

## What is EMDR - For Kids

Before we talk about what EMDR is let me tell you about what EMDR does. When we have yucky things that happen to us, we have many mixed-up feelings and many mixed-up thoughts. We do not feel good in our minds, bodies, and hearts. It is like carrying bags of mixed-up stuff. When we are so busy carrying all these bags, we do not have space in our hearts, minds, and bodies for the good feelings and thoughts. EMDR can help kids by making those bags smaller or even get rid of them so kids will have space for the good feelings and the good thoughts. Grown-ups have a rather complicated name for EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and reprocessing but Ana came up with a cool name for kids: Eyes Moving to Digest and Recover!!

When kids receive EMDR, one of the things they do is move their eyes from one side to another while they think about the yucky things that happened to them. Most kids don't know this, but they actually do this every night....yes kids move their eyes every night while they are asleep and are having dreams. Grown-ups call this Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep cycle. Ana calls this the "eyes dancing in the night." EMDR helpers like Ana can also do other things instead of eye movement. They can tap your hands or knees back and forth or they can use sounds or music that move from one ear to the other.

When yucky things happen, the brain has a hard time putting all the pieces together and as a result, things that people say or do or things that kids see, hear, smell or touch can bring up the yucky memories, the mixed-up thoughts, feelings and body feelings connected to those yucky things. EMDR helps the brain put all the pieces together so the yucky stuff can leave us and the good stuff or the things we learned from it can stay so we get stronger. Then, the brain can chew up and digest all the mixed-up feelings and thoughts as well as the yucky feelings we may have in the body.

Why continue to carry bags of yucky stuff in our minds, hearts and bodies when we can be free from them and find our happy and exciting feelings again?

(This is an excerpt from Ana's book: [EMDR Therapy and Adjunct Approaches with Children: Complex Trauma, Attachment and Dissociation.](#))