Getting Past Your Present
A Child's Perspective
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This handout outlines the ideas, but regrettably it is not the Comprehensive Merck Manual of EMDR. The teaching will also be experiential, with video taped clinical segments to illustrate principles and applications, including the wonders of children’s psyches awakened, and on the part of the therapist, embarrassing moments of therapeutic errors, haunting vagueness and doubt, glimpses of bad haircuts, jubilant moments of grandiosity and humble awe at the child’s genius.

The Plan

“Sure I know the protocol but some kids don't have a trauma to target and I don't always know when to use it, so I don’t use it much."

Think Again

It may be possible.

The Goal Here Is

To expand your conceptualization of problems, because the kids who come to treatment don't always hand you a memory box labeled "Trauma". They may not even have one.

To help kids of diverse ages and backgrounds express their everyday concerns so you can find potential targets to process.

To apply EMDR with enhanced, creative, kid-friendly delivery.

Taking into account

the basic EMDR model

current neurobiological knowledge of child development
the new world of social media
**It Bears Repeating**

EMDR is most viewed and researched as a **trauma treatment**, wherein a **specific memory of a past disturbing event**, held in thoughts, feelings and sensations is (re)processed.

But no one said you cant process **anything** bothersome and that the event must be trauma, nor is it defined how far back the past is. After all even as you read this, the beginning of this sentence is in the past.

Recall too that EMDR is a three pronged approach:

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<th>Present</th>
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<th>Future</th>
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**What Kids Bring to Your Office**

Other than trauma, family, school, friends (or lack thereof) and circumstance offer plenty of opportunities for distress.

Then too, with your brilliant intervention, the child may have already addressed some major trauma, so is it not valid to also treat 'ordinary suffering'?

**Enter EMDR**

You can use EMDR for **current** behaviors, concerns and family issues, social relationships, beliefs, themes and even seemingly trivial matters.

How can you access the child’s material when it is not clearly spelled out?

How can you sleuth out less obvious or seemingly minor complaints?

**Premise**

Every behavior holds the nucleus of a person's past.

D.W. Winnicot : "Tell me your fear and I will tell you what has happened to you."

F. Shapiro "Tell me your fear and you can process what happened to you."

*(She didn't really say that but she could have.)*
Case Conceptualization
Anything, no matter how inconsequential it may seem to you may be a relevant target.

What is important to a child is what is happening now.

The child's core issues are played out in seemingly small events.

So, find out trivial and major doings of the day in the kid's Life.

Observe. Be Curious. Take Field Notes. Pay attention to small details. Connect the dots between seemingly unrelated information.

The Archeology of Past, Present and Future
Digging for dirt is also digging for gold. Explore what is good and what is not; what is important and what is not, what is happening now and what happened in the past.

Your underlying intent is to seek possible targets for immediate or future EMDR intervention.

Twenty One Ways to Shop at Target

1. First ask simple factual questions about things you think are not key distress points. How many, what time, who, where, when?

2. Then, if the kid is forthcoming, get more personal about opinions and thoughts and feelings about the day to day 'stuff'.

3. If the kid is open, gradually expand the sleuthing.

4. Explore interests, hopes and goals, short and long view.

5. Query for desired behavior changes and hoped-for outcomes.

6. Ask nosy questions, Don’t dodge embarrassing subjects.
7. Develop a sociogram of friends and social contacts.

8. Tease out an autobiography.

9. Construct a family tree, or sand tray of family constellation.

10. Use drawings and sand tray to express interests, or problem situations.

11. Map Ego states: self-perceived parts with stones or toys.

12. Expand questions about school and grades.

13. Pore over photos, explore their interests, games, music, T.V. shows, etc.

14. Use current topical and local news interests to launch discussions.

15. Ask their opinions to uncover beliefs, behaviors, likes, dislikes, strengths.

16. Seek religious or cultural underpinnings for beliefs.

17. Enquire about future events, upcoming challenges.

18. Ask for their best guess about their and others’ future life outcome.

19. Just ask for one two or three best things about day, week, life and three worst.

20. Best and worst things about family members, friends, school, sports, food etc.

21. Gain entry to their texts and social media habits.

A note: Impact of the Digital Age

It’s here! Technology is changing brains and the way kids relate to each other, their parents and the world. The impact has positive and negative consequences. We must attend to the impact of social media.

