

Chapter 6

No Part of This is Easy

With some trainees, something happens in six days of EMDR training that encourages them to lose track of the lessons of tens of thousands of hours that they have experienced with clients with complex trauma. EMDR trainees who have worked as therapists in community health contexts for ten years prior to getting trained in EMDR therapy have probably spent 16,000 hours in sessions with clients with severe and complex wounding. That's more direct exposure to anything else in their lives, other than perhaps media or their children. No one on the planet understands the complexity, nuances, and difficulties of working with complex clients more than community mental health workers. Nearly every intervention they have ever conducted has been slow, difficult, challenging, and required substantial modifications to be effective.

Working with clients with severe wounding is almost always hard. You already knew this. It's a lesson that we learned from the first week of our internship placements in graduate school and has been reinforced every session since. Working with clients with complex trauma in EMDR therapy is almost always hard. Pretending that we can ignore everything that we already know about working with complex trauma will make it much more difficult.

EMDR therapy may be intentionally or unintentionally marketed as an easy intervention. We may have been sold a version of ease. We were instructed in how to easily floatback a lifetime of wounding to just a few core memories and encouraged to start there after about a session of resourcing. Really, we should have known better. How we do EMDR therapy needs to be heavily informed by everything we already know about complex trauma, not the reverse.