

New EMDR Protocol for Ego State Work

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I have been glad to see the increasing number of articles on Ego State ideas incorporated into the EMDR protocols. I have been employing Ego State theory along with Resource Installation over the last six months and have stumbled on what seems like a straight forward and reasonably simple protocol that can be applied to a number of disorders i.e. Complex PTSD, DID, OCD, Eating Disorders, Impulse disorders and probably others that I haven't explored yet. It draws on ideas from Andrew Leeds' (Resource Installation), David Grand (Questioning Interweaves), Watkins and Watkins (Ego State Concepts) , George Fraser (Table Technique with DID) and of course Francine Shapiro (EMDR).

The protocol can be used as a guide to determine what internal resources are useful for the client dealing with a particular pathological ego state pattern be it impulse binge eating or a recurring compulsion. It turns out that the pathological ego state embodies inner resources that must be accessed and re-integrated by the client in order to reduce the degree of internal fragmentation. I am suggesting here that other pathological disorders can be viewed on a spectrum of fragmentation with DID and that they can be treated in the same therapeutic framework as DID. The protocol can be incorporated into the standard protocol when a blocking belief (also a blocking ego state) is encountered or it can be useful (how I've used it most often) in the early stabilization phase of treatment, long before addressing target memories. In the latter case I will identify a troublesome ego state pattern that the client wants to deal with and this will lead into the protocol as I've outlined below. (Protocol is in uppercase with comments in lowercase letters).

1. ASK THE CLIENT TO CREATE AN IMAGINARY ROOM IN HER/HIS MIND . ASK THE CLIENT TO DEFINE THIS ROOM AS A SAFE (I.E. NO PART HARMS ANY OTHER PART) , HEALING ROOM THROUGH WHICH VARIOUS PARTS WILL TRANSITION IN ORDER TO BE HEALED (OR HELPED TO EVOLVE INTO MORE USEFUL PARTS OF SELF) BEFORE THEY ARE RE-INTEGRATED INTO SELF. EACH NEW EGO STATE PART THAT IS INVITED INTO THE ROOM IS REMINDED OF THE ROOM'S PURPOSE AND CHARACTERISTICS.

2. IDENTIFY A DISTURBING EGO STATE PATTERN THAT IS MOST IMMEDIATELY IN THE CLIENT'S CONSCIOUSNESS AND THAT SHE/HE WISHES TO ADDRESS. ASK THE CLIENT TO INVITE THIS PART INTO THE ROOM THEN DO A SET OF 30 EM'S. ASK THE CLIENT BOTH a) WHETHER SOMEONE (OR ALTERNATELY SOMETHING) HAS ENTERED THE ROOM AND b) WHETHER HE/SHE FEELS FREE OF THIS PART. IF SO PROCEED TO STEP 3. If criteria (b) above is not met then repeat the invitation followed by recurring sets of 30 EM's and reassess for the criteria in Step 2 to be met.

3. ASK THE CLIENT (ADULT EGO STATE) TO ASK THE NEW PART WHAT IT NEEDS THE CLIENT TO STRENGTHEN WITHIN HER/HIM (I.E. INNER STRENGTHS OR RESOURCES) OR TO DO FOR THE EGO STATE TO HELP IT HEAL OR EVOLVE INTO SOMETHING MORE USEFUL. FOLLOW THIS WITH A SET OF 30 EM'S AND THEN ASK THE CLIENT FOR WHATEVER COMES UP. If the client doesn't verbalize a clear response repeat step 3 one more time. If there is no response then go to Step 4. If there is a response go to Step 5.

4. IF THE CLIENT HAS TROUBLE GIVING A RESPONSE IT IS MOST LIKELY THAT THERE ARE OTHER BLOCKING EGO STATES WITHIN THE CLIENT THAT ARE INTERFERING WITH THE EVOLUTION OF THE PART BEING ADDRESSED IN THE ROOM. ALL THESE PARTS MUST BE ASKED TO ENTER THE ROOM BEFORE ANY PRODUCTIVE WORK CAN BE DONE. ASK THE CLIENT TO INVITE ALL BLOCKING PARTS INTO THE ROOM.

Often this has to be repeated 2 or 3 times with 30 EM's following each request to elicit these occult ego states. However don't be surprised if it takes more than this number. In order to test whether the road is clear I will often return to the initial ego state and ask the client to readdress its healing needs as in Step 3. If a response is elicited then most blocking ego states have been cleared for the moment.

5. ASK THE CLIENT WHETHER SHE/HE HAS THE INTERNAL RESOURCES ASKED FOR BY THE EGO STATE OR WHETHER SHE/HE IS ABLE TO CARRY OUT THE EGO STATE'S REQUESTS WITHOUT ANY RESERVATIONS. IF THE RESOURCES EXIST AND/OR THE CLIENT CAN HELP THE EGO STATE I ASK HIM/HER TO EITHER SHARE THE RESOURCE WITH THE EGO STATE OR TO CARRY OUT ITS REQUEST AND THEN FOLLOW THIS WITH 25 EM'S.

