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INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELETHERAPY

Psychotherapy may be delivered by telephone or videoconferencing (“teletherapy”). Teletherapy is especially useful when either a therapist or client cannot participate in face-to-face sessions because of issues related to transportation, health and safety, and/or mobility. Additionally, teletherapy is a vital resource for people without equivalent local resources. However, there are some risks and limitations specific to teletherapy. This document is intended to outline potential risks as well as general guidelines for teletherapy. It is up to each client-therapist dyad to determine if the likely benefits of teletherapy outweigh the potential risks. Please read the following carefully so that you can provide fully informed consent for engaging in teletherapy services.

- Teletherapy includes any single therapy session held by telephone or videoconferencing, even if most of our sessions are conducted in person.
- We both should be in a quiet, private place with limited interruptions and distractions. This includes turning off “apps” and notifications on your electronic device(s).
- Ideally you will have the ability to take notes or to do exercises that involve closing your eyes or moving around (for example). Therefore, I suggest that you not drive during sessions.
- Please inform me if there is another person present during a session.
- Subtleties of communication, such as tone of voice and nonverbal cues, may be compromised when communicating via telephone or videoconferencing. This may result in an increased need to clarify what we heard from each other, which could at times slow progress.
- It can be challenging to share, exchange, or sign documents when we are in different locations. We will discuss technologies that are available to us both (e.g., fax; encrypted text messaging; encrypted email), and use the most secure mode of document exchange possible. Documents sent via unencrypted email should be password protected, and the password should be shared with the other party through a communication channel other than email. However, a password-protected file is still quite vulnerable to breaches of confidentiality.
- When communicating via telephone or internet videoconferencing there is a non-zero risk that your privacy and confidentiality will in some way be compromised.
- It is important to use a secure internet connection rather than public/free Wi-Fi.
- We will use HIPAA-compliant programs whenever possible. I currently use Zoom for videoconferencing and Signal for encrypted text messaging.
- Another potential risk of teletherapy is service interruptions or technical difficulties that compromise the quality or productivity of a session.
 - We may need to end a teletherapy session if our connection is poor.
 - For videoconferencing sessions, please have available a telephone so we can switch to this mode of communication if necessary.
 - Have your device(s) plugged in or a charger within reach to minimize the risk of session interruption.

- The same confidentiality protections, limits to confidentiality, and rules around medical records apply to a teletherapy session as they would to an in-person session.
- If you previously consented to having sessions recorded, that consent extends to teletherapy sessions. Please do not record sessions yourself without first discussing this with me.
- I should know where you are physically located during each teletherapy session. This will allow me to alert your emergency contact or emergency personnel in the unlikely event that a medical, psychiatric, or other emergency occurs during the session. Please tell me if you are somewhere other than the address I have on file for you.
- It is important for us to develop a safety plan, including identifying emergency contacts, local crisis services, and accessible hospitals in the event of a crisis situation.
- If at any time it is my professional opinion that teletherapy is insufficient to meet your needs I can stop offering teletherapy sessions and ask that we either meet in person or find other, more suitable services.
- All standard fees apply (including session, late cancel, and missed appointment fees).
- If technological difficulties on your end force us to cancel or shorten a session, you still will be responsible for paying for the scheduled time.
- You will be billed for international phone charges exceeding \$5/call.

Guidelines Specific to Group Teletherapy

- If your connection drops out, try to reconnect. If you cannot reconnect, text me to let them know that you are unable to rejoin the group and that you are safe. This will help to settle me and your fellow group members if we are concerned about you.
- It is essential that you protect the privacy of your fellow group members. You must be in a private location, where no other person can see or hear you or any other participant.

By signing below you are indicating that you have read the preceding information and have had an opportunity to ask questions. You understand that I am happy to try to help you locate in-person resources now or at any time in the course of our treatment should you decide that teletherapy is not sufficiently meeting your needs.

Patient Signature

Date

Printed Name

Therapist/Witness Signature

Date

TIPS

Zoom Videoconferencing

I have had the most success using Zoom when people follow these tips.

1. Download the Zoom app/software rather than using the browser interface.
 - Visit Zoom.us
 - Scroll to the footer at the bottom
 - Under the Download menu select the appropriate option for your device
2. You may have better service if you connect to the internet using an ethernet cable rather than wireless technology.
3. Have your electronic device plugged in; Zoom depletes batteries!
4. If the video is “freezing” a lot or you get a message that your internet connection is unstable, select the Stop Video option in the lower left corner. This will decrease the bandwidth load and we likely will be able to keep talking, even if we can no longer see each other. We can flip the video back on to try again after a minute or two.

Meeting Initiation:

- Generally, I will schedule the meeting and text you a link.
- If you move the venue of our session from the office to Zoom within 12 hours of our appointment, please schedule the meeting yourself and text me the link. If you do not do this, then I will start the meeting at the start of our appointment time, which will only cost us a minute or 2.

Signal Text Messaging and Calling

Signal is a free, open-source service available in Android, iPhone, and desktop applications. Text messages and phone calls are end-to-end encrypted, as long as both parties are using Signal. Signal is my default texting app. If you send a text to me from Signal, our message will be encrypted. If you send a text from any other SMS service, it will not be encrypted.

CAUTION: If you have a Signal account but use a different texting app by default, my texts to you will land in your Signal app and you may not see them! Please open Signal and check there if you don't receive a reply message from me in a timely fashion.

Although I do not recommend or offer therapy via text messaging, I understand that text messaging is sometimes an efficient way for us to communicate information. For anything other than routine scheduling issues, I urge you to use Signal rather than unencrypted text messaging.