


June 13 EMDR Connect 

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Katie O'Shea and Sandra Paulsen  
**Early Trauma Protocol**

Presented By  
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What is Early Trauma Protocol? 

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- Developed by Katie O'Shea based on ideas from Sandra Paulsen
- Protocol targets "the time before you remember" (pre-conscious memory)
  - 0 to 3 years
  - In utero
  - Generational

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Why target pre-conscious memory? 

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"Our sensory world takes shape even before we are born. In the womb we feel amniotic fluid against our skin. We hear the faint sounds of rushing blood and a digestive track at work, we pitch and roll with our mother's movements. After birth, physical sensations define our relationship to ourselves and to our surroundings... A cacophony of incomprehensible sounds and images presses in on our pristine nervous system. These events are shaping us, even as we don't recall them."

Bessel Van Der Kolk .  
*"The Body Keeps the Score"*  
Chp 6 p 93 .

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Why target pre-conscious memory?



- Standard protocol targets specific memories
- But sometimes we have clients who have generalized anxiety or other behavior but no clear target or touchstone event
- ETP can provide an approach for these types of clients

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1<sup>st</sup> Example experience using ETP



Abbey (woman age 50)

- Presented with OCD and GAD
- Trauma while in utero
- Processed 12 sessions with ETP
- Significantly reduced anxiety and OCD

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Indications of 0-3 trauma/neglect



1. Someone has knowledge of traumatic or neglectful experience
2. Presence of symptoms possibly resulting from early trauma

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Indications of 0-3 trauma/neglect



Examples of traumatic or neglectful experience

- adopted, multiple placements
- traumatic pregnancy, delivery
- mom in distress (physically/emotionally) during pregnancy, delivery, and/or afterward
- failure to thrive
- early surgeries or hospitalizations (e.g., premature birth)
- abuse, neglect

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Indications of 0-3 trauma/neglect



Examples of symptoms possibly resulting from early trauma

- Fetal alcohol syndrome
- Reactive attachment disorder or other attachment problems
- Autism, Asperger's
- ADD or ADHD
- Sleep, eating, or elimination disorders
- Pervasive emotional distress
  - anxiety (flight), anger (fight)
  - depression (freeze → helplessness → hopelessness)

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Indications of 0-3 trauma/neglect



- Dissociative symptoms
  - blackouts, can't remember time periods (recent or early childhood)
  - headaches
  - child sits and stares, "glued" to the TV
  - daydreams, spaces out, is in a fantasy world
- Somatic symptoms predominate
- Incoherent narrative (Siegel, 1999)
- Float back/Affect scan goes to a time that feels very early or the patient senses it is

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2<sup>nd</sup> Example experience using ETP



Kate (woman age 30)

- Targeted obvious childhood trauma
- Anger issues remained
- Processed with ETP
- Identified attachment wounding in pre-conscious years

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Client Readiness



Three common client mindsets:

- Not yet aware of EMDR
- Ready and open to EMDR
- Open to ETP

How to overcome reluctance in clients

- Research examples
- Accident example

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Client Readiness cont.



“Is this real? Or has this been happening inside my head?”

“Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?”

J.K. Rowling  
*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

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## Early Trauma Protocol Steps



### Four Steps of Early Trauma Protocol (ETP)

1. Containment of all experiences
2. A felt sense of safety
3. Resetting the Affective Circuits
4. Clearing the early trauma

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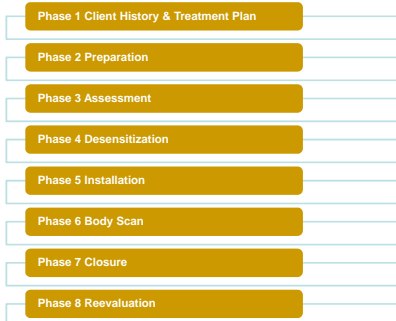
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## EMDR Protocol with ETP



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## EMDR Protocol with ETP cont.



### EMDR Phase 1 Client History & Treatment Plan

- Special Consideration
- DES/DID, Attachment assessment

### EMDR Phase 2 Preparation

- ETP Step 1 Containment Skills
- ETP Step 2 Safe State / Resourcing Skills
- ETP Step 3 Resetting Affective Circuits

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### ETP Step 4 Clearing the Early Trauma

- EMDR Phase 3 Assessment
  - Target by time frame
- EMDR Phase 4 Desensitization –
  - Review, Release, Escape, Repair
- EMDR Phase 5 Installation
  - PC by time frame
- EMDR Phase 6 Body Scan
  - By time frame
- EMDR Phase 7 Closure
- EMDR Phase 8
  - Reevaluation may need to go back multiple times

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### Preparation



Experience of ETP can be overwhelming

Client needs felt sense of therapist's compassion

Early trauma processing needs to accommodate intrinsic subtlety

Be prepared for dissociation

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### Step 1 - Containment



Containment of all experience yet to be "learned from or sorted through"

To leave a "clear desktop" for the work

Dimmer switch, meeting place, container

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Step 2 - Safe State / Safe Place



A felt sense of safety as a starting point to the work

A safe state or safe place

Step 1 and 2 often require client practice  
– “It doesn’t work”

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Step 3 - Resetting Affective Circuits



Clearing the emotional pathways that each of us is born with

Circuits are congested from early learning and inhibitions about whether emotions are safe

A thorough discussion of this topic requires an all day workshop.

