

Chapter 38

The Videotape Approach

It's not a mystery why Shapiro wants therapists to enter the memory at the worst part. The worst part, when it resolves, is likely to generalize quickly throughout the rest of the memory and cause rapid resolution of the remaining parts of the memory. For really healthy people, the worst part is likely distressing enough to cause enough activation for clients to notice but not too much to saturate them. This is the fastest way to digest a memory when working with healthy clients who have an abundance of adaptive information and a large window of tolerance. Remember, Shapiro was initially obsessed with EMDR therapy as a brief approach to psychotherapy. However, it is nonsensical to think that going into a memory at the worst part is the fastest way through with clients with significant deficits of adaptive information and for clients who come to sessions already nearly outside of their window of tolerance (despite months of work developing and practicing regulation strategies). Standard protocol, including going into the memory at the worst part, is an invitation for overactivation, and much of the remainder of the session may be spent clearing up the tsunami of the flooding that occurred in the first few minutes of a reprocessing session. All of the noticing that is productive in EMDR therapy needs to occur inside the client's window of tolerance. Going into a memory at the worst part with many clients with complex trauma often feels like approaching a large bucket of gunpowder with a lit match. And it's not necessary. We have options for how the client interacts with the memory inside EMDR therapy when starting with clients with severe trauma. Shapiro herself recommends other strategies, one of them is the Videotape Approach. Shapiro did not publish a script for the Videotape Approach but described it as a part of the Recent Events Protocol. My version below revises Phases Three and Four. The other phases are not changed. This is one way to do the Videotape Approach. Drop any elements from the revised Phase Three below that are unnecessarily triggering or that do not resonate with your clients.