

Nine Tips for Getting the Most from Teletherapy* (updated)

1. The most important thing is privacy. When we meet in my office, it's my responsibility to provide a private setting. When we meet remotely, it's up to you. Please do whatever is necessary to make certain you are in a private place where you will not be overheard or interrupted.
2. Settle into a comfortable chair but don't lie down or recline. To the extent possible, try to arrange yourself as you would if we were meeting in person.
3. Leave yourself 10-15 minutes of quiet, alone time before and after sessions. You need time before sessions to set aside the activities of the day and let your thoughts transition to therapy; you need time after to reflect and absorb. If possible, take a walk by yourself or take some time to sip a coffee or tea. It is unhelpful to jump from another activity into a therapy session or start another activity immediately after. The "buffer" time before and after is important.
4. It is not necessary or desirable to keep your eyes fixed on the video screen. In face-to-face communication, people naturally make and break off eye contact as part of the ebb and flow of communication. Feel free to look at me or look away as feels natural. You may find it more conducive to turn your screen at a bit of an angle instead of facing it straight on. If you feel too close, you can reduce the size of the video window or sit further away from your screen.
5. Dress as you would if we were meeting in person. Even though I may not be able to see all of what you are wearing, you know what you are wearing, and it can affect therapy in subtle ways.
6. Try to meet from the same location when possible. The physical location is part of the experience and consistency and predictability help.
7. Keep a box of tissues nearby. If you want, pour yourself a glass of water but don't snack or eat.
8. Silence other devices and close any applications running in the background so you won't be distracted.
9. If there are problems affecting the audio or video, let me know and I'll do the same. It's better to acknowledge there's a problem than to soldier on and struggle to understand one another.

*adapted from: Russell GI & Essig T (2019). Bodies and screen relations: moving treatment from wishful thinking to informed decision-making. In Govrin & Mills (eds), Innovations in Psychoanalysis. London: Routledge