

EMDR within the Spectrum: Neuro-divergent Affirming EMDR modifications for Children with Autism and ADHD

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ABSTRACT:

Autistic and ADHD children have many strengths which can often benefit society, despite the equal challenges that may be experienced by neurodiverse children trying to navigate a neuro-typical social world.

Where neurodiverse children experience trauma, therapists need to be neurodiverse-aware and affirming in order to create a positive emotional connection with their client, in which the client feels seen, heard, and valued.

In EMDR processing, the neurodiverse child may need additional modifications to the standard EMDR protocol to help make EMDR more accessible, to help them self-regulate in ways which are sensitive to their neurodiversity, and to help the experience of unpredictable emotions become tolerable.

The child's neurodiversity can be utilised (with or without the storytelling method) as a unique opportunity for resourcing, the use of an extended preparation phase may help the child manage trait anxiety and the modification of EMDR to take into account the child's strengths as well as their challenges (e.g. making EMDR more novel and breaking sessions into shorter sections for the child with ADHD; utilising the storytelling method for children with Autism to help create momentum in the processing) is a necessary adaptation for engaging neurodivergent children in therapy.