

LIFE FORCE PSYCHOLOGY

Guidance for Remote Psychotherapy Sessions

Technology has moved on considerably since the invention of talking therapies, and while psychotherapy was traditionally conducted exclusively face to face, a variety of modalities is now possible. I usually see clients in person, but occasionally there are health or travel issues, or someone is away but still wants a session. In these cases, remote sessions may be necessary or preferred. This document provides information that may help you decide about or prepare for a remote psychotherapy session.

In my experience, and with today's web conferencing technology, remote sessions work exceptionally well. Based on my own experience and client feedback, if we can follow the guidelines set out below, it usually results in a session that feels more or less equivalent to a face-to-face session.

Video sessions may not work for everyone; you need to have a device that meets the technical requirements and must be able to access a private space for the 50-minute session.

Preparing for Remote Psychotherapy Sessions

So that we can have a session that feels maximally natural, please prepare the following setup *in advance*.

- 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: you can search 'hi@lifeforcepsychology.com' and please inform me that you will be using Skype and not Zoom.
- Ahead of the session, I will provide you with a link that is specific to your scheduled session. *You will have a new link for each session.* Using this link, you should be able to access the session seamlessly. I will set the meeting so that your audio and video should be automatically on when you join, but again, you may need to adjust settings on your end. When you are in the 'Zoom room', find the audio and video settings in the lower left corner.
- Decide where you will sit for the session. Treat this as you would any psychotherapy 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.

LIFE FORCE PSYCHOLOGY

Guidance for Remote Psychotherapy Sessions

- 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.
- Ensure that your device will have power through the entire 50-minute session. Ideally, you should be connected to power.
- I prefer to be hard-wired when I have Zoom calls so that I do not fall victim to the vicissitudes of Wi-Fi - I plug my desktop straight into my router with a cable. When there are no pixilation problems, lags or other digital disturbances due to weak signal, remote psychotherapy can be nearly indistinguishable from face to face! When it's bad, it can be very distracting. Do whatever you can to ensure good connection on 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. I try to organise my space so that when I am doing a Zoom session, people see me sitting my chair, pretty much as they would see me in person. If possible, 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 won't be optimally 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.

Managing Risk

To manage any risk that might arise in remote sessions, I follow a 'distress protocol', as follows. These are unusual circumstances and unlikely to occur, but it is important to let you know what steps I take to try and ensure your safety when I am conducting remote sessions and not right there with you.

If there have been any changes to your address, GP, or emergency contact, please let me know.

- Prior to your appointment I may ask whether you will be speaking from your home address as recorded on your Personal Information Sheet, or from some other location. I may verify this information at the start of the session.
- If you terminate the connection during the session, and if this happens when you are severely agitated or upset or after you have made statements indicating compromised safety, I will first attempt to re-contact you online.
- If reconnecting with you online is unsuccessful, I will try you by phone.

LIFE FORCE PSYCHOLOGY

Guidance for Remote Psychotherapy Sessions

- If I am unable to reach you by phone, and if the broken contact occurred after you had made statements indicating that your safety or the safety of others might be compromised – or if you were so severely agitated or emotional that I felt significantly concerned for your safety or the safety of others - I will attempt to contact your emergency contact and/or your GP, using information as provided on your Personal Information Sheet. If this is unsuccessful and I am significantly concerned, I may need to contact emergency services.

Questions?

If you have further questions about remote psychotherapy, please contact me. I am happy to discuss.