Framing and Forming Targets

Now

Help the child frame the issues.

Propose a topic or concern to address.
Again It Bears Repeating

Target need not be a past memory or trauma, nor monumental.

It can be anything of concern: an incident that just happened, an ongoing irritation, an interpersonal conflict, a family relationship, a non productive behavior, or a faulty belief.

The assumption is that all troubling concerns are of consequence, reflecting the substance of the child's life and an important portal to the psyche.

Core internal conflicts are often held in apparently simple events. By addressing even seemingly superficial targets, deeper feelings may emerge.

Simple targets may soften resistance to addressing difficult material

Fear of future processing may dissipate with a less disturbing issue.

A gateway target, one that is topical but not necessarily traumatic, may uncover a hidden trauma or a different conflict to target.

There may be no hidden trauma. The current matter is pertinent.

A core distress may be unknown to the child but reveals itself during processing.

The distress may be known but purposely hidden and processing may enable its expression.

The less disturbing target facilitates a positive learning experience to encourage future work.

Processing either does or does not lead to resolution, and provides material to address in the non emdr portion of the therapy.

Revelations about family or other contextual issues can then be addressed.

Examples

My friend tells me things I don't want to know.

I'm getting a C in math.

My father doesn't believe I did my homework.

I'm afraid of the dark.

I have to eat everything on my plate.

My mother spoils my sister.
Also

Developmental and age factors are important to keep in mind. Attachment history and support systems should be assessed. Current family and social stability should be considered.

**Preparation and Priming**

Provide Ego strengthening, self mastery skills, calming or stabilizing interventions before, during or after processing.

**Introduce EMDR**

Don't underestimate the therapist’s role as marketer of EMDR. Ethics and cultural sensitivity always apply,

Consider introducing EMDR in a casual, manner, which reduces anxiety.

Sometimes it is useful to informally set up target with the protocol **before** explaining EMDR.

Use age appropriate presentation. Children's literature is a guide to language, detail and length of story.

Less is more. Anxious therapists explain more.

Tired of explaining? Here are places to go to introduce EMDR. On the internet:

- www.emdr.com
- www.emdria.org

Seek appropriate YouTube segments (be wary).

Google or Bing together.

Preferably give the search job to the kid: i-collaboration facilitates the therapeutic relationship.
Processing

Strike while the kid is hot.
Don't prolong set up
Delivering the protocol can be creative
Don't mess with the procedure.
Follow it.
Just - go with that, go with that, go with that.

Here Comes the Interweave

Use of interweaves is perhaps more frequent and likely for present issues
Boost intimacy
Keep engaged
Validate
Break Deadlock
Unscramble enigma
Hunt for hidden landmines
Hunt for hidden gold
Untangle intricate knots
Mouth what is unsaid
Echo what is said and felt
Give form to feelings
Link bits and pieces
Take sides: theirs or another
Mirror
Open a window
Add a View
Summarize

Consider internet to:

introduce an idea
challenge misinformed beliefs,
be your Greek Chorus, validate your view
offer support eg. cutting and suicide sites.
Snags

Not much processed.? Take a SUDS. Discuss.

**Resistance**

Hypothesize what's going on.

**May need**

- improved therapeutic relationship
  - shift in style and direction of sessions
  - integrative family systems work
  - resource building
  - other therapeutic interventions
  - time; *Tomorrow. Tomorrow. I'll Love ya Tomorrow*

If EMDR is rejected today, it may be accepted another time.

**Future Template**

**Imagining - The Henceforth**

Important step to contemplate the future and how to cope.

Even if resolution is not complete, help the child develop ways to keep afloat.

