

Teletherapy Expectations and Limitations

Telehealth for behavioral health, also known teletherapy, or telemental health, has several benefits especially given the current circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. Peace of Time will continue to offer telehealth sessions and honor the time-frame given by insurance companies for complying with offering these services. Below is information regarding the limitations as well as expectations for teletherapy.

For clients

Some drawbacks include:

- **Compliance:** The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires healthcare providers, including therapists, to protect patient or client privacy. Unsecure chat and other programs may expose sensitive data, so clients should work only with therapists who encrypt data. Peace of Time Counseling, LLC uses a secure, encrypted platform for teletherapy services. Clients are responsible to check their own connection and privacy of their connection.
- **Therapy environment:** For people with little privacy at home, finding the time and space for therapy can be stressful. Treatment in the office may offer a low stress alternative to treatment at home. Providers at Peace of Time Counseling, LLC conduct sessions in secure, private locations. Clients are responsible for treating the session space as if receiving services at the office, with no distractions in a private space.
- **Technical difficulties:** Slow internet connections, glitches in video software, and communication delays can make online therapy feel more stressful and less personal. For people who lack technological proficiency or do not trust digital platforms, telehealth may not be a good option. Please discuss other options with your provider in the event that your connection effects access to services.
- **Communication:** Communicating across a digital channel can make it more difficult to read body language and other subtle cues. Virtual and phone therapy eliminate these forms of communication.

For therapists

Some challenges with virtual therapy include:

- Ethical and legal issues: Therapists must comply with state licensing board regulations in both the state where they practice and the state where they treat a client. This compliance can require significant legal knowledge, and violating the law could endanger a therapist's license.
- More client anonymity: When therapists meet with clients on a digital platform, it may be more difficult to support those who pose a danger to themselves or others. Therapists have a duty to warn the proper authorities if a client is at risk of harming themselves or others, and client anonymity can make this more difficult, potentially interfering with the therapist's ethical obligations.
- Communication barriers: It can take longer to establish a strong rapport with clients over digital networks. Some therapists may struggle to read body language and other subtle forms of communication, making it more difficult to offer high quality treatment. Some treatment modalities can be less effective due to communication barriers as well.

Expectations:

- Teletherapy is conducted as though it is an in-office session. All Peace of Time office policies are still in effect. Please review office policies that all clients signed upon initial services with Peace of Time.
- During a teletherapy session, both client and therapist locations shall be considered a patient/therapy room regardless of a room's intended use. Providers and clients will ensure privacy of their respective space so clinical discussion cannot be overheard by others outside of the room where the service is provided. To the extent possible, the client and provider cameras should be placed at the same elevation as the eyes with the face clearly visible to the other person.
- Office policies shall remain in place whether services are rendered virtually or in office, including the provider's right to refuse services, cancellation, and payment policies according to the established office policies.