Technology in the Therapeutic Frame

Getting the setting right for our clients

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The photos in this presentation are posed by models for illustrative purposes only.

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'System' Requirements

▸ A sufficiently experienced clinician

▸ Confirmed insurance cover

▸ Familiarity with the software and hardware

▸ An ability to troubleshoot tech problems

▸ Data security compliance

▸ A reliable platform and internet connection

▸ Adequate hardware

▸ A pleasant setting / background

The Choice of Software

▸ Only use GDPR compliant platforms

▸ User friendly – bandwidth required and ease of use

▸ Practitioner friendly – features and level of customer support

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Providing a Reliable Link

- ▸ Broadband speed and stability needs to meet your platform's requirements. Test connection.
- ▸ If your connection is not optimal you may need to approach your provider and perhaps hardwire your PC to the modem (which is always the preferred option) or use power link sockets.
- ▸ Consider having mobile data backup
- ▸ Provide technical guidance to your clients (e.g. links to videos)
- ▸ Monitor your email account pre-session.
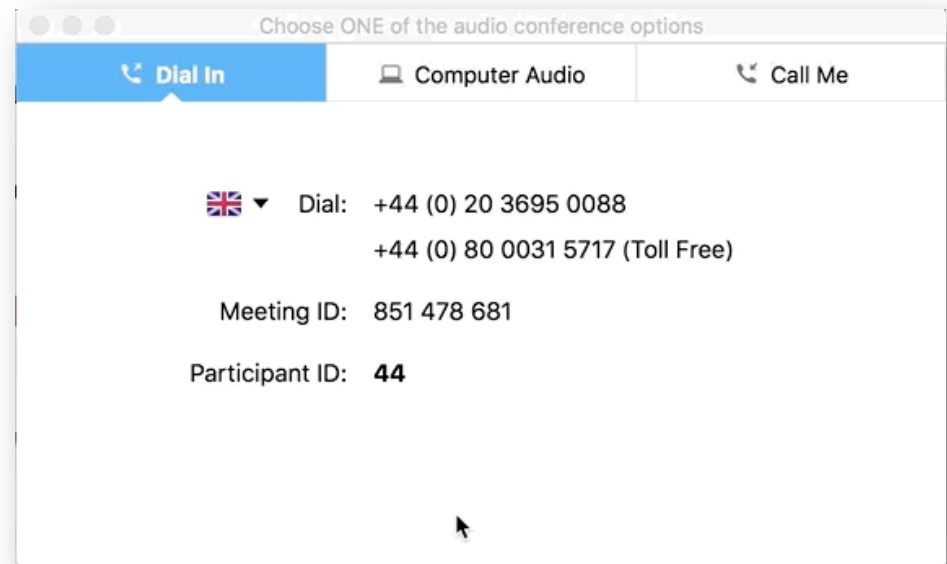
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Providing a Reliable Link

▸ Consider what you can offer if the client's connection is poor. Some software (e.g. Zoom) allows clients to transmit audio via their phone while still transmitting video via the web.

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The Choice of Hardware

- A simple mid-range laptop
- External camera
- Camera stand

(rigid or collapsible)

- Light source

(possibly packable)

A Well Prepared Clinical Space

A Well Prepared Clinical Space

▸ Ensure your room is silent and secure. Child and cat free, no ticking clock, no extractor fan noise.

▸ Block all notifications.

▸ A simple background providing good framing. A picture or plant provides a focal point. Allow some distance to the background to aid focus.
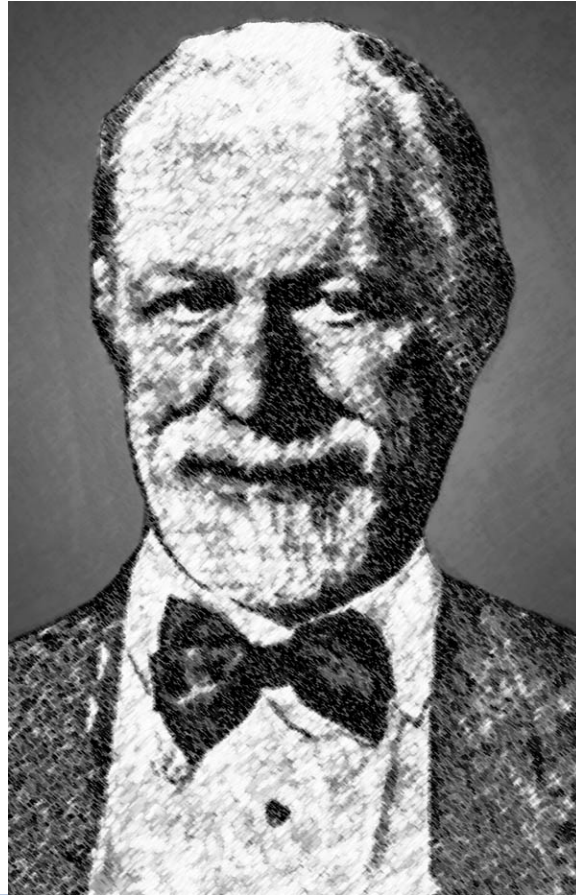
A Well Prepared Clinical Space

‣ Light

Best to face a window with a diffuser during the day. If dark, use a lamp shade or photo light in front of you. Try to avoid reflections if wearing glasses.

‣ Experiment and test audio and video test.

‣ Consider use of external camera with microphone.

‣ Setup so that: a). camera is at eye level,

b). enough and not too much of you can be seen,

c). the top of your head skims the top of the frame (consider use of webcam management software).

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A Well Prepared Clinician

- Consider visuals. If your background and shirt are the same colour you are less of a presence.
- Remember that your face may appear in higher resolution than in the consulting room!
- Ensure you are in a professional state of mind and dress.

A Well Prepared Clinician

▸ Be alert and curious.

▸ Expect the unexpected.

▸ Take time to think and consult:

"The field of teletherapy is so new that standards of practice and learning resources are still being developed. None of us has enough experience as yet to be definitive but we all feel the need to open the topic for discussion"

Scharff (2013)

On becoming an Online Patient

▸ Clients may need support to come to appreciate the requirements of online therapeutic practice even if seated on their sofa. Therapy is not the same as entertaining guests.

▸ Help clients understand that they need to locate their camera appropriately (i.e. at eye level with laptop on a table rather than their lap and not facing a window or bright light).

▸ Remind patients that you need to both hear and see them.

On becoming an Online Patient

- ‣ Make the need for privacy central to your offer.
- ‣ If you are seeing couples discuss whether they will connect from same location or different locations.
- ‣ Prepare couples as to what will happen if one of them is unable to connect. What policy will you adopt?

Planning

- Duration and frequency of sessions
- Flexibility of appointments, cancellation policy
- Payment
- Consent (use of online forms)
- Audio recording
- No shows, how long to wait?
- Cancellation policy around technology problems
- Risk management policies

Contingency Planning

‣ Internet and tech failures happen. What will you do? Call, email or wait?

‣ Have contact details at hand.

‣ Client turns up in an appropriate space.

‣ Only one partner turns up when working with a couple.

‣ Cancel, discuss, provide full session anyway?

‣ Who pays? Will you offer a replacement session?

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