Below you’ll find each client statement or question, followed by **three** therapist responses in the order they are most likely to occur. These responses reflect a supportive, trauma-informed approach consistent with EMDR principles, while also incorporating general therapeutic techniques (e.g., grounding, exploring triggers, validating experiences). Use these examples as illustrative guidance; in actual therapy, responses would be tailored to the client’s unique circumstances.

**I. Expressions of Overwhelm & Anxiety**

1. **Client**: “I feel completely overwhelmed by everything.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “It sounds like everything is weighing on you at once. Can you tell me more about which parts of your life feel most urgent or intense right now?”
   2. “Let’s see if we can slow things down. Would it be helpful to do a brief grounding or breathing exercise to help you feel more settled?”
   3. “Overwhelm often comes when our system is on overload. We’ll explore ways to break down these stresses into manageable steps.”
2. **Client**: “My mind won’t stop racing.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “I hear that it’s difficult to find peace when your thoughts are racing. What do you notice triggers these racing thoughts the most?”
   2. “Sometimes, just labeling that you’re in ‘racing thought mode’ can help create a bit of space. Should we try that together now?”
   3. “We’ll also look at how EMDR and related strategies can help slow down or lessen the intensity of these thoughts over time.”
3. **Client**: “I feel like I’m drowning in my worries.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “That image of ‘drowning’ says a lot about how overwhelming this is. Could you describe what it’s like in your mind and body right now?”
   2. “When we feel submerged in worries, it can be helpful to identify a small, solid ‘anchor’ in the present. Shall we try a quick grounding technique?”
   3. “As we keep working, we’ll explore the underlying beliefs fueling these worries and use EMDR to process them more fully.”

**II. Self-Criticism & Low Self-Esteem**

1. **Client**: “I’m not good enough.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “I hear so much pain in that statement. Can you share when you first remember feeling ‘not good enough’?”
   2. “Let’s notice how this belief shows up in your body. Sometimes our body reactions offer clues about its origins.”
   3. “We can use EMDR to target the experiences that led you to form this belief and help you replace it with a more empowering one.”
2. **Client**: “I feel like a failure.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “What does it mean to you to ‘feel like a failure’? Is there a specific situation that makes you feel this way right now?”
   2. “Sometimes, that sense of failure is tied to earlier messages or experiences. Let’s see if we can connect those dots.”
   3. “We can work on changing the narrative around these events and how you see yourself, especially during EMDR sessions.”
3. **Client**: “I always mess things up.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “I notice you’re using the word ‘always.’ Can you share an example of when you felt you messed something up?”
   2. “Let’s explore whether this belief started from a particular event or pattern in your past.”
   3. “We’ll focus on reframing this belief so it’s not so absolute—EMDR can help untangle the roots of these feelings.”

**III. Feelings of Hopelessness & Despair**

1. **Client**: “I don’t see any way out of this.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “That level of hopelessness can be really distressing. Can you share what feels most impossible right now?”
   2. “Let’s look at times in your life when you’ve overcome challenges, even small ones. Sometimes remembering those moments can offer hope.”
   3. “We’ll move step by step; exploring your feelings in therapy can help us find a path that feels more manageable.”
2. **Client**: “I feel hopeless about the future.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “It sounds like the future feels dark and uncertain. Do you have any sense of when these hopeless feelings first started?”
   2. “Sometimes these feelings are connected to past trauma or repeated disappointments. We’ll try to uncover those links.”
   3. “As you process deeper issues in EMDR, we’ll look for signs of new thoughts or perspectives that could shift your outlook on the future.”
3. **Client**: “Nothing ever seems to get better.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “It must be very frustrating to feel stuck like this. What areas in your life feel the most stuck right now?”
   2. “Let’s also look for small exceptions or moments of relief. Even little shifts can give us clues for moving forward.”
   3. “Over time, as we process the core beliefs behind this despair, you may start to notice gradual changes that challenge ‘never’ or ‘nothing.’”

