

A Better Training Model

The EMDR International Association (EMDRIA.org) has recently approved “virtual” trainings in EMDR and you may hear of other trainings offering 100% virtual practice experience. I have serious doubts about this format in terms of its effectiveness and its safety and have included my thoughts for your consideration.

Effectiveness - The most important part of EMDR is the small group practicum work (which comprises roughly 40% of the training) where you get to actually practice EMDR face to face in the role of practitioner and client while receiving support and immediate feedback. This allows for a richness of experience and connection far superior to that which can be obtained on screen. Contrast this to the limitations of virtual learning that were perhaps best summed up by a good friend of mine, an education researcher at Johns Hopkins, when he stated, “Virtual learning is good for teaching people how to fill out tax forms; not so good for learning how to ride a bicycle,” or learning a method of therapy as rich and nuanced as EMDR.

Safety – Keeping both our clients and trainees safe in a stable environment has always been an overriding principle of EMDR. In the trainings, we create a structure with graduated practice and a rich ratio of small group facilitators to participants to provide safety and support. I don’t believe that support and comfort can be as effectively provided “virtually” to a potentially isolated trainee as she or he practices using their own historical material.

A Better Model - For the reasons cited above, I believe the model I and my colleagues are proposing is educationally superior and better able to provide adequate trainee safety. I know there has never been more of a need for EMDR clinicians now and in the future. Being trained well will give you the best level of preparedness and confidence to make the extra potential inconvenience well worth it.

I believe this training model will provide you the very best training experience in a safe enough environment. I hope you’ll agree.

Sincerely,

William M. Zangwill, Ph.D.