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Teletherapy Considerations and Regulations

Teletherapy is not the same as “FaceTiming with friends”; it needs to be approached in a different way that attempts, as much as possible, to recreate the privacy elements of the therapy office. Here are some things to consider before you agree to participate in psychotherapy via teletherapy/telehealth:


1. How is your internet connectivity? Do not use public wifi as it is not secure.
2. Do you have a space or room that is private where no one else can hear you? Is it reasonably quiet? Privacy is essential. Diane will start sessions by asking if the client is alone and has privacy, then have the client scan the room with their camera.
3. What is your comfort with this technology?
4. If we are doing couples therapy, there will need to be discussion and coordination between the partners as to which device to use, private place to sit, etc. Each partner will need to be visible/on camera at all times (i.e. not passing a phone back and forth).

Regulations state that I must do the following:

1. At the beginning of each teletherapy session, I must verbally obtain from the client the client’s name, physical address of the client’s present location, and current phone number.
2. During each teletherapy session, I must assess whether the client is appropriate for teletherapy, including but not limited to, consideration of the client’s psychosocial situation.
3. For each session, I must utilize industry best practices for teletherapy to ensure both client confidentiality and the security of the communication medium/technology used. I have researched many teletherapy services; Zoom for Healthcare is HIPAA compliant.
4. Confirm that nobody will record the session without permission.
5. We will discuss a back-up plan in case there are technical difficulties that interfere with the continuation of the session.
6. We will discuss billing

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Things for clients to do in advance of a teletherapy session:

1. Download the service in advance of the first teletherapy session, because it can be quick or take up to 10-15 minutes depending on your device's capacity and internet connectivity.
2. Both of us should disable all other apps and alerts on the devices we are using - pop ups and alert sounds should hopefully not occur on either end.
3. Consider using a larger device (like a laptop or iPad) rather than smartphone, in order to have a larger screen.
4. Lighting can have a big impact on how clearly we can see each other. It is preferred that you not sit in front of window – or close the blinds/drapes if you do.
5. It seems better if the client puts their device on something stable like a table so there is less movement with the camera.
6. Be mindful of sounds because microphones can pick up ambient noises. Consider using a headset to minimize this.
7. Realize that eye contact will be different.

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