Delivering Effective Online Support

Evidence For Delivering Online Support

With online support, there is good evidence to suggest that it is:

- A good way to increase accessibility.
- Acceptable to the Client
- Effective
- Possible to build therapeutic relationships just as well as face to face.

See Resources at the end of this guide.

Practicalities for Setting Up Online Session

Dos	Don'ts
Use a fit-for-purpose VOIP system. Zoom is Young Somerset's approved system of communication with service users.	Avoid non-approved communication platforms, such as Facebook, Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp, etc.
Test your setup is working before you meet clients online by delivering a practice session with a colleague or friend before using software with a client.	
Preferably ethernet cable connections, or WiFi is needed.	Avoid using 4G/data connections, as they lead to poorer quality audio and video.
Close all other apps, tabs and windows on your device before a session, especially programs that use a lot of memory or data, or docs with sensitive information, as accidental screen-sharing can happen.	Avoid having lots of apps or internet tabs open, as this may slow down your device and/or internet connection.
If connection is not performing well, request others on the same connection not to use high data applications, such as video streaming or gaming.	Avoid letting many people use the same internet connection for high bandwidth apps like video streaming and gaming during clinical sessions.
Use headphones or earphones to reduce audio-clipping due to mic-speaker feedback.	Avoid using speakers to hear you clients, as this will lead to audio clipping and make it harder to listen and reduce relational depth.
Ensure you have a private, confidential space, free from background distractions or noise-disturbances.	Avoid interruptions during the session by requesting all people in the building to not disturb you.
Switch off device notifications to reduce audio-visual distractions.	

	Avoid having notifications on your device as this will create audio-visual distractions and reduce relational depth.
Aim to have the main light source facing you, as this will aid camera brightness, reduce glare, and allow the client to see your face clearly, helping to establish relational depth.	Avoid having sources of light such as windows behind you, as this will reduce image clarity for your client.
Have a clear procedure in place for dropped connections – eg phone call immediately	Avoid not having a back-up plan for when internet connect fails.
Consider in advance what materials a client might need to be sent via email before the session.	Avoid trying to figure out how to use a software feature during a client's session or use a client's time to send information needed during the session.
Be familiar with software features that you may need to use during the session, such as screen sharing, before you begin the session with a client.	

Using Zoom

Scheduling A Meeting:

1) Log In
2) Click "Schedule A New Meeting".
3) Name the Meeting in the Topic Section
   a. Make the meeting identifiable
   b. Avoid using the client's full name
   c. Avoid using overly descriptive language, like "Therapy Session".
   d. Consider using your name and the client's initials: "AB zoom meeting with Sarah".
4) Set the Time
5) Set the duration of the session
6) Let the Meeting ID Generate Automatically
7) Set Password Depending On Preference and Need
8) If Video Session is Desired, Set Video Preference On for Host and Participant
9) Set Audio as Both
10) Leave other Meeting Options off, unless required.
11) Click Save

Send Meeting Info To Participant:

1) In the Meetings Tab, click the meeting you wish to share.
2) You Can Add the relevant calendar and/or,
3) Use the "Copy the Invitation" link next to "Join Url" and send this to the participant by email, or text.

Starting A Meeting:

1) When you are ready to start a particular meeting, go to the Meetings Tab
2) Click Start
3) The Meeting Will Now Begin and the participant will be able to join.

Set Up a Meeting to Begin Straight Away:

1) Go to "Host A Meeting" at the top of the Zoom page
2) Select with Video On, Off, or Screen-Sharing Only, depending on Preference.
3) The Meeting Will Begin Straight Away
4) If you wish to invite someone to join this meeting, click the "W=Invite " button and use the relevant option.

Screen-Sharing On Zoom

1) To screen share, click the "Screen Share" button
2) Click the relevant tile you wish to share
3) Note: Do not have sensitive information open in other apps during Zoom meetings as this can lead to accident screen-sharing of confidential information.

