

# EMDR and DID

## Ensuring Safe Treatment in Dissociative Systems

# What You Need to Know Before Starting EMDR Therapy

EMDR can be powerful for healing trauma, but if you live with Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) or Other Specified Dissociative Disorder (OSDD), it is very important to make sure the preparation work is thorough. Rushing into memory work without proper preparation can leave your system overwhelmed, flooded, or even destabilized. This guide is here to help you know what questions to ask and what answers point to safe, responsible EMDR for dissociative systems.

Think of this as a “safety map” — with green flags showing signs of safe practice and red flags warning you to consider looking for a different EMDR therapist.

## It's Not Quick

EMDR is often thought of as a quick and gentle trauma treatment. Particularly with DID and OSDD, it is not quick. Before memory work begins, there are three foundational phases that must be completed. These initial phases lay the groundwork for trauma memory processing. Before you start the trauma work, you need to know you have the skills and resources to cope with the intense emotions that can be a part of this work. With DID and OSDD, it is likely to be several months of preparation prior to starting trauma memory work.

This time of resource and skill building is likely to make the difference between helpful EMDR therapy and EMDR therapy that leaves your system severely dysregulated and unable to function. If your therapist moves quickly to trauma memory processing, you might want to ask why they believe you are ready for that work so quickly.

## The Gold Standard

The gold standard of EMDR training for therapists is the training certified by EMDRIA. In order to be certified for EMDR, the therapist must complete 40 hours of training and practice, at least 50 sessions with at least 25 different clients, and then 20 hours of consultation with expert EMDR trainers. A letter of recommendation from the consultation expert is required. Two letters of recommendation from colleagues are required. And a therapist must have two years of experience as a therapist to be eligible for certification. You can see that these high standards help to insure that your therapist offers sound treatment.

## Other Trainings

Other non-EMDRIA trainings are available. A therapist could choose to do a 4 hour training and then advertise themselves as EMDR-trained. For DID and OSDD, it is highly recommended to get an EMDRIA-certified EMDR therapist.

## Making Sure Your Therapist is Qualified

If you make sure your EMDR therapist has EMDRIA certification, then you have ensured a that the therapist has significant training. On the following page, you will find additional questions which can help you determine if the therapist is one you feel safe working with.

## Questions to Ask

1. How much time do they spend on the resourcing phase of EMDR?



They describe doing the calm/secure place exercise only before moving on to memory work.



They do a thorough assessment of your current resources and safety and take as much time as needed to ensure that you have all the skills and capacity needed for trauma work.

2. What kind of screening for dissociation do they do?



None, because “it’s really rare.”



They routinely use assessments such as the DES-II and MID, and watch for signs and symptoms of dissociative disorders

3. How do they view “resistance” in moving toward memory processing?



They say, “EMDR is so effective , it is important to push through resistance and get to phase 4 so the memories can heal.”



They say, “Safety is essential to trauma healing, so we do not push through to processing memories until there is internal agreement. We will explore concerns and fears that come up in the process and take them seriously.”

4. Do they participate in ongoing EMDRIA consultation?



They say they do not.



They say that they are either participating in ongoing consultation for EMDR or that they have several certified colleagues or consultants with whom they consult as needed.

Your healing deserves care, respect, and pacing. If you notice red flags, it's okay to pause, ask questions, or seek another therapist. EMDR can be safe and effective for DID and OSDD — but only when your system's needs are fully honored.

## EMDRIA-Certified Therapist Directory

<https://www.emdria.org/find-an-emdr-therapist/>

### ♥ How This Helps You Heal

When you live with DID or OSDD, it's easy to doubt yourself or assume the therapist knows best. This guide gives you a way to step into therapy with confidence. By knowing the difference between green flags and red flags, you're better able to:

- Protect your system from harm by recognizing unsafe pacing or rushed memory work.
- Strengthen your voice in therapy with clear questions that put you in an informed, empowered role.
- Build trust with your therapist by seeing how they respond to concerns about safety, protectors, and dissociation.
- Reduce shame and self-blame — if EMDR feels destabilizing, you'll know it's not because you "failed," but because the process wasn't handled with the care DID requires.
- Support long-term healing by choosing an approach that honors your system's needs and capacity.

# You're Not Alone.

Healing isn't easy, and there are no shortcuts. But you've already made it through the hardest parts—and that strength is still with you. This resource was created to support you on your path. Take what helps. Leave what doesn't. Keep going.

## ◆ More Support Is Available

Looking for more tools, videos, or gentle guidance?



Explore free and premium resources:

[www.communiDID.com/resources](http://www.communiDID.com/resources)



Watch videos for DID systems:

[www.YouTube.com/@CommuniDID](http://www.YouTube.com/@CommuniDID)



Get new tools each week—free in your inbox:

[www.communiDID.com/subscribe](http://www.communiDID.com/subscribe)

CommuniDID: Support for Dissociative Identity Disorder  
that's gentle, grounded, and real.

## **Your voice matters.**

If this resource was helpful, confusing, or brought something up for you — I'd love to know. I'm always working to make these tools more useful and more supportive. You can share feedback (even anonymously) here:

**<https://www.communiDID/feedback>**

☀️ This document is more heartfelt than fancy—made to support you, not impress anyone.

