitor tolerability throughout
- Recheck usefulness later



A useful reminder

This is an educational overview, not an RDI installation protocol.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • Experiencing EMDR Therapy
EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

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Pause signals and client control

Make stopping ordinary and easy to request



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Agree on a signal



- A word such as “pause”
- A clear hand signal
- No reason needs to be given

Practice first



- Rehearse with neutral content
- Check that the signal is visible
- Stop movement promptly

Ask what is needed



- Orient to the room
- Talk, adjust, or stop
- Revisit the plan together

Prepare for disconnection



- Use a backup contact plan
- Know how to reconnect
- Do not rely on the app for crisis care



A useful reminder

Client choice and consent continue throughout the session.

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EMDRIA • Experiencing EMDR Therapy
EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

emdrdot.com/resources/preparation/pause-signals

Readiness discussion

A discussion—not a pass or fail test



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Present-day needs



- Current stability and stress
- Safety and health considerations
- Daily functioning and support

Connection and coping



- Recognize activation
- Notice disconnection
- Review what helps orientation

Working together



- Trust and communication
- Ability to request a pause
- Willingness and concerns

Decide the next step



- More preparation or adaptation
- Consultation when needed
- An individualized treatment plan



A useful reminder

Readiness is revisited as the person's needs and circumstances change.

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EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

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Telehealth preparation

Prepare the plan, the space, and the equipment



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Clinical plan



- Confirm consent and jurisdiction
- Keep emergency details protected
- Agree on a connection-loss plan

Private, comfortable space



- Reduce interruptions
- Position a comfortable display
- Arrange support as needed

Test the equipment



- Charge devices and check internet
- Try visual comfort and stereo audio
- Use neutral demonstration content

Know how to pause



- Rehearse the stop signal
- Know how to reconnect
- Reserve time for closure



A useful reminder

A working screen does not establish clinical suitability for remote treatment.

Educational review draft • Awaiting qualified clinical review. Not formal EMDR training, an individualized treatment plan, or emergency care.

Selected framework references

EMDRIA • Guidelines for Virtual EMDR Therapy
HHS • Telebehavioral health emergency planning

emdrdot.com/resources/preparation/telehealth

Informed consent discussion checklist

An ongoing conversation about choices



Clinicians • Phase 1

Explain the proposal



- Treatment rationale and phases
- Possible benefits and uncertainty
- Possible distress and alternatives

Make choice visible



- Pause, adapt, or decline
- Ask questions at any point
- Revisit consent during treatment

Discuss the practical details



- Clinician competence and policies
- Privacy and technology limits
- Notes, shared responses, and exports

Check understanding



- Invite the client's concerns
- Use the practice consent process
- Document in a protected system



A useful reminder

This discussion aid is not a legal consent form or a substitute for local requirements.

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EMDRIA • Experiencing EMDR Therapy
EMDRIA • Guidelines for Virtual EMDR Therapy

emdrdot.com/resources/preparation/consent

Target preparation and planning worksheet

Organize the plan in a protected practice record



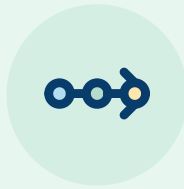
Clinicians • Phase 1

Goals and context



- Meaningful daily-life change
- Relevant history and current needs
- Strengths, supports, and coping

Past • present • future



- Possible past experiences
- Present triggers
- Future situations needing support

Target assessment



- Image, beliefs, and emotions
- SUD, VOC, and bodily disturbance
- Only when clinically indicated

Plan and document



- Preparation and sequencing rationale
- Consent, closure, and follow-up
- Use an approved practice record



A useful reminder

Do not enter client details into the public preparation library.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

Phase 3: Assessment

Clarify a shared target and baseline



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Name the target



- Identify the relevant image
- Clarify the current negative belief
- Choose a desired positive belief

Understand the scales



- SUD: disturbance, 0–10
- VOC: felt truth, 1–7
- Accept the client's own rating

Notice the experience



- Emotions connected to the target
- Current bodily disturbance
- Present connection and tolerability

Record the baseline



- Use the client's language
- Document appropriate assessment
- Follow training and clinical judgment



