

# Transitioning to Teletherapy

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**Welcome!**

# About Me

- Doctor of Psychology + Master in Business Administration
- Outpatient therapy services in a rural town of Pennsylvania
- Board Certified Telehealth Professional
- Founder of The Teletherapist Network

**THE TELETHERAPIST  
NETWORK**



# Learning Outcomes

# Objectives

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- List pros and cons for 3 different types of teletherapy services
- Identify questions to ask a client before starting teletherapy services
- Describe 3 complications that may arise during teletherapy sessions, as well as how to handle the complications
- Identify additional sources of support and training in teletherapy

# Introduction to Teletherapy

# Teletherapy Activity

— — —

**What other names are used to describe teletherapy?**

*Reply using the chat box.  
Lets see how many we can get!*

# What is teletherapy?

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- Definition of teletherapy might differ depending on the organization or location
- American Psychological Association (2013)
  - *Telepsychology is a provision of psychological services using telecommunication technologies*
- Includes telecommunication with client outside of in-person care
- Client may be in different types of environments
  - Clinically Supervised: hospital, prison
  - Unsupervised: their home



# Most Common Teletherapy Options

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1. Telephone
2. Text Based (e-mail, chat, etc.)
3. Video Conferencing

# Telephone Teletherapy

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- Types of telephone connections
  - Landline
  - Mobile Phone
  - VoIP
- Mobile Phone Security
  - Enable Password
  - Add encryption
  - Avoid public wifi when dealing with patient information

- Benefits
  - Accessibility
  - Cost-effectiveness
  - Improved confidentiality
  - Lower attrition rates than in person
  - Generally reliable
  - Useful in emergency situations
- Limitations
  - Not used for group therapy
  - Miss non-verbal information
  - Client's environment
  - No eye contact

# Text Message Activity

— — —

I never said she stole my money.

I never said she stole my money.

I **never** said she stole my money.

I never **said** she stole my money.

I never said **she** stole my money.

I never said she **stole** my money.

I never said she stole **my** money.

I never said she stole my **money**.

# Text Based Teletherapy (email, chat, text message)

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- Benefits

- Accessibility
- Quickly send & respond to messages
- More comfortable for some clients
- Great for scheduling & check-ins

- Limitations

- May not be real-time
- Unaware of clients environment
- Text may be misunderstood
- Lacks tonal and visual communication cues
- Cannot interrupt a message
- Blurred boundaries

If you choose to contract with a therapy company, make sure you read the contract!

# Video Conferencing Teletherapy

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- Benefits

- Accessibility
- Flexibility of individual or group sessions
- Cost-effectiveness
- Improved confidentiality
- Additional information about home environment, family dynamics

- Limitations

- Security of video platform
- Cannot be required
- Miss non-verbal information
  - Smell
  - Fidgeting
  - Gait
- Eye contact is different
- Prone to technical difficulties

# Commonly Used Teletherapy Services in the US

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- Video
  - Doxy.me
- Telephone
- Email
  - Hushmail
- Integrated Platforms
  - GSuite - email, documents, video chat, phone
  - Spruce Health - phone, messages, video
  - Simple Practice- electronic medical records, video, messaging, forms, billing, scheduling
  - TherapyNotes - electronic medical records, video, messaging, forms, billing, scheduling

**BAA - Business Associate Agreement**

# Conducting your first Teletherapy session

# How to determine if a client is right for teletherapy

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1. Do they have access to reliable technology?
2. Are they familiar with how to use the required technology?
3. Do they *want* to do teletherapy?
4. What environment will they be in? Is it private and secure?
5. Do they have any risk factors? (i.e. suicidal ideation, homicidal ideation)
6. What is their social support like at home or in their community?
7. Will teletherapy *help* or *hurt* their clinical presentation?
  - a. Hoarding vs. Agoraphobia



# What about *your* office?

— — —

- Where are you right now?
- What would it be like to do teletherapy there?
  - What do you like about it?
  - What would you change about it?
- **Share your answers in the chat**

# Office

— — —

- A private, quiet location where you won't be interrupted
- A neutral, professional background for the video
- Headphones to further ensure privacy and confidentiality
- Front-facing light source so that facial expressions are easily seen
- Place your computer or laptop camera at a height that makes it easy to look directly into the camera
- Ensure you have fast enough internet speed
  - Generally, 10 MPS is the recommended minimum for video conferencing
- Check the picture and audio quality prior to your first session

# Conducting Teletherapy Sessions

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- (Screen potential clients)
- Ensure privacy - both you and the client
  - Private location in home or office
  - Use of headphones
  - Turn off other devices
  - Secure internet access
  - Codeword to use in case of privacy breach
- Informed Consent to Teletherapy
  - Explain your policies and procedures for conducting teletherapy
    - Privacy, payment, etc.
  - Share risks and benefits of teletherapy
  - Agree upon relationship, boundaries, and expectations of therapy

# Conducting Teletherapy Sessions

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- Authenticate client's identity & location
- Disconnection Plan
  - Sample:
    - Wait 1 minute for technical issue to resolve itself
    - Log out of application, restart application
    - Therapist will call client on phone number provided
- Emergency Plan
  - Contact information for local emergency services
    - Police, medical services, mobile crisis units, etc.
  - Contact information and address of nearest hospital or clinic
  - Contact information for 3+ emergency contacts
    - Geographically close to the client and easily available

# Common Complications in Teletherapy

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1. Loss of connection or other technical issues
  - a. Solution: Enact Disconnection Plan
2. Interrupted privacy
  - a. Solution: Use codeword & pause session until environment is private
3. Inappropriate behaviors or appearance
  - a. Solution: Reinforce expectations of client or cancel session
4. Active Suicidal Ideation
  - a. Solution: Enact Emergency Plan

# Other Considerations in Teletherapy

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- Clinical Competency
  - Evidence-based practice
  - Scope creep
  - Referrals
- Malpractice Insurance
- National and local laws
  - Where you are and where the client is

# Additional Training Options in Teletherapy

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- American Psychological Association - <https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19>
- Person Centered Tech - <https://personcenteredtech.com/>
- Zur Institute - <https://www.zurinstitute.com/>
- Online Therapy Institute - <https://www.onlinetherapyinstitute.com>

# Don't Practice Teletherapy Alone

**TELETHERAPIST  
NETWORK**

[www.teletherapistnetwork.com](http://www.teletherapistnetwork.com)

**2 Weeks Free**  
with code  
**BRIGHTERVISION**

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**TELETHERAPY:**

**WE'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR A WHILE,  
HOW CAN WE IMPROVE?**

with DeeAnna Mertz Nagel  
of the  
Online Therapy Institute

**LIVE  
WEBINAR**

January 22nd  
at 1 pm est



Tap link in bio to join the Network



# Questions?

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**Let's Connect!**

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