

EMDR, Brainspotting, and Guided Imagery Resource Guide

A Practical Guide to Processing Trauma and Restoring Emotional Freedom

Understanding Trauma and Emotional Processing

Healing does not come from forgetting the past. It comes from helping the brain and body fully process what they have carried.

Many people live with experiences that continue to affect them long after the event has passed. You may find yourself reacting more strongly than you would like, feeling anxious or guarded, or repeating patterns that don't seem to change.

You may logically know that you are safe—but your nervous system does not fully feel that way.

This is not a failure of willpower.

It is how the brain and body protect you when something overwhelming has occurred.

When an experience is too intense, the brain may not fully process it. Instead, it becomes stored in the nervous system in an unresolved form.

You may notice:

- **Anxiety or hypervigilance**
- **Emotional reactions that feel disproportionate**
- **Shame, self-doubt, or negative self-beliefs**
- **Emotional numbness or shutdown**
- **Difficulty trusting yourself or others**
- **Repeating patterns in relationships**

These are not signs that something is wrong with you.

They are signs your nervous system is still holding onto something that has not yet been fully processed.

Therapies like EMDR, Brainspotting, and Guided Imagery and Music help the brain complete this process—allowing experiences to move into the past where they belong.

Signs You Might Benefit from Trauma-Focused Therapy

You may benefit from this type of therapy if you notice:

- **Strong emotional reactions that feel difficult to control**
 - **Persistent anxiety, fear, or hypervigilance**
 - **Negative self-beliefs or ongoing shame**
 - **Feeling stuck in patterns you cannot change**
 - **Emotional numbness or disconnection**
 - **Difficulty trusting yourself or others**
 - **Lingering impact from past experiences**
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Self-Assessment Reflection

Take a few minutes to reflect on the following:

- **Are there experiences that still feel emotionally “active” for you?**
 - **What situations tend to trigger strong reactions?**
 - **What patterns feel difficult to change?**
 - **How does your body respond when you feel overwhelmed?**
 - **What would feel different if these experiences no longer had the same impact?**
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Nervous System Regulation Exercises

1. Orienting to Safety

Help your nervous system recognize that you are safe.

- **Look around and name 5 things you see**
- **Notice sounds, textures, and physical surroundings**

- **Remind yourself: “I am here, and I am safe right now”**

This helps shift the system out of threat mode.

2. Containment Exercise

Create a mental space to hold overwhelming material.

- **Imagine a container (box, vault, etc.)**
- **Place distressing thoughts or images inside**
- **Close it and return to the present**

This builds control and emotional stability.

3. Body Grounding

Reconnect with your physical body.

- **Press your feet into the ground**
- **Notice physical sensations**
- **Take slow, steady breaths**

This helps regulate emotional intensity.

Practical Tools for Supporting Processing

1. Notice Triggers Without Judgment

Instead of reacting immediately:

- **Observe what triggered you**
- **Notice your thoughts and body response**
- **Remind yourself this is a pattern—not the present moment**

Awareness reduces reactivity.

2. Separate Past from Present

When strong reactions arise, ask:

“Is this happening now—or does it feel like something from the past?”

This helps create distance from automatic responses.

3. Build Internal Safety First

Before deep processing, stability matters.

Focus on:

- **Consistent routines**
- **Safe relationships**
- **Emotional regulation skills**

Processing works best when your system feels supported.

Mini Worksheet: Trigger and Response Awareness

Trigger Situation:

What I Felt in My Body:

What I Thought:

What I Did:

What I Might Try Next Time:

Preparing for Your First EMDR or Trauma Therapy Session

Beginning trauma-focused therapy can feel both hopeful and uncertain.

Before your first session, it may help to reflect on:

- **What experiences you feel ready to work on**
- **What feels most difficult right now**
- **What you hope to change or heal**
- **Any concerns or fears about the process**

You do not need to share everything at once.

Therapy moves at a pace that respects your readiness.

How to Get the Most Out of Therapy

Trauma processing is most effective when it is gradual and supported.

Helpful approaches include:

- **Being honest about your experience**
- **Moving at a pace that feels manageable**
- **Practicing grounding skills between sessions**
- **Trusting the process over time**

You are never forced to go faster than your system can handle.

Recommended Books and Apps

Books

The Body Keeps the Score — Bessel van der Kolk

Getting Past Your Past — Francine Shapiro

Waking the Tiger — Peter Levine

Apps

Insight Timer

Calm

PTSD Coach

Closing Encouragement

Your brain and nervous system are designed to heal.

Even if you have carried emotional pain for a long time, it does not have to stay this way.

With the right support, many people begin to experience:

- **Reduced emotional reactivity**
- **Greater calm and stability**
- **Increased confidence and self-trust**
- **Freedom from patterns that once felt automatic**
- **A stronger sense of presence and control**

You are not broken.

Your system is holding something that has not yet been fully processed—and that process can be completed.

Healing is possible. Freedom is possible. Change is possible.