

You're Okay Just As You Are: EMDR and Neurodiversity

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Neurodiversity is the idea that humans are highly variable, and we do not have to see this variation as due to disorder. Children in particular are very different to each other, and some of these differences can cause challenges for the children themselves and the adults who live and work with them.

Neurodiversity includes everyone, but some children have differences which make life more difficult. These children may receive diagnoses of ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, sensory processing disorder, learning disability, dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia, or may have no diagnosis. They experience the world differently and they can react in unexpected ways to things which happen to them.

Families often experience a higher level of stress because the world is not an easy place for their children. It can be hard for these families to access EMDR because their children do not respond in conventional ways, and the expectations of the therapist can create barriers to access.

In this workshop we will start by discussing neurodiversity and explaining the growth of the concept over the last decade. We will describe some common ways in which neurodiversity shows up, and how this can cause problems in EMDR therapy when the therapist is not using a neurodiversity informed lens.

we will discuss common difficulties which neurodivergent children and their families present with, in particular the strong sense of self-defectiveness which many children learn through years of feeling different, and the significance of the 'little t' trauma.

We will talk about the barriers which neurodivergent children and their families face when seeking EMDR, and outlines ways in which therapists can reduce these barriers in order to carry out effective EMDR with neurodivergent children and adolescents. We will outline a method to help therapists identify barriers and make adaptations to make their EMDR more accessible and inclusive. Case examples will be used to illustrate the use of EMDR therapy for neurodiverse children.