

EMDR therapy is used to resolve memories relating to adverse life experiences, both traumatic life events and also adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that may contribute to problems in daily living.

Therapists require potential EMDR clients to complete the following 2 questionnaires before starting treatment, as explained below:

The ACEs Questionnaire

First published in 1998, the USA Department of Health's Centers For Disease Control & Prevention conducted the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE Study) which discovered significant links between childhood trauma with chronic health problems (physical and mental) including in later adult life (e.g. heart disease, lung cancer, diabetes and many autoimmune diseases, as well as depression, violence, being a victim of violence, and suicide).

The **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) questionnaire** was used for the ACEs Study. It scores 10 potential ACEs during the first 18 years of life including experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect, witnessing substance abuse, and violence in the home or community, and experiencing instability in the home (significantly between parents), or having a family member with mental health problems, and/or attempt or die by suicide.

Each type of trauma counts as one, so a person who's been physically abused, with one alcoholic parent, and a mother who was beaten up has an ACE score of three. The higher the ACE score, the higher the risk of health and social problems in childhood and later adult life. When scoring 6 or more client's are recommended to select a highly experienced EMDR therapist.

For further information: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/>

The DES Questionnaire

Potential EMDR clients are asked to complete a Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES) questionnaire. The DES is a 28-item, self-report measure of dissociative experiences which helps to screen for people with dissociative disorders. Each question is scored on a scale from 0% to 100%, then an average is calculated for the 28 questions. Averages over 30% indicate high likelihood of a dissociative disorder.

"Dissociation" is a break in how the mind handles information. The person may feel disconnected from thoughts, feelings, memories, and surroundings, like being detached from their body and sensing the world is unreal. Emotion regulation techniques are typically taught to help people experiencing dissociation to stay present, grounded and engaged (e.g. slow box breathing).

Because of the potential for quite quick emotional flooding during EMDR, it is recommended that extra care is taken to reduce discomfort and risks with clients that dissociate, including strengthening the client's emotion regulation capabilities, and selecting a highly experienced EMDR therapist who has expertise with dissociation.