

## **EMDR Expedition can highly promote School Students Academic Performance Who Have History of Grade Failure and Dropout.**

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**New words:** *EMDR Expedition, Body feelings, My Resources, Train ride, VOC bridge for self-assessment, Container exercise, Calm(safe) Place, SUD scale to indicate individual destructions, Trauma Mapping, targets for EMDR Processing, Cognitive interweaving, Bilateral Stimulation (BLS) and its types, installation, body scan, evaluation.*

**Abstract:** EMDR psychotherapy has become the most effective way of treating traumatized clients according to WHO (2013). The main objective of this article is to show that EMDR therapy can have an extensive influence on reprocessing the maladaptive information, related to the past trauma memories and present stress and has the enormous positive influence on the central nervous system CNS (Shapiro, 1995) of young individuals. Especially students, who have the history of grade failure and drop out, to make them calmed, reassured to concentrate on academic subjects. As trauma memories has the continuous capacity of making client pathological, thus students' academic abilities extremely hindered.

### **Objective:**

Evaluating the need assessment of providing EMDR psychotherapy whether the obtained outcome of EMDR application onto the selected population

- could reduce their low feeling,
- Increase self-respect and their learning abilities,
- Teaching authority will gain alternative skills in dealing them.

**Sample size:** 120 students of age 12-17 were recruited from grade 5 ---9 and their parents for psycho-education.

### **Obtained result after therapy:**

25% have achieved result of passing all subjects with 40-50% marks,  
67% have progressed mildly. They acquired 35-42% marks indicating their academic improvement. Math improvement was not directly shown, as student shown difficulties in operational concrete and logical thinking (Piaget 1938). Others have improved in social performance, e.g. school attendance & communication skill.

**Before therapy:** 17% of them reported events or image of physical/sexual abuse in childhood memories. Children both boy and girls 15% have shown abandonment and attachment issues with their primary caregivers. 10% of them have the phobia of physical abuse, prone to think unusual ideas of defence,

Stayed inside home being depressed ignores others with mild level of OCD. 8% of these total group has shown learning difficulties in recalling, reproducing, and 13% among them have insecure feelings, frequent desire for suicide.

### **Introduction:**

A pilot project in a rural area, a Govt. High School, students:1178, teacher 28. 86 km. far from the capital city. The geographical region of that location is like a delta shaped area, the total land (58,47sq.km) is surrounded by three rivers.

**Background:** Four years ago, this researcher got chance to talk with many students and parents in this area regarding mental health issue. One thing she has noticed then, that children wanted to talk about their several issues. Reporting about their conflicting relationship, family or school environment but one common sentence, **“it is not to be told to anybody”** all they have said to her with her huge surprise. She planned to do something to those students as she was originated from this rural area too.

**Methods & procedures:** In the title, the word ‘expedition’ according to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2010) means ‘an organized journey with a particular purpose, especially to find out about a place that is not well known to all’, so the meaning has given emphasised. During the researcher training periods in EMDR, when she got materials of Adult Attachment Interview (AAI, 2014) and Resources-Team (Egli-Brend,Hanna. 2014) and Robbie Adler Tapia & Maura Tapia’s MY EMDR WORKBOOK (2008), these tools were planned for use with the cognitively low functioning, (per result sheets)and emotionally disturbed children of that school. From that idea in June, 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 59 students were selected with their parents’ permission by two teachers and the researcher.

This research activity has been named “my EMDR expedition”. The meaning in their language stands AVIJATRA, like going to discover something or some areas. So while they have started their work with drawing with crayons, playing with dough, animal dolls, cards and balloons many of them were engaged eagerly and freely. 26 students were from grade five and 33 from grade six .They have reported vomiting tendency, anxiety, and physical sickness before, during and after exam. Their stresses were several kinds of fear; fear of not proper understanding, fear of incapacitation for answering the question, fear of failing and fear of teacher/parents criticism. This group has introduced to the three pronged protocols targets and experienced it on their different individual emotional levels, which was not only fear but also profound anger, sadness and frustrations.

31 additional students of class seven (3 section) and 30 (3 section) from class eight were included in the groups. With parents' permission school authority introduced 2 more groups. Finally they run 4 groups.

3 sessions had done with each of the four groups, using first Adult Attachment Interview. The purpose of using AAI to make them able to write their own things/ stories and being thoughtful about 'self'. So in their known way they got chance to think about themselves, their parents, mostly about their relationship. The history taking and assessment phase were conducted non-formally from these sessions for gathering information and about adverse childhood experiences which had negative impact on their present behaviour.

'MY EMDR Word Book' was used to introduced children with EMDR protocols and make them familiarised with this psychotherapy as an exploratory manner. The researcher has translated Robbie Adler-Tapia & Maura Tapia's 'MY EMDR WORKBOOK (2008) from English to Bengali to create a playful, stress-free work setting to be engaged with, and shared their pent up feelings.

Thirdly, they work on building resource teams to the group for enhancing their will powers. This work provided them safety feeling and made them able to raise his/her own voice.

The treatment plan using EMDR psychotherapy was carefully designed for the students only in groups. Majority of them were addressed with their **small 't's** in group, while clients with their **big 'T's** were treated individually. Here the researcher has used the new metaphorical words to make the group to be acquainted with those meanings. They were allowed to visit imagery their past events of trauma memories, to feel past traumatic experiences, present worries which relates them with their unusual body sensations and future anxieties. Thus they got their target memory and able to choose their negative cognition, related body sensations to focus on it. These words were; *EMDR psychotherapy, my inner self, Positive and negative Cognition, Brain work, Body feelings, My Resources, Train ride, VOC bridge for self-assessment and positive future plans, Container exercise, Calm(safe) place, SUD scale to indicate individual destructions, Trauma Mapping, targets for EMDR Processing, Bilateral Stimulation (BLS), Installation, Body scan, Evaluation..*

The school system in the rural context is still very rigid and traditional. So a lot of creative work and teaching materials had to be used. Large cards, poster paper pieces to write their feelings on were put into each individuals' colourful envelop, along with colour pencils, and dozens of balloon for having fun. Metaphorically 'let it go' filling the balloons with their bad feelings.

