

EMDR Hiking Adventure Map for Kids

A trail guide through the 8 phases of EMDR therapy

Think of the EMDR journey like a **hike up a mountain**, where each phase is a fun stop on the trail. The child adventurer carries a backpack filled with skills, helpers, and tools they discover along the way.

Trailhead: Welcome to the Journey

(Before Phase 1—setting the stage)

- Meet your trail guide (therapist).
- Get your hiking pass (consent/assent explained in kid-friendly language).
- Pick out your backpack (introduce metaphor).

PHASE 1 – HISTORY TAKING

Stop 1: The Map Hut

- Your Superpowers! The Answer with kids/caregiver
- The Guide helps the child draw a simple **trail map** of life events.
- Big hills = big problems
- Small bumps = small problems
- Identify trail hazards (past hurts, triggers).
- Choose which trail to explore first.

PHASE 2 – PREPARATION

Stop 2: Gear-Up Camp

- Pack the backpack with coping tools:
 - Safe place = tent
 - Calm breathing = water bottle
 - Body awareness = compass
 - Positive helpers = hiking buddies

- Practice using the gear before walking further.
- Create a resource for and some examples, all of these can be created in a sand tray, drawing or story or use physical movement or props for creating the following:
 - Safety- Hugging a lovie, wrapped in a blanket,
 - Container
 - Love- Hugging a lovie, photos of people or pets they love
 - Calm- deep breathing, I spy game,
 - Calm Place
 - Happy- draw a happy place, create in sandtray, tell a story

PHASE 3 – ASSESSMENT

Stop 3: Trail Marker Check-In

- Choose the memory trail (target).
- Find the:
 - Picture = trail snapshot
 - Negative belief = “This trail is too hard” sign
 - Positive belief = “I can do this!” sign
- SUD = how steep the hill feels
- VOC = how true the positive sign feels

PHASE 4 – DESENSITIZATION

Stop 4: The Wiggly Trail

- Walk the trail using bilateral stimulation (the “left–right step rhythm”).
- Notice things along the path: feelings, thoughts, memories.
- The trail gets less steep over time.

PHASE 5 – INSTALLATION

Stop 5: The Victory Vista Point

- Plant the “I DID IT!” flag.
- Strengthen the helpful belief (“I am strong,” “I can handle things”).



- Take in the view—the child notices how different the trail feels now.
 - Notice the smaller beautiful things like flowers, butterflies, trees, clouds etc.

PHASE 6 – BODY SCAN

Stop 6: The Body Check Station

- Use the “body compass” to see if anything still feels tight, heavy, or uneasy.
- Clear out leftover trail dust (remaining sensations).

PHASE 7 – CLOSURE

Stop 7: Cozy Campfire Reset

- End the session feeling safe and calm.
- Pack up gear again (coping strategies).
- Review the day’s trail progress.
- Remind them they can return to camp anytime if needed.

PHASE 8 – REEVALUATION

Stop 8: Back at the Trailhead

- Check how the trail feels today.
- Is the hill still easy to climb?
- Are new trails ready to explore?
- Plan the next adventure.