



MELBOURNE
INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Informed Consent for Telepsychology

This form contains important information on doing psychotherapy using the phone or the Internet. Please read it carefully and let me know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Benefits and Risks of Telepsychology

Telepsychology refers to the provision of psychotherapy services via the Internet or telephone. One of the benefits of telepsychology is that the client and clinician can engage in psychotherapy without being in the same physical location. This can be helpful in ensuring continuity of care if the client or clinician becomes ill, moves to a different location or is otherwise unable to continue to meet in person. However, it requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits to telepsychology, there are some risks as well. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because telepsychology sessions take place outside of the therapist's office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. On my end I will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. But it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of our session on your cell phone or other device. You should participate in therapy only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear the conversation.
- Issues related to technology. There are many ways that technology issues might impact telepsychology. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to our private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, I will not engage in telepsychology with clients who are currently in a crisis situation. Before engaging in telepsychology, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our telepsychology work.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that telepsychology is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, some therapists believe that something is lost by not

being in the same room. For example, there is debate about a therapist's ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely.

Electronic Communications

Telepsychology service is available to you using your cell phone, or if you prefer videoconferencing using a HIPPA-compliant videoconferencing platform on your personal computer or tablet. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telepsychology.

For communication between sessions, I only use email and text messaging with your permission and only for administrative purposes. This means that email exchanges and text messages to me should be limited to administrative matters such as setting and changing appointments, billing matters, and other related issues. I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email or text. Therefore, I will not discuss any clinical information by email or text and prefer that you do not either. Also, these methods **should not** be used if there is an emergency.

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at your regularly scheduled sessions. But if an urgent issue arises, you should feel free to attempt to reach me on my cell phone which I have previously provided to you. I will try to return your call within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call.

Confidentiality

I am legally and ethically responsible to protect all communications that are a part of our telepsychology. However, the nature of this technology is such that I cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. I will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up systems to help keep your information private, but there is a risk that our electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of our communications (for example, only using secure networks for telepsychology sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telepsychology).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that I outlined in my Informed Consent for Outpatient Therapy still apply in telepsychology. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Telepsychology

From time to time, we may schedule in-person sessions to "check-in" with one another. I will let you know if I decide that telepsychology is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. We will discuss options of engaging in in-person counseling or referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services.

Emergencies and Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting telepsychology than in traditional in-person therapy. To address some of these difficulties, we will create an emergency plan before engaging in telepsychology. I will ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and who I will contact in the event of a crisis or emergency. I will ask that you sign a separate authorization form allowing me to contact this person as needed.

If the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, and you are having an emergency, do not call me back; instead, call 911, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK), or go to your nearest emergency room. Call me back after you have called or obtained emergency services.

If the session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and I will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the telepsychology platform on which we agreed to conduct therapy. If you do not receive a call back within two (2) minutes, then call me on my office phone or cell phone. If there is a technological failure and we are unable to resume the connection, you will only be charged the prorated amount of actual session time.

Fees

The same fee rates will apply for telepsychology as apply for in-person psychotherapy. However, insurance providers may not cover sessions that are conducted via telecommunication. If your insurance provider does not cover telepsychology, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company prior to our engaging in telepsychology to ensure these sessions will be covered.

Records

Telepsychology sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by mutual consent. I will maintain a record of our session in the same way I maintain records of in-person sessions in accordance with my policies.

Informed Consent

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent that we agreed to at the outset of our clinical work and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement. Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

Client

Date

Therapist

Date