

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELEPSYCHOLOGY

This Informed Consent for Telepsychology contains important information about doing psychotherapy and assessments using the phone or the Internet. Please read this 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 providing psychological services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telepsychology is that the client and clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location, reducing the need for travel. This can be helpful in ensuring continuity of care if the client or clinician moves to a different location, takes an extended vacation, or is otherwise unable to continue to meet in person. It is also more convenient and takes less time. Telepsychology, however, requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telepsychology, there are some differences between in-person psychological services and telepsychology, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because telepsychology sessions take place outside of the psychologist's private 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 creates a quiet, distraction-free and safe space for us to work together. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of our session on your cell phone or other device. You should participate only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot distract you or 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. The first minutes of our session will be spent ensuring an open channel of communication.
- Crisis management and intervention. 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 treatment and evaluation. However, some psychologists believe that something is lost by not being in the same room. For example, there is debate about a psychologist's ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely. Neuropsychological assessments conducted via teleconference are limited, since some cognitive abilities (motor skills, executive function, visual-constructional skills) cannot be assessed as comprehensively as during a face-to-face assessment. These limitations will be discussed prior to initiating the assessment and during the feedback session. You will be given the option to participate in a limited evaluation or to defer all or part of the assessment until it is feasible to conduct it face-to-face.

Electronic Communications

You may have to have certain computer or cell phone systems to use telepsychology services. 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 communication and text messaging with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. This means that email exchanges and text messages with my office should be limited to administrative matters. This includes things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters, and other related issues. You should be aware that 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, I do not regularly check my email or texts, nor do I respond immediately, so 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 by phone. 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. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact in my absence if necessary.

Confidentiality

I have a legal and ethical responsibility to make my best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telepsychology. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that I cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. In order to lower the risk of others accessing our session, we will conduct our work using the professional version of Zoom, a HIPAA-compliant video-conferencing service used by large medical systems. 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 the Informed Consent documents that you reviewed and signed when we started working together still apply in telepsychology. Please let me know if you have any questions about matters of confidentiality.

Emergencies and Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting telepsychology than in traditional in-person environments. To address some of these difficulties, we will create an emergency plan before engaging in telepsychology services. 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 to assist in addressing the situation. Your signature below authorizes me to contact the emergency contact person listed at the end of this document as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

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, 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, wait two (2) minutes, restart the telepsychology platform on which we agreed to conduct the work and sign back into the meeting. If you cannot do so, then call me at 585-831-1461.

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 services. However, insurance or other managed care providers may not cover sessions that are conducted via telecommunication. If your insurance, HMO, third-party payor, or other managed care provider does not cover electronic sessions, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee. Please contact your insurance company prior to our engaging in telepsychology sessions in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered.

Records

The telepsychology session will be recorded directly onto my computer only, in order to ensure accurate analysis and understanding of our interactions. These recordings will be maintained on an encrypted, external hard drive that will be stored in a safe in my office and will never be connected to the internet. I have a professional ethical obligation to ensure the security of any test materials that may be presented to you during an assessment. **By signing below, you agree not to record any aspect of the session using any electronic or other means.** I will also maintain a written 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 you have previously signed and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement. Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions.

Client

Date

Emergency Contact and Phone

Psychologist

Date