**Case.1: is about close perpetrator and poor understanding with selective mutism.** A 12 years girl who has history of fail/poor marks in Math and English repeatedly since last three years. Her physical symptom is stomach ache, less sleep, often mood swing with school refusal. Her regular threats are to face her class teacher who teaches English and Math in the class and bullied her often. These traumatic event reminded her of early childhood memories. She was the third daughter of her parents. The elder sister was married ten years back. The perpetrator was her brother in law, who has criticized the young girl as another inheritor of their property. So often he non-verbally abused her with his monstrous facial expression. Her grand mom also scolded her for her wrong gender. She has developed selective mutism.

**Case. 2 is about big T.** Student of grade five, living with his parents, was a bright and regular student. His father had history of Schizophrenia, severe hallucination and has committed suicide by hanging in a nearby tree. The boy was shocked and could not attend school for a week after this devastating incident. He has started having flash back, becomes unconscious in school, stopped playing, and finally he has failed on three subject.

**Case.3 of sexual abuse:** The girl was very bright, was preparing for the primary scholarship, and attending extra coaching class in a group in the afternoon. One school committee member used to come to check this extra classes. By this way he ordered that girl for a glass of water and touched her breast with threats if she disclosed this fact he won't allow her to sit in the exam. The girl had body symptom started as abdomen pain, headache, panic attack, so she stopped exam and drop out her study. After successful EMDR protocol sessions she has joined her class.

**ReprocessingDesensitization:** Shapiro (1995), stated that, 'the ultimate goal of therapy is to increase the client's sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy', so the following activities were done to conduct the reprocessing phase: During the working days with the groups using first, second and third phases several exercises were held on Container exercise, making Trauma Map, List of (PCs & NCs) Positive Cognitions and Negative Cognitions, Touchstone memories with associated body feelings, SUD the scales of disturbance and affect in the body, Cognitive interweaving, Checking VOC Bridge e.g. how much true the cognition; is that low or high or where are you now on your positive Cognitive Bridge? And BLS for conceptualization of the essentials protocols of EMDR.

After the 7<sup>th</sup> weekly session students acquired a sense of safety and trust, so they participated in the session regularly. Like learning how to swim, we started drawing the Trauma Map on a big sheet of paper with pencil with the message to every student that '*whenever you like you can bring change into the Map*'. Here client puts many shapes of trauma linking one another with one identifying word on each about the worrying fact of the trauma to target which s/he could select for processing.

So, each event s/he could remember while processing begins. Students were reminded following Adler-Tapia R. Settle. C, (2008) statement, “*remember that it is your brain will fix your worries and that I can teach you a way to help your brain shrink the worries and even make the worries go away.*”

Often in between if, talking about the information of worries or fears disturbed them they could use Calm Place to become soothed. It was suggested, that if s/he feels more stressed or anxious s/he can use the Trauma Map as a Container to put all their worries into it. If they like they can use more Maps for putting their worries onto it safely and select the most disturbing incident to process.

Introducing them with their resources they felt that they would not fail any more, and could reproduce their resources in the needful moment and become much more attuned with this process.

Later, researcher engaged them to draw their own planning creatively. So they used different colours to draw their own desired map of happiness and success which was appropriate for their developmental level and understanding. Students, who needed reprocessing, were provided with short sets of BLS. Working with EMDR is considered to them as a dual attention of past events and present triggers to sense primarily that, ‘*oh! Still I am alive! Now, I can do or I can go as I wish*’. This is what, inevitably shapes their future templates.

**Discussion:** According to research, ‘prolonged stress in a young child, whose nervous system is still rapidly developing, can have profound effects in terms of neural growth, migration, and differentiation’ (Perry, 1994b). Apparently normal children’s’ low feeling can be reflected in their past trauma related memories, sensation, image and cognition, and they are unable to articulate it internally. Due to this they are being bullied or criticized at home, school and outside. These unseen states finally made them withdraw, psychopath or neurologically impaired. Thus young children’s’ emotional and academic dysfunctional issues were considered as an unreached locality which could be treated with EMDR protocols. There is a significant chance in dealing young clients’ mental health issues.

**Findings:** The study was a descriptive research, so qualitative findings are as bellow:

- Flexible family and school environment with non-comparison approach can help exploring students’ psychological disturbance level.
- EMDR protocol helps to reduce the rate of mental health problems in young people which has a terrific increasing rate (17%) and also subsequently correlates in progressing to the adult mental health issues (18%) according to the NIMH survey (2018-19).

- As the children and adolescents are present oriented, predicting a brighter future and finding resources to cope, this study revealed that the young generation have the power to choose their options and becoming their own mentor.
- Exploring parents' psycho-somatic conditions is urgent, as anxiety, stress, emotional disturbance in the parents, have significant correlation with the child's dysfunction.
- EMDR psychotherapy can enhance young students' psychosomatic levels by minimizing the difficulties they faced intra-psychically & interpersonally.

**Conclusion:** This research results proposed additional studies are required to make a significant exploration of EMDR application in school systems for an inclusive mental health wellbeing of young student. To conclude, if school authorities come forward in dealing with weak students using EMDR the outcomes would be visible as students' psychosocial performance and their academic result would definitely improve.

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