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Division of
Clinical Psychology

GUIDANCE

Top tips for psychological sessions delivered by video call for adult patients

Digital interventions come in many forms, such as video, telephone or online chat or information/education based.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL SESSIONS DELIVERED BY VIDEO CALL?

Though it is different, people often find using video can be as equally helpful as face-to-face. It can also make psychological sessions more accessible. It is completely normal to feel a whole range of emotions before your first session. You might feel even more apprehensive at the prospect of video psychological sessions, especially if you don't know what to expect. We have therefore compiled some information and top tips on what to expect from video psychological sessions. The main difference receiving digital psychological sessions is the delivery, which is via an online platform rather than face-to-face.

Your first few appointments

Your initial appointments will usually be an assessment, which involves your therapist listening and asking questions to gain an understanding of your current difficulties and your hopes for your sessions (by therapist we mean anyone you are working with to support your wellbeing, it could be a psychologist, care-co-ordinator, nurse, PWP etc). At the end of the assessment, some recommendations will be made on the best way forward.

HERE ARE A FEW TOP TIPS FOR VIDEO PSYCHOLOGICAL SESSIONS TO HELP YOUR FIRST SESSION FEEL AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE:

The day before

Ensure that you can access the online 'room' where your session will take place. Your session will take place on a video call 'platform'. There are lots of different types of video call platforms including Skype, Zoom, Google Hangouts, Facetime, Attend Anywhere. This might mean going to a website or downloading something to your computer.

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You can use a desktop, laptop tablet or 'smart' mobile phone for video psychological sessions, however, it is recommended that you use a desktop, laptop or tablet as they have larger screens and some functions might work better. However, if options other than a mobile are not available, sessions are still possible this way.

Plan where you are going to have the session. Choose a room where you can be alone and not over heard and where you feel comfortable. It's important that you can talk freely and are not going to be disturbed. It is recommended that you use Wi-Fi or an ethernet cable, where you can, to connect to the internet. You can use mobile data, however, this is not ideal as an hour of video calling can take up a lot of data!

Thirty minutes before your call

Log on to your computer and locate some headphones or earbuds which will help to ensure your privacy if someone were to come into the room or there is poor soundproofing. You can use the earbuds that come with your mobile phone.

Close unnecessary applications that may use up the internet and compromise the video quality.

Ensure there is sufficient battery power or that you are plugged in.

Collect anything you think you might need for the session, such as those things you would have in a face-to-face meeting.

In face-to-face psychological sessions, being able to hear each others' tone of voice, and see facial expressions are important ways of getting to know one another, so it's really helpful to try and make sure you can see and hear each other clearly in a video call. Therefore, it is important that you and your worker, have good lighting whenever possible and are somewhere you feel comfortable. Positioning your laptop or device fairly close to you so that the worker can clearly see you, and you can see the worker, can help it to feel more natural. A link to further guidelines around creating the best environment for therapy is [here](#).

Moving to or beginning video psychological sessions is an adjustment like any other change. Allow yourself time and be open-minded to it. However, it is also important to communicate any concerns that you have as this is an important way for you and your therapist to continue to work together to achieve your goals.

HOW DO I BUILD UP TRUST WITH MY THERAPIST?

The trust with your therapist will build up slowly, just as it would in face-to-face sessions. If you are already engaged in face-to-face sessions and are switching to a video, it is OK to acknowledge any losses you feel about this new intervention and the fact you may well miss your therapist's physical presence. It's also important to keep in mind that, whilst you may feel there are losses, there may be gains from having digital psychological sessions. Some people find it easier to disclose painful things remotely.

If you are soon to start your sessions with a therapist you have never met, building up a safe and comfortable relationship is important for your therapeutic journey. Your therapist will spend time with you to create a safe environment and a collaborative trusting relationship, where how much you feel safe to disclose will be at your own pace.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CONNECTION BREAKS?

It is very normal for connections to break during video sessions so prior to, or at the beginning of your first session, you and your therapist will plan what would happen if the connection breaks. For example, trying to reconnect or resuming the session by telephone. You may also want to discuss with your therapist about the process if you need to change a session time, or if you have questions or concerns between sessions.

Both you and your therapist might be quite new to using these technologies and will be learning together. If you have any ideas for how your therapist can make you feel more comfortable engaging with your video psychological session, do give feedback.

If you are particularly concerned about losing connection during your session, you should express your concerns to your therapist. By doing so, your therapist may be able to address your worries, or suggest a different type of platform that might be more suitable to you, such as telephone.

HOW WILL I FEEL COMFORTABLE TO DISCLOSE QUITE DIFFICULT THINGS?

Try to find somewhere where you can be alone, this might be a room in your house, in the garden, in the shed, in the car or anywhere else you can find where you feel comfortable talking honestly. You may consider setting up a 'code word' with your therapist to indicate you are unable to talk at that moment. For example, if someone has just come into the room or the garden etc, this will quickly communicate to your worker to change to a less sensitive topic. Hopefully this will only be momentary, but you may want to consider having a second word to indicate your need to end the call.

HOW DO I KNOW MY DATA IS GOING TO BE SAFE?

Anyone that conducts a psychological intervention will be a professional, will be bound by confidentiality ethics and will use secure online platforms to conduct your intervention. Each service varies in how they will store your data; however, all services should be complying with General Data Protection Regulation (2018). Your therapist should discuss how your data will be stored. Please ask your therapist if you have any questions or concerns regarding this.

Discuss with your therapist whether you are happy for the session to be recorded. Your session should not be recorded if you have not given your consent. You may want to know the purpose of the recording and who it will be shared with. You should also not record the session without your therapist's permission. Wearing earphones or earbuds can help the conversation to feel more confidential.

ENDING VIDEO PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

Ending your intervention can be difficult at the best of times and it is normal to have a mixture of thoughts and feelings. It might feel harder when it is remote rather than face-to-face, particularly if you have had to change to digital psychological sessions half way through. You and your therapist will begin to think about the end of your sessions together, a couple of sessions before this happens to give you both an opportunity to explore some of the thoughts and feelings you might have.

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