

## Welcome Letter

### How EMDR can help you feel less pain

Chronic pain can be a confusing and overwhelming problem to live with. Here are a few things you need to know before starting your healing journey.

1. **Chronic pain is a mind-body problem.**

Human beings have two pain pathways, one from the body to the brain and one from the brain to the body. Acute pain comes from your body ('bottom-up' processing) Chronic pain feels like it's coming from your body, but it really comes from your brain.

2. **Your brain chronic pain treats chronic pain as an emotional problem, not a sensory one;**

Only 2 of the 9 key areas of the brain that are involved in chronic pain are for sensory processing.  
7 of the 9 brain areas that are responsible for chronic pain, are for mental and emotional processing.

3. **Your brain not only notices pain (nociception) it also remembers it in the form of altered patterns of neural firing (central sensitization).**

That's because your brain is designed to remember anything that is relevant to your survival, which pain is.

4. **Your brain also sends pain signals back to your body (top-down processing).**

5. **Pain can persist for many reasons (depleted immune system, previous trauma, genetic predisposition etc).**

6. **The longer you experience pain the more your brain remembers it.**

While its unfortunate, that's just your brain doing what's its meant to.

7. **Just as the brain remembers, it can also forget.**

Neuroplasticity refers to how the brain learns, through forming and re-forming neuronal connections, something neuroscientist Daniel Seagal summaries as 'Neurons that fire together wire together.'

This means that your brain can always learn - that you can change your brain change your pain.

(Remember, even though pain feels like it's coming from your body, chronic pain really comes from your brain).



8. **Just as you have bottom-up and top-down brain-pain pathways, you also have bottom-up and top-down analgesic pathways.**  
Interventions such as massage, hot and cold stimulus and topical creams are ‘bottom-up.’ Interventions such as Meditation, Hypnosis and Cognitive therapy are ‘top-down.’ Top-down and bottom-up interventions harness different biochemical reactions.
9. **The best way to change your brain change your pain is to have new experiences that stimulate new patterns of brain activity that get remembered.**
10. **EMDR is an integrated bottom-up/top-down treatment which uses dual focus of attention and bilateral stimulation (BLS), to disrupt the patterns of brain activity which maintain pain.**
11. **EMDR has been found to de-activate several of the 7 key areas of the brain involved in pain processing, especially areas involved in emotional processing.**  
EMDR also seems to stimulate the top-down brain-body analgesic pathway through the locus cereleus – amygdala – PAG pathway which stimulates the release of natural opioids (endorphins and enkephalins). These systems are part of your body’s Adaptive Information Processing system which normally processes painful experiences adaptively.
12. **EMDR treatment of pain also usually involves resolving trauma or other psychological issues which might be subtly maintaining your pain.**  
Unresolved psychological trauma often acts as a hidden non-medical cause of chronic pain.
13. **Although it may not lead to complete elimination of your pain, EMDR can help reduce its intensity and associated emotional distress.**
14. **Keeping a lid on on-going pain may require supplementing EMDR with interventions such as Hypnosis.** Hypnosis gives you access to the power of your subconscious mind, which regulates your bodily systems.
15. **How long will it take?**  
That’s up to you – depending on how determined you are to get better, how willing you are to take responsibility for that, and how able you are to maintain a compassionate attitude toward yourself. Knowing that there will be set-backs but not giving up. The most important thing is to believe in yourself – that you can get better, that you deserve to get better.