

EMDR core beliefs

The beliefs that trauma leaves behind, and the ones we work toward

EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) therapy often focuses on identifying and reprocessing negative core beliefs that are linked to traumatic memories. These core beliefs usually stem from past experiences and shape how individuals perceive themselves, others, and the world. In EMDR, the goal is to transform these negative beliefs into more adaptive, positive ones.

NEGATIVE CORE BELIEFS · CIRCLE THE ONES THAT FEEL TRUE

Trustworthiness

- I can't trust others.
- People will betray me.
- People are out to hurt me.
- People can't be trusted.
- Everyone is out to get me.
- People always let me down.
- No one will understand me.
- People will hurt me if I get close.

Safety/Vulnerability

- I can't handle it.
- I will never be safe.
- The world is dangerous.
- Something bad will happen.
- I have to be on guard all the time.
- I am in danger.
- I can't protect myself.
- I am powerless.
- I am vulnerable.

Control/Power

- I have no control.
- I am weak.
- I am helpless.
- I can't succeed.
- I can't change things.
- I am out of control.
- I am stuck.
- I am powerless to improve my situation.
- Nothing I do makes a difference.

Failure/Incompetence

- I will never succeed.
- I am not smart enough.
- I always mess things up.
- I am not good at anything.
- I can't do anything right.
- I will fail no matter what I do.
- I am incapable of doing hard things.
- I don't have what it takes.
- I am not talented enough.
- I can't meet others' expectations.

Isolation/Belonging

- I don't belong anywhere.
- I will always be alone.
- I am invisible to others.
- No one will ever truly accept me.
- I am an outsider.
- I will never fit in.
- I will always be rejected.
- I am destined to be lonely.

Helplessness/Despair

- Nothing will ever get better.
- I am stuck in this situation forever.
- There is no hope for me.
- I can't change anything.
- I am doomed to fail.
- I am powerless to help myself.
- I can't escape my circumstances.
- There is no way out.
- I am destined for a life of misery.

Responsibility/Defectiveness

- I am not good enough.
- I am defective.
- I am a failure.
- I am worthless.
- I don't deserve happiness.
- I am a burden.
- I can't do anything right.
- I am broken.
- I don't matter.

Lovability

- I am unlovable.
- I am undeserving of love.
- I will be abandoned.
- I am not worthy of kindness.
- I am unimportant to others.
- I am destined to be alone.
- I am too flawed to be loved.
- I am not deserving of affection.

Shame/Guilt

- I am a bad person.
- I am disgusting.
- I should be ashamed of myself.
- I don't deserve forgiveness.
- I am unforgivable.
- I am dirty.
- I should be punished.
- I always make things worse.
- Everything is my fault.
- I ruin everything I touch.

Positive core beliefs

Tick the ones you would like to be able to believe, even if they feel far away today

POSITIVE CORE BELIEFS · WHAT WE ARE WORKING TOWARD

Trustworthiness

- I can trust others who have earned it.
- There are people who care about me.
- I am supported.
- I can build meaningful connections.
- People can understand and accept me.

Safety/Vulnerability

- I can handle challenges.
- I am secure in this moment.
- I am protected.
- I can trust myself to be safe.
- The world is not as dangerous as it once was.
- I am safe in the present moment.
- I can protect myself and stay secure.
- I trust my ability to handle difficult situations.

Control/Power

- I have control over my life.
- I can change my circumstances.
- I can make things happen.
- I am in charge of my future.
- I have the power to make decisions.
- I trust myself to make good decisions.
- I have the ability to influence my future.
- I can create positive change in my life.
- I am strong and resilient.
- I am capable of setting and maintaining boundaries.

Failure/Incompetence

- I am capable of learning and growing.
- I can succeed with effort and persistence.
- I am good at many things.
- I learn from every experience.
- I am smart and resourceful.
- I am enough just as I am.
- I trust my abilities.
- I am capable of achieving my goals.

Lovability

- I am worthy of love as I am.
- I deserve meaningful relationships.
- I am loved and appreciated.
- I am deserving of care and attention.
- I can receive love and give love freely.
- I am deserving of unconditional love.
- I am important and cherished by those who care about me.

Shame/Guilt

- I am worthy of forgiveness.
- I am a good person who makes mistakes.
- I deserve compassion.
- I can let go of shame and grow.
- I am deserving of kindness.
- I am clean and pure.
- I am worthy of redemption.
- I learn from my mistakes.
- I can forgive myself.
- I am not defined by my past actions.

Responsibility/Defectiveness

- I deserve good things.
- I am important.
- I am capable of success.
- I can do things well.
- I am complete as I am.
- I am enough and do not need to prove myself.
- I am not broken, I am whole and capable of growth.
- I can forgive myself for past mistakes.

Isolation/Belonging

- I am worthy of love and connection.
- I belong and have a place in this world.
- I am accepted for who I am.
- I can create meaningful relationships.
- I am seen and valued by others.
- I fit in where I am meant to.
- I can build strong connections.
- I deserve to be included and accepted.
- I am not alone; I am supported.
- I am part of a community.

Helplessness/Despair

- I have the power to change my life.
- I can find solutions to my problems.
- There is always hope for the future.
- I am capable of making progress.
- I can overcome any obstacle.
- I am resilient and resourceful.
- I am in control of my choices.
- I trust the process of life.
- There is always a way forward.
- I am capable of creating a better future.

The eight phases of EMDR

What to expect, in order. Phases one and two can take several sessions on their own.

1 History-Taking and Treatment Planning

- The therapist gathers the client's history, identifies traumatic memories, and collaboratively determines treatment goals.
- This phase helps to identify the specific memories and current issues that need to be addressed.

2 Preparation

- The therapist prepares the client for EMDR, explaining the process and establishing trust.
- Coping strategies, like deep breathing or visualization techniques, are introduced to help manage any distress.

3 Assessment

- The therapist and client identify the target memory and assess the associated negative beliefs, emotions, and physical sensations.
- The client selects a positive belief they'd like to associate with the memory and rates the intensity of negative emotions.

4 Desensitization

- The client focuses on the traumatic memory while engaging in bilateral stimulation (usually eye movements, tapping, or sounds).
- This phase continues until the memory causes little or no distress.

5 Installation

- The positive belief identified earlier is strengthened and “installed” as the client's new way of thinking about the memory.
- Bilateral stimulation is used to reinforce this belief, helping it feel more true to the client.

6 Body Scan

- The client scans their body to identify any residual tension or discomfort related to the memory.
- Any remaining physical sensations are targeted with further bilateral stimulation until they subside.

7 Closure

- At the end of each session, the therapist ensures the client feels stable and in control.
- Coping techniques are reviewed, and the client is guided to a calm mental state before leaving.

8 Re-evaluation

- At the start of the next session, the therapist reviews the previous session's work, ensuring the memory remains non-distressing.
- If there is still some level of distress, the therapist may continue with EMDR or address other related memories.

You stay in charge. At any point you can pause, use the stop signal you agreed with your therapist, or go back to a coping strategy from the preparation phase. Nothing in EMDR requires you to describe the memory in detail out loud.

My belief pair

One negative belief, the positive belief you would rather hold, and how true each feels today.

The memory or situation I am working on A few words is enough; no detail needed.

The negative belief about myself that goes with it From page 1, or in your own words.

The positive belief I would rather hold From page 2, or in your own words.

How true does the positive belief feel right now? (1 = completely false, 7 = completely true)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7

How disturbing is the memory right now? (0 = not at all, 10 = the worst it could be)

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Where I feel it in my body

The emotion that goes with it

A coping strategy from the preparation phase that works for me

Anything I want my therapist to know before we start