After this the client will often report (if asked to reflect on these) that the ego state has shifted in some way or that he/she feels more neutral or better about it. This is a sign that the ego state has made a shift and is evolving. Sometimes a shift will be very subtle. At this point I repeat steps 3 to 5 until the Ego State is fully evolved. This will often be signaled by the client having developed a warm, friendly relationship with the ego state and feels ready to reintegrate it. I will ask the client whether she/he is ready to take it back into her/his body. If the answer is yes then proceed to step 6. If not return to step 3 and continue processing. Occasionally the need for multiple inner resources will present itself; please see addendum below to integrate these resources simultaneously.

6. AT THIS POINT I WILL ASK THE CLIENT TO ASK THE EGO STATE HOW IT CAN NOW HELP THE CLIENT (this will give some indication of what the evolved ego state's internal resources are). THIS IS FOLLOWED BY 30 EM'S TO ELICIT AN ANSWER. USUALLY AN ANSWER IS FORTHCOMING (a sign that the evolution of this part is complete, otherwise further processing via Step 3 is suggested).

I ASK THE CLIENT IF HE/SHE ACCEPTS THE EGO STATE'S HELP. IF SO I ASK HIM/HER TO LET THE EGO STATE KNOW THAT HE/SHE WILL ACCEPT THE HELP AND I FOLLOW THIS WITH 25 EM'S. I THEN ASK THE CLIENT TO TAKE THE EVOLVED EGO STATE BACK INTO HER/HIS BODY AND FOLLOW THIS WITH 30 EM'S.

7. AT THIS POINT I WILL ASK THE CLIENT TO REFLECT ON WHAT SHE/HE HAS LEARNED ABOUT HERSELF/HIMSELF IN WORKING WITH THIS PARTICULAR EGO STATE. THESE INSIGHTS (which are often quite amazing) ARE BROUGHT TO THE SAFE PLACE AND INCORPORATED THERE WITH 30 EM'S.

1. ADDENDUM:

As mentioned in Step 3 above occasionally the client will need to install 2 or more resources as required by the particular ego state. Andrew Leeds has presented a clear and straight forward way to install resources and I refer anyone who does not yet use his strategy to him for his wonderful treatment of this issue. I have adapted his strategy in the following way:

1. I ASK THE CLIENT TO ASK THEMSELVES INTERNALLY WHERE A PARTICULAR RESOURCE LIVES IN THEIR BODY. I FOLLOW THIS WITH 30 EM'S. (Most often the client has some connection with the resource and can identify where it is. In cases where they cannot then an external resource (which is really an internal resource because they have it stored in memory) must be brought in according to the Leeds' Protocol.) I ASK THEM TO REMEMBER THE LOCATION AND THEN REPEAT THE SAME PROCEDURE WITH THE NEXT RESOURCE. (Most people can connect 3 resources simultaneously using this strategy)

2. ONCE 2 TO 4 RESOURCES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED I ASK THEM TO LINK THEM IN IMAGINATION WITH " A BEAM OF LIGHT " OR SOME OTHER METAPHOR THAT SUITS THEM AND THEN DO 15 EM'S. AFTER EACH SET I ASK THEM HOW THEY FEEL. IF THEY FEEL BETTER OR NEUTRAL I CONTINUE SUCCESSIVE SETS OF 15 EM'S CHECKING EACH TIME FOR AFFECT UNTIL A ROBUST RESPONSE OCCURS (Sometimes this can require upwards of 10 or 15 sets of 15 EM's). IF NEGATIVE AFFECT, NEGATIVE THOUGHTS OR UNCOMFORTABLE BODILY SYMPTOMS ARISE I ASK THE CLIENT TO INVITE THE EGO STATES CONNECTED WITH THESE TO ENTER THE ROOM AND I REPEAT SUCCESSIVE SETS OF 30 EM'S UNTIL THE NEGATIVITY SUBSIDES. I THEN ASK THE CLIENT TO REFOCUS ON THE CONNECTED RESOURCES AND RETURN TO STRENGTHENING THEM WITH SUCCESSIVE SETS OF 15 EM'S.

3. ONCE THE RESOURCES HAVE BEEN REASONABLY STRENGTHENED (This is a judgement call but try upwards of 10 to 15 sets of 15 EM's to see what amazing results are possible) THEN I ASK THE CLIENT TO "BATHE THE SAFE ROOM WITH THE FEELING HE/SHE NOW HAS INSIDE OF HER/HIM " AND I FOLLOW THIS WITH 25 EM'S. THIS CAN BE REPEATED 2 MORE TIMES TO STRENGTHEN THE EFFECT. (Often the client will report, when asked to reflect on this, that the entire room is more friendly or brighter and everyone seems to be getting along. This is a sign that the dissociative barriers between ego states are disappearing)

4. FINALLY I ASK THE CLIENT TO TAKE THE POSITIVE RESOURCES HE/SHE HAS STRENGTHENED TO HIS/HER SAFE PLACE AND FOLLOW WITH 30 EM'S.

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I have found this protocol quite useful in a variety of situations. Although it seems a bit complicated on paper, once one explores it with clients it can begin to feel rather straight forward. I welcome any comments from those of you who choose to try it.