**IV. Physical Manifestations of Anxiety**

1. **Client**: “My heart races and my chest feels tight when I think about the future.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “It sounds like your body is sounding an alarm. Would it help to place your hand on your chest and notice how it feels as you breathe?”
   2. “We can explore a calming technique—like four-count breathing—to ease the tension in your chest right now.”
   3. “Let’s also consider if there’s a past experience that triggers this future-focused anxiety, which we can work on with EMDR.”
2. **Client**: “I get dizzy and my stomach churns before social events.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “It seems your body goes into high alert in social settings. What do you imagine might be the worst-case scenario in these moments?”
   2. “Can we practice a grounding exercise together to see if we can reduce some of the dizziness?”
   3. “We’ll dig deeper to see if an earlier experience is fueling this anxiety, and then address it in our EMDR work.”
3. **Client**: “Sometimes I feel numb or disconnected.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “Numbness can be our mind’s way of protecting us from overwhelming feelings. When do you notice it most?”
   2. “Let’s do a brief check-in: can you sense any part of your body that doesn’t feel numb right now?”
   3. “As we gently process past events, we can often reduce the need for that protective numbness.”

**V. Recurring Negative Thoughts or Memories (Especially in EMDR)**

1. **Client**: “I keep reliving that one painful memory.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “It must be very distressing to revisit that memory repeatedly. Would you describe what comes up when it surfaces?”
   2. “During EMDR, we’ll use bilateral stimulation to help your brain reprocess and integrate that memory differently.”
   3. “For now, let’s identify some coping strategies or a ‘safe place’ visualization to help you when the memory resurfaces.”
2. **Client**: “Every time I think about that event, I feel the same terror.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “That terror can feel overwhelming. Can you notice how your body reacts to that fear in this moment?”
   2. “We’ll use grounding skills to manage the intensity right now, and then in EMDR, we’ll address the root of that terror.”
   3. “Over time, as the memory is processed, we aim for that terror to diminish and feel more manageable.”
3. **Client**: “I can’t seem to escape these flashbacks.”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “Flashbacks can make it feel like you’re back in the original situation. Can you identify any patterns or triggers for them?”
   2. “We’ll learn techniques to help anchor you in the present moment, so you feel more in control when flashbacks occur.”
   3. “Using EMDR, we’ll target the underlying memory networks that are causing the flashbacks to persist.”