A useful reminder

Assessment organizes the work; the numbers are not a grade.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

Phase 4: Desensitization

Monitor reprocessing, connection, and choice



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Follow your training



- Use the appropriate protocol
- Adapt pace to clinical needs
- Reserve time for closure

Invite noticing



- Thoughts, feelings, or sensations
- New material or little change
- Keep check-ins understandable

Monitor connection



- Activation and disconnection
- Physical comfort
- Ongoing consent and choice

Pause and reassess



- Respond to a stop signal
- Reorient when needed
- Document response and adaptations



A useful reminder

A moving dot is one tool within clinician-guided treatment.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

Phase 5: Installation

Check the fit of an adaptive belief



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Review the target



- Check whether proceeding fits
- Reassess emerging concerns
- Use the clinical formulation

Confirm the belief



- Use the client's own language
- Check whether it still fits
- Avoid forced positivity

Ask about felt truth



- VOC ranges from 1 to 7
- Relate the belief to the target
- Accept an honest response

Monitor and document



- Use trained installation methods
- Notice obstacles or new distress
- Record belief, response, and rationale



A useful reminder

A helpful belief should feel personally meaningful—not imposed.

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Selected framework references

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Phase 6: Body scan

Notice bodily responses with care



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Confirm the context



- Review target status
- Check whether this phase fits
- Maintain present connection

Invite awareness



- Notice tolerable bodily responses
- Keep choice about attention
- Do not demand a clear sensation

Respond thoughtfully



- Explore residual disturbance
- Adapt within your training
- Reassess disconnection or discomfort

Keep a broad view



- Record relevant responses
- Review unresolved concerns
- Assess symptoms needing medical care



A useful reminder

A sensation is information—not proof that a medical symptom is psychological.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

Phase 7: Closure

Close the session, even when work is unfinished



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Allow enough time



- Stop active processing in time
- Acknowledge unfinished work
- Avoid pressure to reach zero

Orient to the present



- Check connection and distress
- Review current functioning
- Assess present safety needs

Review support



- Use agreed resources
- Clarify contact boundaries
- Confirm the next appointment or plan

Finish the workspace



- Offer the existing export choice
- Protect any downloaded record
- Document closure and follow-up



A useful reminder

Incomplete processing deserves thoughtful closure and a continuation plan.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

Phase 8: Reevaluation

Review what changed and what needs attention



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Ask about the interval



- What has happened since last time?
- How was daily functioning?
- Were supports useful?

Revisit the target



- Check its current response
- Use relevant ratings when indicated
- Notice new or unresolved material

Review today's needs



- Current priorities and safety
- Present connection and resources
- Readiness for the proposed pace

Choose together



- Resume, prepare, or revise
- Explain the next step
- Document the clinical rationale



A useful reminder

Reevaluation guides the next decision; improvement is not required to report honestly.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

Between-session support and aftercare

Know what to notice and how to get support



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Expect variability



- Emotions or dreams may change
- Fatigue may occur
- No noticeable change is possible

Use agreed supports



- Tolerable grounding
- Ordinary routines and rest
- Support chosen with the therapist

Know the contact plan



- How to reach the clinician
- Expected response times
- When additional support is needed

Ask for assessment



- Report persistent difficulties
- Report worsening functioning
- Use the crisis plan for immediate danger



A useful reminder

Do not try to finish trauma-memory processing on your own.

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Selected framework references

EMDRIA • Experiencing EMDR Therapy
EMDRIA • The Eight Phases of EMDR Therapy

emdrdot.com/resources/preparation/between-session

Understanding SUD and VOC

Two scales. Two different questions.



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SUD: disturbance



- 0 = no disturbance
- 10 = highest disturbance
- How disturbing does the target feel?

VOC: felt truth



- 1 = completely false
- 7 = completely true
- How true does the positive belief feel?

Use the target context



- Clarify which question is asked
- Relate the answer to the target
- There is no “correct” number

Different purposes



- Higher SUD = more disturbance
- Higher VOC = greater felt truth
- Neither is a diagnosis or readiness score



A useful reminder

A SUD of 6 and a VOC of 2 can describe different parts of the same experience.

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