

A few practical tips and ideas to consider that may help with online psychotherapy and supervision

Consider the location of your “online office/practice” and particularly the available light sources and the background (what is visible behind the therapist on camera). A camera will often “see” light sources very differently than the eye. Experiment with natural and artificial light “on camera” to create a desired atmosphere for online work. For example, a window behind or in front of the therapist rarely works well on screen. Windows to the side may facilitate a better screen experience. Outside daylight hours, multiple artificial lights can create a more diffuse lightening effect that may suit the camera better than a single light source.

Placing the camera on eye level usually provides best results. A tripod stand for laptops (commonly used by musicians) can facilitate additional location flexibility for therapists.

Negotiate protocols in case of any technical disruptions. Establish who will re-initiate a call after a connection dropped (two people simultaneously dialling rarely works smoothly). A backup telephone with a headset should always be available. In case of a slow internet connection, it is also possible to use a telephone alongside the video for better audio quality (but turn off the online platform microphone and speakers to avoid audio “feedback”).

Some colleagues allocate time for “set-up sessions” in order to create an effective therapeutic space. For instance helping clients/patients with positioning their devices and with their choice of location, e.g. away from a usual place in which they use their computer, or in a comfortable location, or visible enough (e.g. from head to waist) to support the therapeutic endeavour and working alliance. Reportedly, this also may help clients/patients to return easily to their “own” co-created therapeutic space at the start of each session.

Some therapists create space for “transition” in the absence of the natural transition provided by travelling to the therapist’s practice. Clients/patients may for example just come out of conversations or even arguments with colleagues or family members when they enter the online therapeutic space.

Some therapists invest in music recording quality microphones (which can be found for as little as 50 Euro) to improve the audio received by clients/patients.

Secure encrypted online platforms (e.g. Zoom or Vsee) may not always remain secure or high standard in future. Keep yourself informed as new threads and problems continue to surface and previous advise or standards may change at any time.

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