

RECLAIMING OUR INNOCENCE - HEALING EARLY TRAUMA WITH EMDR REPROCESSING THERAPY

By Dr Adrian Hekel (based on Dr Sandra Paulsen protocols)

We know that our experiences in the first five years of life are absolutely crucial in setting up our habits and emotional patterns – in other words, who we are today. It is also known that many disease states actually begin in our mother's womb, and this period can actually mould how our genes are expressed throughout our life.

What, then, if we could revisit these early childhood years and re-pattern these imprints which give birth to our personality habits, emotional struggles and even dissociative states (when you feel 'I am just not myself' today)? What if we could revisit the innocence of our being, even before we were born, and bring this into our current lives?

The good news is this is in fact possible using an early trauma approach developed by one of the world's leading experts in trauma therapy.

The Four Steps of the Early Trauma Approach

Early Trauma reprocessing includes the following steps:

- 1) Cultivating structured **containment** of all experience yet to be “learned from or sorted through,” to leave a clear “emotional desktop” for the work to take place;
- 2) Developing a **felt sense of safety** as a starting point for the work, which is achieved by tapping into and strengthening a naturally occurring (but sometimes hidden) “safe state” in the body, or “safe place” which we can

access through visualisation or other methods. Both steps 1 and 2 will require practice;

3) The most mysterious step—**resetting the affective circuits**—involves clearing the emotional pathways that develop in each of us early on during our development in the womb, but which may be congested from maladaptive early learning and inhibitions about whether emotions are okay and safe. Once the circuits are clear, they can function as they were intended, to conduct emotional information between the brain and the body.

4) **Clearing the early trauma**, which happens by processing small time periods, beginning with a time before conception (necessary owing to generational, cellular memory), then moving on to conception, gestation in the womb, birth, and on through the first few years of life. These time periods are variable with the client, depending how “gnarled” the roots of the tree appear to have become by growing around early obstacles. The clearing may be of somatic/implicit memory or of explicit memory, or mental constructs related to the time periods. For each time period, if it doesn’t resolve spontaneously, there is an imaginal good outcome of “what you needed, the way you needed it to be.”

In this way we will help you hear the story of baby you that may never have been told or heard before, except in symptoms or re-enactments. You can then review, release and repair very early experience in a way that provides a **felt sense** of well-being. For many individuals, this leads to a critical emotional shift with increase in emotional stability, comfort, and peaceful relation to one’s emotions.

There may need to be additional preparation, most commonly **parts work**; further education about healthy emotion, brain functioning and/or trauma; and sometimes somatic, **body awareness** or grounding work.

Spend a little time before we meet identifying, if you don’t already know, what your highest resource is, and what your relationship is to the spiritual realm. Then we can support your process in a way that makes sense to you on your own terms. This is the most helpful way we know to repair very early injuries, hurts, betrayals and disappointments.

The Mechanics of the Early Trauma Approach

The experience of the infant is almost entirely a *felt* sense; there is not much cognitive happening at the beginning. Therefore, when the therapy taps into those early felt senses, it often occurs without as much access to the more conscious and cognitively informed resources usually available to adults. Because of its central role in early life, this felt sense is an ideal entry point for attending to early, emotionally overwhelming experience so that it can be reprocessed and cleared.

As we are relying upon the most primitive information available to reprocess early experience, the standard EMDR therapy modality of eye movements or taps conducted with equipment may be too scary, too technical, and too alienating for some. Therefore, the reprocessing is facilitated by tapping on the client's knees or ankles, while the client sits in a comfortable position.

Early trauma reprocessing is designed to come in from the beginning, 'under the floor-boards', so to speak, so it is typically quite gentle and tolerable. People learn a lot about their own story in this lovely and very powerful procedure.

Note - Highly dissociative people are only appropriate for this method if they have already established considerable groundwork in therapy and the self-system is likely to allow the work.

During and After Early Trauma Clearing

It is not unusual to feel 'drained' after early trauma reprocessing has taken place. Most people don't want to do much in the evenings after an intensive session. The work is profound and will require time set aside for introspection or just plain rest. Self-care is key in this work, so plan on drinking plenty of water, getting plenty of sleep, inviting yourself to dream, eating good food, maybe taking some anti-oxidants because you'll be releasing energetic holdings. Fruits and vegetables will be put to good work in reconfiguring your new you.

After the work, your nervous system will be “knitting and purling” for a time, and this is usually gentle and comfortable. Occasionally, if we ran out of time in a gnarly hurtful baby spot, you may feel stuck there. Let your therapist know if you need help in person or by phone moving through such a spot.

Please keep in mind that any unusual experiences during the work or in the time right after the work may be related to the work. Think of them as ‘vapors leaking up from King Tut’s tomb’. So, for example, if your spouse, partner, or a good friend seems, for whatever reason, suddenly to resemble demon spawn, consider the possibility that something about the early work has a theme of demon spawn in it somewhere. Similarly, if it seems to you that your therapist is suddenly just like the meanest parent ever, please mention this, because, although it may have a basis in present time, then we’ll consider that, often those kinds of feelings and perceptions are part of the client’s story, telling itself without words.

The most common unsettling experience after early trauma work is to feel oddly inert or flaccid. This seems to be part of a baby state, as if baby is just sitting, waiting, not mobilized for much action.