RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONLINE INTERVENTION DELIVERY

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS ON THE SPECTRUM

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, therapists have had to transition their services online and adapt interventions for their clients on the autism spectrum. Below are some tips to remember and incorporate before, during and after sessions that can promote positive outcomes

BEFORE SESSIONS

SETTING UP



- Free your background from any personal items

→ **Try using a virtual background or blur effect!**



- Consider how you want to present yourself during the pandemic

→ **What view of your room do you want your client to have**

→ **How much you want to share about yourself**



- Use earphones for privacy

ORIENTATION



- Ensure that your client(s) is in a safe and private space in their home



- Provide a program overview

→ **Review attendance policies**

→ **Set expectations for participation**

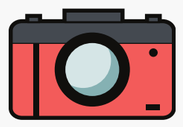
With Children



Play a brief game to acquaint them with online interaction (for example, Kahoot quizzes)

SETTING UP

- Sit back at a distance from your camera



← **Mimic the view your client(s) would have of you in person**

Viewing a face up close may be uncomfortable for some clients



- Create unique and password-protected meeting links for each session



A WORD ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

Give your client(s) detailed instructions for technology use and discuss preferred methods and frequency of communication

Zoom Tutorials →

Click Here!

ORIENTATION

- Plan in advance for technological disruptions



Have a backup phone number on hand in case you get disconnected

- Be patient



← **Provide ample guidance and reassurance about technology use**

DURING SESSIONS

BUILDING RAPPORT

- Attend to non-verbal cues throughout the session
  - → **Tone of voice**
  - → **Changes in energy level**

- Individualize sessions for each client
  - → **Talk about their interests**
  - → **Reference things they have previously mentioned**
  - → **Allow screen-sharing**

With Children

Use themed virtual backgrounds and/or personal items that they like (for example, pets, toys, games)

BUILDING RAPPORT

- Understand and accommodate your clients' communication needs

Allow them to turn off their video, walk around, or stim

With Children

Let them take the lead and respond accordingly

- Consider incorporating check-ins

You can create a fun scale and ask your client(s) to rate how they are feeling that day

PREVENTING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS

- Offer frequent breaks and the freedom to have a "**safe word**" for when the client wants a break
- Allow your client to engage in self-regulatory behaviours (such as stimming)
- Offer verbal praise and other incentives for completing tasks

MAINTAINING THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE

- Show flexibility in session
  - → **Reschedule**
  - → **Reorder activities**
  - → **Shorten sessions**
  - → **Assign homework**

Some clients may be spending most of their day online and view therapy as added screen time

With Children

Support parents in a co-facilitation role to help their child re-focus and monitor challenging behaviours

MAINTAINING THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE

- Maintain structure and consistency

Weekly email reminders

Regular debrief sessions

Keep within agreed-upon start and end times

- Incorporate visual cues when possible

Images/videos to aid explanations

Objects to accompany verbal demonstrations

Visual timers, schedules and/or calendars

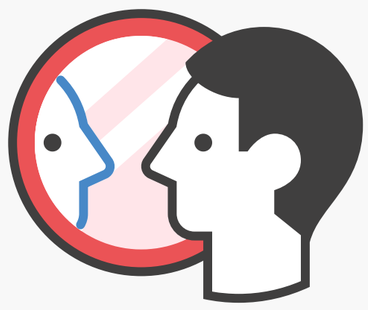
AFTER SESSIONS

REFLECTION



If applicable, offer and/or receive feedback from your client(s) regarding their experience with online therapy

REFLECTION



Reflect on what worked and what did not

- **Think about the therapy itself**
- **Think about online delivery specifically**
- **What changes can you make?**

EVALUATION



Send out exit surveys after program completion to evaluate the experiences and needs of your clientele

SOURCE:

Lee, V., Roudbarani, F., Tablon Modica, P., Pouyandeh, A., and Weiss, J.A. (Online First) Adaptation of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Autistic Children During the Pandemic: A Mixed-Methods Program Evaluation. *Evidence-Based Practice in Child and Adolescent Mental Health.*

Thank you to the Sinneave Family Foundation whose staff consulted with us on this knowledge translation initiative and who supported this work.

Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health Lab

at York University