Helping Clients Set Up

Clients should be offered a brief phone call or sent an introduction email to help them set up for an online session.

The phone call or email should:

- Confirm client has a suitable device (smart-phone, tablet, laptop, or PC)
- Confirm client has access to a stable, secure internet connection (i.e. not a local café WiFi).
- Confirm client has access to a private space that won't be interrupted during session time.
- Advise client in advance to wear headphones, to improve sound quality.
- Agree what you will do if connection drops, such as attempt to reconnect with them online, and, if that fails, call them by phone if possible, and email to rearrange if not.
- If the client's connection is not so good, advise client to inform others in family to not use connection, especially for streaming videos or Gaming, during the session time.
- A link to support services, such as crisis team and urgent support.

Letter/Email Template

Dear Participant,

As agreed, we will soon have an online Zoom session.

In order for this to happen, please ensure you have access to a suitable device (eg. smart-phone, tablet, laptop, or PC), and that you have access to a private, stable, and secure internet connection. We also advise that you make sure you can access a private space that won't be interrupted for the duration of the session.

To make the most of this session, please turn off all audio or visual notifications on your device so we can focus better together, and wear headphones to improve mic and audio quality.

If this is your first time using zoom, we recommend having a practice meeting with a friend by signing up for zoom, downloading the software on your device, and setting up a test session with them to make sure you camera, mic, and audio works well on your device and internet connection.

A Zoom Meeting invite will be sent shortly. At the time the meeting is due, please click the link in this meeting invite and follow the instructions.

If you have any problems, please feel free to contact us. If you need urgent support, are at risk, or feel like you are in crisis, please follow this link: _____.

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

Beginning Online Sessions

Ensure the client is comfortable with the link, and that they can hear and see you OK.

Make it clear that if the connection is not clear

- They can tell you and ask you to say things again, if needed.
- They can request others to reduce their use if the connection by, for example, turning off streaming or gaming apps.
- If the connections is really bad, you can switch to phone or reschedule.

Cover confidentiality, as normal.

Ensure consent, to support, and via video format.

Confirm if you, or the client, would like to use the record function.

If you wish to record the session, as with any form of recording, normal procedures for recording sessions should be followed.

Developing Therapeutic Relationships Online

As with any supportive relationships, establishing the core conditions of empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard is essential. That being said, when working online, particular attention can be given to:

- Make sure your video feed is clearly lit, so clients can see your facial expressions. This will aid relational depth and the therapeutic relationship.

- Nod clearly, and use non-verbal, audible feedback like "mmhmm" to indicate that you are still with them. Use the body language that the client can clearly see to congruently communicate you are still with them.

- Using active listening skills, such as paraphrasing, summarising, and verbal empathic statements to show the client that you are hearing them. See https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-active-listening-3024343 and https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/active-listening.html

Risk and Safeguarding

Risk and Safeguarding online should be managed in the same way as face to face sessions.

Appropriate support information, such as crisis information or 24-hour support, should be made easily available to online clients. This could be in the form of a link to support services.

Try to confirm the client's location. Are they at home, in school, a friend's house at the beginning of the session, so that if urgent risk arises, the emergency services can be dispatched to the right location.

Have a plan in place if a client were to indicate an intention to significantly harm themselves and cut-off sessions. Again, knowing the client's current location would be a key piece of information in this scenario.

Ensure you have in advance the client's consent to send information such as crisis support, and where you can send this information safely, such as their email, or SMS.

Ongoing Support

Make sure you use supervision well, in order to develop you capacity to work online, and explore how working online may or may not be impact the relationship.

Resources

Effective Therapy via video: Top tips. https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/dcp-digital-healthcare-sub-committee-top-tips-providing-effective-therapy-video

A Comprehensive Review and a Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Internet-Based Psychotherapeutic Interventions.
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15228830802094429

Efficacy of synchronous telepsychology interventions for people with anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and adjustment disorder: A rapid evidence assessment.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ser0000239

A new emphasis on telehealth. https://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/06/telehealth