**Psychology Plus Guidelines on the Safe and Effective Use of Online Therapy**

**(last updated 3rd June 2020)**

I usually prefer to see clients in person, at the very least until we both get to know each other, but COVID-19 has challenged this and many other preferences for how we live our lives! We are all having to adapt and work flexibly within Government restrictions and according to professional and organisational policies. This document provides some information and guidance on how video-conferencing technology can help us to work together, remotely in a way that feels safe, comfortable and therapeutic.

Video sessions may not work for everyone; you need to have a device that meets

the technical requirements, access to a good internet connection and the use of a quiet, private space for the 60-minute session. I tend to use Zoom or Skype but if these aren’t available to you we can consider other options such as telephone sessions.

**Preparing for Remote Therapy Sessions:**

* I prefer to use Zoom, which can be used on multiple devices, on the web or via an app. If you have not used it before, go to https://zoom.us and click on ‘Sign Up, It’s Free’ in the upper right-hand corner. Have a bit of a play around with it ahead of time to ensure that it works on your chosen device. Adjust audio and video settings to fit with the inputs/outputs you are using. If for whatever reason Zoom is not technologically compatible with your device, we can use Skype instead. Please add me ahead of your session: my username is lindsey.macleod\_1
* If we are using Zoom, I will provide you, ahead of time, with a unique zoom meeting number and password that is specific to your scheduled session. With these details, you should be able to access the session seamlessly. When you are in the ‘Zoom room’, find the audio and video settings in the lower left corner and make sure they are switched on.
* Decide where you will sit for the session. Treat this as you would any therapy session, arranging not to be disturbed during the session if you can. I will be doing the same. Let family, housemates or work colleagues know that you have a private meeting and cannot be disturbed. Disturbances also include digital disturbances - pings and interruptions from messages and emails, for example. Please disable these and close down other windows and applications/notifications so that these will stay out of your environment. Put any other devices you are not using for the Zoom call (i.e. phones) away.
* If you are comfortable using headphones with a built- in microphone (such as that come with your mobile phone), this will give you added privacy.
* Choose a comfortable seat. If possible, move away from your desk or work-station so that your therapy session doesn’t feel like another work call. If you are working online from home, then try to factor in a little extra time before and after your therapy session. Think of this as the time you would take to “travel” to and from to your therapy.
* Have a pen, paper, tissues and a glass of water at hand.
* Ensure that your device will have power through the entire 60-minute session. Ideally, you should be connected to power.
* To avoid problems associated with the waxing and waning of your wifi signal, if practical, you might want to plug your desktop straight into your router with a cable. If you are using a lap top it’s wise to close other tabs or applications and to limit the rest of the household’s use of wifi while you are on your therapy call. I appreciate this might not make you very popular, but pixilation and delays can be distracting. Do whatever you can to ensure a good connection at your end.
* Whatever device you are using, laptop or tablet/phone, ensure that it is properly situated so that I can see you well - not the ceiling, or a wall, or half your face. I’ll feed back to you if the frame needs adjustment. Try not to be backlit by a window or roof light, as I can’t then easily see your face.
* Please don’t walk around with the phone or hold it in your hand. From my vantage point it looks like you’re bouncing around, and you probably won’t be focused on the session. Ensure that your device is on a surface in front of you, stable and supported, so it doesn’t keep falling over. For a natural connection between us, it works better if you’re facing it straight on – not from above or below.
* There are added considerations when working with children and young people on-line. I am happy to discuss these directly.

**Managing Risk:**

If you terminate the connection during the session when you are severely agitated or upset or after you have said something that suggests your own safety or the safety of others is compromised, I will first attempt to re-contact you online. If reconnecting with you online is unsuccessful, I will try you by phone. If I am unable to reach you by phone, I will attempt to contact your emergency contact and/or your GP, using the information you provided in your contract. It is important therefore to inform me of any changes of numbers or other contact details.

**Please feel free to discuss any of this with me at any point in our work together. It might seem like a lot to get your head around to start with but we can work some of this out together as we go along!**