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Step 4 - Clearing the Early Trauma



Processing small time periods (these vary by client):

- Preconception
- 1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> Trimesters
- Birth
- 0-6 months, 7-12 months, etc.

Clearing of somatic/implicit memory, explicit memory, or mental constructs related to the time periods

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Step 4 – Sample Script



“Now we’ll review the time...

[e.g. ‘second trimester, ‘your birth’, ‘12 to 15 months’]

“...to be sure that any trapped energy is released and conflicting information is cleared up. All you need to do is notice what happens, just like you’re viewing a video.”

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Horizontal lines for notes

Step 4 – Sample Script cont.



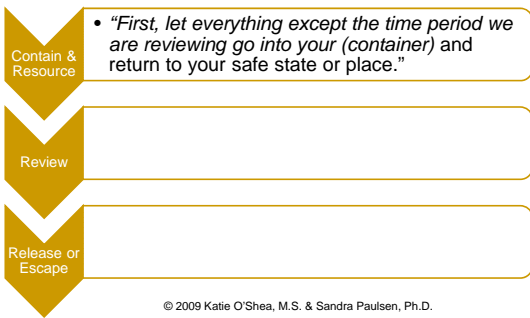
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Horizontal lines for notes

Step 4 – Sample Script cont.




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Horizontal lines for notes



Step 4 – Sample Script cont. 

**Contain & Resource**

- *“First, let everything except the time period we are reviewing go into your (container) and return to your safe state or place.”*

**Review**

- *“Now, just let your focus go to the time while I tap, to see if there’s anything left that needs to be reviewed, released, or repaired.”*

**Release or Escape**

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Step 4 – Sample Script cont. 

**Contain & Resource**

- *“First, let everything except the time period we are reviewing go into your (container) and return to your safe state or place.”*

**Review**

- *“Now, just let your focus go to the time while I tap, to see if there’s anything left that needs to be reviewed, released, or repaired.”*

**Release or Escape**

- If emotions loop, say *“Imagine what you need or need to do.”*
- If physical sensations loop, say *“Imagine it (physical sensation) happening.”*

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Step 4 – Sample Script cont. 

**Relearn & Repair**

**Install**

**Body Scan & Close**

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Step 4 – Sample Script cont.



Relearn & Repair

- If the following doesn't happen spontaneously, say *"Imagine getting everything you needed."*

Install

Body Scan & Close

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Step 4 – Sample Script cont.



Relearn & Repair

- If the following doesn't happen spontaneously, say *"Imagine getting everything you needed."*

Install

- *"Is there a positive statement/thought that comes to mind when you focus on the [timeframe]?"* If so, install.

Body Scan & Close

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Step 4 – Sample Script cont.



Relearn & Repair

- If the following doesn't happen spontaneously, say *"Imagine getting everything you needed."*

Install

- *"Is there a positive statement/thought that comes to mind when you focus on the [timeframe]?"* If so, install.

Body Scan & Close

- Whether session is complete or not, say *"Let everything else that still needs to be reviewed go into [container]."* Use resources. *"We'll continue at our next session."*

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Helpful reminders



Resourcing is critical

- Katie O'Shea spends entire first day discussing
- Robin Shapiro's **EMDR Solutions II** provides additional detail

After resourcing, have clients go back to the time before they can remember

Protocol "Review, Release or Escape, Repair"

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Further reading and study



Books

- EMDR Solutions II: For Depression, Eating Disorders, Performance, and More  
Robin Shapiro (Editor) 2009
- Looking Through the Eyes of Trauma and Dissociation: An illustrated guide for EMDR therapists and clients  
Sandra Paulsen, PhD 2009
- The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma  
Bessel van der Kolk MD, 2014
- When There Are No Words  
Sandra Paulsen PhD Coming in 2015

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Further reading and study cont.



Online Workshops for BBS and EMDRIA Credits

- Sandra Paulsen, PhD
- <http://www.sfrankelgroup.com/>  
Toward An Embodied Self (9 Credits)  
Looking Through The Eyes (12.5 Credits)  
When There Are No Words (6.5 Credits)

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Final Thought



**JUMP IN AND TRY IT!!!**

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