Current targets may not reach a neat resolution. The child is after all living in the present imperfect.
Ending the Therapy Session

Where are we now?

- Endorsement of effort regardless of outcome.
- Brief, in fact, very brief, collaborative statement of what to do now.
- High Fives or knuckle thumps.

Follow Up

Next session, check in using matter of fact mode.
Define any response as positive. "Well at least we know where you stand."
Should you be the electronic follow-up therapist and text between sessions?
Perhaps limited interim support but not to conduct therapy.

Be careful. Consider ethics, boundaries, liability.
Follow-up resource work may be useful to support change.
New targets may surface.
Take a break or do more EMDR? Consider the child and circumstances.

A Thought

The brain seeks novelty. Perhaps better to vary activities.

Once More With Feeling

It's Not Your Show.
Choice of problem is one the child is willing to confront.
X Marks the Spot: Finding treasure involves improvisation and flexibility.
The vehicle chosen should accommodate the terrain.
The kid has access to the steering wheel.
The EMDR protocol is the map.
The route may take diversions.
Make a u-turn when safe.
You will arrive at a destination, somewhere.

The Take-Away Message

EMDR is useful for more than a big-T trauma. Almost anything in the kid’s life is a potential target.

You can expand your ways of communicating with kids.

You do not have to be controlled by gimmickry, but you have the option to enhance your work by staying in i-tune with the times to reach the kid. Technology is not therapy.

You can have fun dismantling misery.

The only tool you really need is you.

The Last Hiccup

The idea is for you to both endorse what you know and do and to adapt ideas for your clients, in your own particular style.

The beauty of the EMDR process and protocol is that it gives structure to both your thinking and the kid’s. Mostly, you have no clue as to what might emerge next in a session. The art is in supporting the kid as you sift through what is both said and unsaid, to choose what might be an effective intervention.
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I am interested to know what you are doing: ideas and anecdotes. You may ask nosy questions. If you wish to reproduce any of my material, please contact me. Thanks and Good Luck.

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Klaff, F.,Practical EMDR with Children and Adolescents: An integrative family systems approach. 1Presentation at 10th EMDR International Association Conference ,Seattle,WA(2005,September)


Some Other Useful Resources

EMDR Therapy and Adjunct Approaches with Children, A. Gomez . Springer Pub, NY 2012


Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing (EMDR) in Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy, R.Greenwald, Jason Aronson, 1999

Small Wonders: Healing Childhood Trauma with EMDR, J.Lovett,Simon and Schuster,NY 2008

Through the Eyes of a Child: EMDR with Children, R.Tinker, S.Wilson, Norton,(1999)

And there are many more excellent books on the topic, beyond the scope of this presentation, so you are going to have to either search yourself or email me.

Bonus Bibliography

Technology and Kids:
It's Complicated, the Social Lives of Networked Kids. D. Boyd, 2014
It's Complicated: Teen Privacy Strategies in a Networked Age [FOSI Keynote Video]
Bullying as True Drama (with Alice Marwick) [New York Times Op-Ed]
Keeping Teens ‘Private’ on Facebook Won’t Protect Them[Time Magazine Op-Ed]
Cracking Teenagers’ Online Codes[New York Times by Pamela Paul]
Don't Blame Social Media if Your Teen Is Unsocial. It's Your Fault. [Wired Opinion by Clive Thompson]

Parents: Don't Panic About Your Kids' Social Media Habits [Tech Review Q&A by Brian Bergstein]

Networked teens are far from doomed [USA Today Q&A by Marco della Cava]

Online, Researcher Says, Teens Do What They've Always Done [NPR Morning Edition by Elizabeth Blair]

How to tweet like a teenager [Financial Times by Gillian Tett]

Stop freaking out, parents: Social media isn't the problem [Salon by Andrew Leonard]

Networked teens are far from doomed [USA Today Q&A by Marco della Cava]

Are the Kids on the Internet Alright After All? [KCRW To the Point panel discussion]

Childhood Trauma with EMDR, Joan Lovett. M.D. The Free Press, NY. 1999