

# Going Virtual: Tips for Clients Accessing Virtual Therapy Services

The following information was collected from Occupational Therapists in Canada, the USA, and the UK. This resource is designed to help clients adjust to the rapid shift of healthcare services to a virtual platform during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

### THE TECHNOLOGY

- **Be prepared!**
- Test your technology ahead of time
- Give yourself **extra time** to set up before your appointment
- Check your **WiFi** connection (you can test your speed at *fast.com*)
- Practice positioning your camera
- Have a **charging cord** available
- If you have a tablet, consider using it!
  - The screen is larger than a phone and it is more portable than a laptop
- Plan to have your **camera on**, if possible. It helps with communication with your clinician, as well as their ability to make physical observations
- If you have **headphones**, it's encouraged that you use them to maintain privacy

### THE ENVIRONMENT

- Find a **private, quiet place** with minimal distractions and good lighting
  - Ideally, **indoors** on a chair with a table/surface in front of you
  - Avoid sitting in front of windows, as this may create problems with lighting
- Ask your therapist what **materials** you should have ready before the appointment
- Have a **notepad** handy to write thoughts, questions or general notes
- You can also ask your clinician to email you a summary of the appointment afterwards
- **Have someone with you, if possible!** This can be very helpful, especially for the initial assessment (*see Caregiver box below*)

### YOU

- Treat it like an in-person session:
  - Designate the time and be prepared
  - Be set up and ready in advance
  - Let others in your household know you are busy
- Think about your **priorities and goals** for the session
- Prepare **specific questions** you would like to ask your clinician
- Understand that extra sessions may be needed to see progress without hands-on work
- Consider writing **key points or questions** you want to bring up during the meeting on a list
- **Be on time!** Choose an appointment time when you have good energy, less chance for distraction, and sufficient time to set up before your appointment
  - A 30 minute session where you are fully focused without distractions is better than an hour session where you are not fully engaged!
- Eat and drink water prior to your appointment



## YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

- Ask about **consent**, including the potential risks and benefits associated with virtual sessions
- Discuss and establish **expectations and boundaries** for both you and the clinician
- If you are not comfortable with the virtual session, speak up. It's okay to ask for alternate ways of meeting (e.g. telephone)
- Let the therapist know what you want to work on
- Understand that treatment may look different from in-person therapy, and we may not be able to work on the same goals in the same ways
- **Be patient and flexible!**

- **Provide feedback**
  - Communicate with your healthcare provider regarding what is working well, what is not, and any suggestions you have for future sessions
- Take a break from the screen if you need one
  - **Movement-based breaks** are important - consider walking around, or something similar to get moving
- Don't be afraid to **ask questions**, or to ask your clinician to repeat or demonstrate something!
- Feel free to **take notes** to help you remember what you worked on and/or ask your clinician to send you a session summary
- **Expect issues with technology**, they happen!
- **Be creative**
  - Don't feel restrained to use the specific item the clinician suggests - use what's accessible to you
- Remember, this is a learning curve for everyone, so don't worry if you feel like you aren't doing everything right
  - Be patient with your clinicians, they're learning too!
- Be open to **trying new things** and have fun!

## TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS



## PREPARING FOR APPOINTMENTS

- Review the tips above (preparing the technology, the environment and the client)
- Ask any questions you have when consenting to virtual practice
- Be extra **present and ready to engage** during the session
- **Don't expect perfection** - things may not run as planned and that is okay
- **Communication is key!** Let the clinician know what you need before each session

## SELF CARE

- Remember to **take care of yourself** too
- Ask for a break if you need it during the session
- Ask the clinician for **caregiver support resources**
- Join caregiver support groups in the virtual community (for example, on Facebook)
- Be aware of your own mental health. If you feel overwhelmed, share that with the clinician and **seek support** - you are not alone

## DURING THE APPOINTMENTS

- **Be there to support, not take over**
- Ask questions, provide feedback and **share ideas!**
- Make sure you are **comfortable with what is expected of you**
- Make sure you understand the reasoning behind what the clinician is doing. This will help you facilitate the activities for the client later, when the clinician is not present
- **Be open to new things**, patient and flexible