

# My Journey through EMDR

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Trauma has had a profound impact on the quality of my life. I was diagnosed with PTSD after a long struggle with severe anxiety and depression as a result of my parent's death. My parent's death had a lot of complex pieces to it, on top of the heaviness of grief, and it resulted in me feeling and living in survival mode one hundred percent of the time. I was living in Indiana and seeing a therapist certified in EMDR. She facilitated our sessions through the use of Bilateral Stimulation and The Flash Technique. I began to notice a significant behavioral improvement and internal relief from the intense anxiety and depression. However, as I was experiencing relief from the effects of my parent's death, I was uncovering a significant amount of unaddressed childhood trauma. While I was hopeful for the healing I was receiving, I was beginning to feel discouraged from the pain being uncovered. There I was, faced with a reality I had tried to avoid for years: my entire life is riddled with unaddressed trauma. Meanwhile, my husband got offered a job that would take us from Indiana to Texas. This would mean finding a new therapist which, in the midsts of a big move, was an overwhelming and scary task for me. I needed immediate help and taking time to find someone new wasn't a privilege I had. If it wasn't for my previous therapist being so insightfully helpful, this whole process could have been a lot harder. I count it a miracle that I found Jaqueline, in the sea of therapists, as soon as I did and how quickly she knew how to handle someone like me — with CPTSD. When I first began to see Jaqueline, I was regularly dissociating, unable to identify personal feelings, and having symptoms of multiple personality. My nervous system was a mess, my life had become unmanageable, and I never knew which part of me was going to show up to our sessions. One of the gifts of working with

Jaqueline was my unpredictability wasn't too much, but that wasn't the only gift in working with her.

Another gift of working with Jaqueline was learning how to be present with my feelings. Dissociation blocked me from being able to connect with myself and she helped me reconnect in a gentle way. Being as I've been dissociating since I was a kid, making this healthy change was pivotal to my healing. As a result, I've been able to advocate for myself, establish healthy boundaries, and engage in relationships. By addressing dissociation first, I learned how to stay present and aware of my body which has made my EMDR even more effective.

Establishing a felt sense of safety with myself has proven to be another gift. By Jaqueline providing emotional safety in our sessions, I've learned to trust myself and feel safe within my body. In order for me to acknowledge my feelings, having a felt sense of safety within has been crucial. Once we were able to disrupt the pattern of dissociation in my life, we were able to address the feelings that motivated me to dissociate in the first place. What we discovered was those feelings were always linked back to a shame-filled message that would ultimately reinforce that I'm not safe in my body ("You are not enough", "You are a fraud", "You are stupid", "You are worthless", or "You are worth less"). Jaqueline gave me the gift of safe space to listen and acknowledge those feelings so that they can be purged and purified. As I started to feel safe within, I was able to be honest without. In turn, that honesty became a breeding ground of the continued good, healing work we did in our sessions.

This leads me to the next gift — reframing. Reframing is taking a message or perspective that doesn't serve us and reframe it in a life-giving way. To this day, reframing destructive and unhelpful messages is a tool I continue to use. Initially in our sessions, Jaqueline assisted in helping me reframe messages. As our sessions progressed, though, she would insisted I learned

to advocate for myself by reframing the message for myself. It made me feel like she believed in me, which in turn allowed me to believe in me too.

In closing, I hold a tremendous amount of gratitude and respect for Jaqueline's work. While I started with her because I was desperate and my life was unmanageable, I continue working with her because I see the value her work brings to my health and well-being. In fact, my husband and I even started working with her in couples therapy. She's probably stuck with me forever because, till death do I part, I'm committed to my health and well-being and Jaqueline keeps me healthy.