

Effective Teletherapy Sessions

Tips for Parents

We recently asked clinicians in the DC CoP to share best practices with families currently using teletherapy services for their children. Here's what they had to say.

THE BASICS

- Teletherapy offers an opportunity to continue wellness services when your child and therapist cannot meet in person.
- Teletherapy is a way to provide services to students and families through two-way, real-time, video-audio communication, such as the phone or internet.
- This is the therapist's time with your child, but be prepared to join in the conversation if needed.
- This is new for you, your child, and likely your therapist so don't worry if it doesn't go exactly as planned.
- If possible, don't allow your child to text as the only method of communicating so the therapist is able to assess your child's facial expressions, body language, mood, and emotions.



PRIVACY

- Try to find a private space where your child (and you) can speak candidly.
- If you have one, use a noise machine or other sound buffering equipment (ex. fan, humidifier, or air purifier) to buffer the noise and help keep conversations confidential.
- Let the therapist know at the start of the call who is in the room and/or can hear the content of the session.
- Ask the therapist if anyone else is joining the session (such as supervisors, psychiatrist, and/or trainees).



GETTING STARTED

- If a shorter than normal session time is easier for you, discuss this option with the therapist.
- Have your child enter sessions "in-person" via smartphone, tablet, or computer.
- Help minimize outside noises and distractions (ex. dog barking, TV or radio in the background, etc.) by creating routines with the entire household so there's quiet time during sessions.
- If using a smartphone or tablet, use a stand or use household items to prop up the device to have a head-on view.
- Allow younger children to play "let's use a smartphone or computer" for practice.



EVERY SESSION

- Be sure your child can be seen by the camera so the therapist can use eye contact and monitor body language.
- Be sure your child's computer or smart device is fully charged -- keep chargers handy. Have a phone (and the correct phone number) ready as a backup if video conferencing fails.
- Ask your child to wear wired or wireless headphones, if possible, for improved audio quality.
- To eliminate distractions, turn off all other smart devices and close any open browser windows or tabs.
- Ask in advance what materials (e.g., pen, paper, crayons) or websites will be needed.
- If using a web-based platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, ask the therapist for a tutorial.
- Let the therapist know if the sound quality is low or something was not heard or understood.



PREPARING FOR THE NEXT SESSION

- Join at a designated time during your child's therapy session to help with next steps, homework, and/or planning for the next session.
- Give therapist feedback for next time: say what you and/or your child liked or didn't like about the session.
- Ask when the next session will be, what materials will be needed, who should be in attendance, and how you can support your child between sessions.
- Ask if the therapist is doing anything on social media to engage with students in between sessions.



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