**VI. Common Questions**

1. **Client**: “Why do I always think the worst will happen?”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “It sounds like a pattern of expecting the worst. Let’s explore if there’s a past experience or belief that taught you this outlook.”
   2. “Sometimes, catastrophic thinking is our mind’s attempt to prepare or protect us—knowing that might help us find new coping strategies.”
   3. “As we reprocess relevant memories, you may find these automatic negative predictions start to soften.”
2. **Client**: “Am I overreacting, or is this normal?”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “Your feelings are valid, and there’s no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ amount of reaction. What matters is understanding why it’s so intense for you.”
   2. “Let’s explore the context—sometimes past trauma intensifies current feelings beyond what others might expect.”
   3. “We’ll look for ways to respond more gently to your emotions, rather than judging them as ‘normal’ or ‘not normal.’”
3. **Client**: “What is wrong with me for feeling this way?”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “It sounds like you’re blaming yourself for your emotional reactions. Let’s see if we can replace blame with understanding.”
   2. “Often there’s nothing ‘wrong’—feelings can be natural responses to difficult experiences. Let’s figure out the roots of this response.”
   3. “Over time, EMDR can help shift how you experience and interpret these emotions so they feel less overwhelming.”
4. **Client**: “How can I stop these negative thoughts?”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “First, let’s acknowledge how distressing they are. Do they come up in specific situations or all throughout the day?”
   2. “We can work on thought-stopping or ‘container’ exercises to temporarily set these thoughts aside.”
   3. “With EMDR, the goal is to address the memories or beliefs fueling these thoughts so they lose their grip over time.”
5. **Client**: “What can I do to feel better when I’m overwhelmed?”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “We can try a quick grounding technique—like naming five things you can see, four things you can touch, and so on.”
   2. “Think about small, achievable steps or coping tools you’ve used in the past that offered any relief.”
   3. “Over the course of therapy, we’ll expand your toolkit of coping strategies and process triggers so they feel less intense.”
6. **Client**: “How do I learn to control my anxiety?”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “Anxiety often feels uncontrollable, but there are evidence-based techniques to help you manage it more effectively.”
   2. “Let’s practice specific skills—like paced breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or bilateral tapping—to see what works best for you.”
   3. “By reprocessing past traumas or triggers with EMDR, we aim to lessen the root causes of your anxiety, making it easier to cope.”
7. **Client**: “How do I know if these techniques are working?”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “We’ll track changes in your distress levels over time. Sometimes it’s small shifts—like recovering faster from a stressful moment.”
   2. “You might notice less intense emotional or physical reactions when thinking about certain situations.”
   3. “We’ll regularly check in to see if you feel a difference in how you handle triggers and upsetting thoughts.”
8. **Client**: “What should I focus on when these memories come up?”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “Try to simply notice whatever arises—images, emotions, or sensations—and remind yourself that you’re safe in the present.”
   2. “If the memory feels too intense, you can use a ‘safe place’ or ‘container’ exercise to help you step away from it temporarily.”
   3. “In our EMDR sessions, we’ll work on fully processing those memories so they feel less overwhelming between sessions.”
9. **Client**: “Is it normal to feel even worse before I start feeling better?”  
   **Therapist Responses**:
   1. “Yes, it can happen. Sometimes bringing up painful memories temporarily intensifies distress before it decreases.”
   2. “We’ll go at a pace that feels safe for you and use grounding techniques if the emotions become too overwhelming.”
   3. “Processing difficult experiences can be challenging, but often leads to lasting relief once you’ve moved through it.”
10. **Client**: “How do I know if I’m processing the memory correctly?”  
    **Therapist Responses**:
    1. “There’s no single ‘right’ way—processing can look different for everyone. The key is noticing whatever comes up.”
    2. “We’ll keep track of changes in how you feel about the memory, such as reduced distress or shifting beliefs.”
    3. “If you’re noticing any new insights, emotions, or even unexpected thoughts, that’s a sign that your mind is working through it.”
11. **Client**: “What should I pay attention to during the eye movements?”  
    **Therapist Responses**:
    1. “Just notice any thoughts, images, or feelings that come up, and let me know whatever you become aware of.”
    2. “There’s no need to force or control your thoughts—trust that your brain will guide the process.”
    3. “If you feel stuck or overwhelmed, let me know so we can pause and regroup.”
12. **Client**: “What if the flashbacks or negative feelings don’t go away?”  
    **Therapist Responses**:
    1. “If they persist, we’ll explore the possibility that more layers of the memory need to be addressed.”
    2. “Sometimes it takes multiple sessions and techniques to reduce the intensity. We’ll keep working until you feel relief.”
    3. “We can also explore additional resources—like grounding strategies, medication consultations, or supportive group therapy—if needed.”
13. **Client**: “Why do I feel this way even when nothing seems wrong?”  
    **Therapist Responses**:
    1. “Our nervous system can remain on high alert from past experiences, even if the current situation seems safe.”
    2. “We’ll look for any unresolved experiences or beliefs that might be triggering these feelings beneath the surface.”
    3. “EMDR can help your mind and body recognize that the threat is in the past, easing these unexplained responses over time.”
14. **Client**: “Will I ever be able to overcome this?”  
    **Therapist Responses**:
    1. “Many people worry they’ll never get better, but there is hope. We’ll walk this path step by step together.”
    2. “EMDR and other interventions have helped countless people find relief. It often takes consistent work, but change is possible.”
    3. “We’ll focus on noticing gradual shifts—sometimes even small signs of progress can be stepping stones to bigger change.”
15. **Client**: “How can I build a better coping strategy for when things get really bad?”  
    **Therapist Responses**:
    1. “We’ll start by identifying your key triggers and develop specific coping tools—like grounding, breathing exercises, or journaling.”
    2. “Think about anything that has helped in the past, even briefly, and we’ll refine it or build on it.”
    3. “By reprocessing underlying traumas and beliefs with EMDR, you may find it easier to use coping skills effectively when stress peaks.”

**Key Takeaways About These Responses**

* **Validation First**: Most responses begin by validating the client’s experience—naming or reflecting the emotion, sensation, or belief.
* **Curiosity and Exploration**: Therapists often invite clients to notice the body’s reactions or explore past experiences that might be contributing to current feelings.
* **EMDR-Specific Integration**: References to bilateral stimulation and memory reprocessing are woven in, reflecting how an EMDR therapist might guide the client.
* **Practical Tools**: Suggestions for grounding, breathing exercises, or container techniques help clients manage distressing symptoms.
* **Hope and Reassurance**: Therapists remind clients of the potential for change and that experiencing temporary discomfort can be part of the healing process.