

Bilateral Tapping (Bilateral Stimulation) in EMDR

EMDR, which was developed by psychologist Francine Shapiro in the late 1980s, is a powerful, well-researched treatment for trauma that incorporates alternating bilateral stimulation (=alternating left-right taps e.g., on your knees or arms) into a structured therapy. This bilateral stimulation activates our inherent information processing system and allows our minds and bodies to find their way back to wholeness.

When a trauma or disturbing thoughts occur, they seem to get locked in the nervous system with the original picture, sounds, thoughts and feelings. The eye movements or other bilateral stimulation (BLS) we use in EMDR seem to unlock the nervous system and allow the mind and body to process the experience. That maybe is what is happening in REM sleep. Some well regarded brain researchers believe that the bilateral stimulation used in EMDR may be activating both hemispheres of the brain much in the same way that REM sleep does. During REM sleep, our eyes move rapidly back and forth, and we process and integrate information. The BLS helps to process the unconscious material. It is important to remember that it is your own brain that will be doing the healing and that you are the one in control.

Brain research has shown that when we imagine doing something, neurons in the brain are activated as if we were actually doing it. For example, if you imagine moving your right arm, the same region of your brain is activated that would be if you were actually moving your arm. Clinical experience has shown that bilateral tapping strengthens this activation even more.

When you activate a disturbing thought or memory by evoking the emotions, body sensations, and thoughts associated with it, and then add bilateral stimulation, you begin an extraordinary free-associative process between mind and body geared towards healing.

Effects of Bilateral Tapping:

- Regulates affect
- Reduces tensions in the body
- Aids in ego strengthening
- Calms and regulates anxiety and depression • Supports recovery from addictions
- Supports Self-Regulation:
- Can be used outside of sessions

Bilateral Tapping calms the nervous system. It links up and integrates information, links up and connects base, and mid brain and right and left brain. It facilitates the resourcing as well as the (memory) processing and drives the development of new behavior.

Resource Tapping

In my EMDR work I use adapted attachment focused (AF-EMDR) protocols developed by Dr. Laurel Parnell. AF-EMDR not only helps to resolve traumatic memory, it also provides a way to connect to and uncover our inner natural resources and making them accessible to us for use as a way to reduce anxiety or depression, and calm yourself or a loved one relatively quickly and easily. This is called resource tapping.

Resource tapping is used to reduce anxiety and depression, help with sleep, increase creativity and performance, aid in healing, and decrease distress after a traumatic incident. Just as when we process traumatic memories, we use bilateral stimulation by tapping on your knees bilaterally or do a butterfly hug tapping on your arms to help calm yourself. You can do this without any imagery while tapping as long as it feels calming to you.

Tapping in our resources seems to help assimilate them into our whole experience of ourselves, making these resources more accessible to us. Tapping in seems to integrate memory networks. When we tap right-left, right-left, we help the brain process and integrate information that is stored in different compartments. Think of it like merging two files or covering the dark with light; the healthy part infuses the unhealthy part with healing.

There are four foundational resources we will work with throughout your treatment. These are: a peaceful place, a protector figure, a nurturing figure, and a wise figure or inner advisor. In addition, I always add a resource called "The Circle of Love" to the four foundational resources. There are many positive resources that can be tapped in that comfort us, lift our spirits, or empower us, including inherent qualities such as love, wisdom, and joy, as well as memories, experiences, images that arise from our imaginations, and people to whom we can connect.

Other resources we might develop are an ideal or good enough mother, an ideal or good enough father, an ideal or good enough brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent, and even family. Resource figures can be shaped after people you know or have heard of, people you wish you knew animals or power animals; fantasy figures like Superman or Batman; deities, angels, saints; or a combination of any.

It is important to understand that resource tapping is not taking something from outside ourselves and putting it in; rather, we use this method to enhance resources that are already within us. When tapping in a resource, it is important to use your imagination to enhance your sensory experience of the resource as much as possible. Don't just think about the resource, but feel the resource in your body instead. When you bring it to mind, be sure to notice what you are seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting, and hearing. The more detail you can bring to the visualization, the more vibrant the experience will be for you.

Principles of resource tapping

1. We are essentially whole. This wholeness is our true nature. The expression of our wholeness is wisdom, compassion, equanimity, power, and joy.
2. Within each of us is the potential to realize this wholeness. Indeed, this wholeness wants to be realized, impels us to realize it.
3. We also have within us a reservoir of positive stored experiences. These can include experiences of loving and being loved, and of feeling comforted, competent, powerful, happy, joyful, peaceful, and calm.
4. We become unhappy when we are not able to access our wholeness, our reservoir of positive experiences, or when we are out of balance.
5. We have a natural healing system that, when accessed and activated using bilateral stimulation (tapping), can restore us to balance.
6. We can access, strengthen, and integrate our wholeness and our reservoir of resources by tapping in our resources.

Resource Tapping at a Glance

1. Find a place where you won't be disturbed.
2. Go to a quiet place inside yourself, using techniques such as Grounded Breathing.
3. Bring to mind your resource memory, experience, imagination, or figure.
4. Activate the sensory details of that resource until they are alive.
5. Begin to tap right-left, right-left 6 to 12 times. If the resource is continuing to strengthen and feels positive, you can continue to tap.
6. If you wish, you can tap as long as the resource remains positive.