

EMDR Therapy Group FAQ's

What is the EMDR therapy group?

A therapy group that utilizes EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) to help clients process traumatic, negative, or distressing experiences.

What is the EMDR therapy group like?

This therapy group is different from other therapy groups because participants will not talk at all during the therapy group. The facilitator will guide participants through prompts to visualize their trauma, draw associated thoughts and feelings, and rank their subjective units of distress while doing “butterfly taps” (alternatively tapping their shoulders to engage bilateral stimulation and facilitate the trauma processing). Participants will then send their drawings/writings to the facilitator after each group to be uploaded to their client file.

When is the group?

The EMDR group is held on Fridays from 10:30 – 11:50 am via zoom during the fall 2025 semester. Students will need to have a secure, confidential space (for example, a room where they are alone and won't be interrupted) to attend the group. Students will attend the group for as long as it takes for them to process through their traumatic event(s) – this could be a few group sessions, or the full semester. This is different from other groups as well in that students are able to leave the group after they've finishing processing their traumatic event(s), and do not need to commit to staying in group for the full semester. The group will remain open for most of the semester, so students can join throughout the semester.

How many people will be in the group?

The group will be led by two co-facilitators. One co-facilitator (Dr. Holly Nicely) is a licensed psychologist trained in EMDR in both individual and group settings, and the other co-facilitator will be a doctoral intern under Dr. Nicely's supervision. The second co-facilitator is available if clients experience distress during the group and need to go into a private Zoom room to utilizing distress and coping skills, with the aid of the co-facilitator. In terms of members, the group could have as few as 1-2 members, or as many as 10-12 members (and potentially more, if there is a need). Group members are encouraged to only put their first name or initials as their zoom name, and are required to agree to hold the privacy of other members of the group (ie, not sharing who else is in the group). Since group members do not talk at all during the group, group members will not have any information about other member's traumatic experiences or processing.

What do students need to do if they're interested in joining the group?

Email holly-nicely@uiowa.edu to schedule a group screening – this is an hour long appointment where the group facilitator will meet with the student to explain the group, conduct a screening to determine if the student is appropriate for group, and discuss briefly & to the student's comfort level, the traumatic event that the student is hoping to process in the group.

Who is a good fit for this group?

-Clients who have one or more negative/traumatic/distressing experiences, **the most recent of which occurred at least 3 months ago.**

-Clients currently experiencing any of the below PTSD symptoms, which may include but are not limited to:

- Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of a traumatic event(s)
- Recurrent distressing dreams related to the traumatic event(s)
- Flashbacks
- Distress or internal/physiological reactions when exposed to environmental cues potentially related to traumatic event(s)
- Avoiding reminders, thoughts, or feelings about a traumatic event(s)
- Difficulty remembering the traumatic event(s)
- Negative beliefs about themselves, others, or the world that started post-trauma
- Self-blame about the traumatic event(s)
- Worsened general mental health symptoms following the traumatic event(s)

Do students have to be in individual therapy at the same time as they're in the EMDR group?

It is recommended, but not required, that students are also attending individual therapy while simultaneously attending the EMDR therapy group. Individual therapy can be a helpful place to verbally process the traumatic experiences, as students will not be talking at all during the EMDR therapy group.