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### Preparing for Telehealth Sessions

Telehealth is a great way to receive professional services at the convenience from where you are without traveling anywhere. Once you've taken care of practicalities such as scheduling, filling out forms, and making payment arrangements with your provider there may be a few more things to do to help your sessions go smoothly.

Try your best to recreate the experience of going to a professional counseling office. Dress and present yourself appropriately. Carve out the time out of your day to promote the mindset for a therapeutic experience. Get ready several minutes before the session to help transition and settle in on time. Don't forget to set a reminder and include any relevant information such as the link to the video chat. Consider completing the "Session Orientation" form beforehand, found at the downloads tab. Bring your therapy journal and any notes or homework from the last session.

Choose or create a non-public space that is congruent for counseling. Use proper lighting and put away personal items that you don't want to be seen on screen. Consider having nearby drinking water, tissues, and any comforts that are grounding such as a favorite blanket. This is especially important if you are working on emotionally difficult issues.

Reduce distractions including turning off music and other devices and closing windows and doors. Minimize other screens on your device and disable any notifications. Don't eat, drive, or engage in other activities that take away your attention. Prepare pets and children ahead of time and tell others nearby to respect your need for quiet and privacy. Some people use a sign on their door. If you're concerned, consider a towel at the door crack and music or white noise outside of your space where others may be.

Be sure to test your device and video chat app before the first appointment. Check settings from time to time to optimize the technology being used. Be sure you have plenty of bandwidth and nothing else is currently taking it away. Consider using headphones or earbuds. Check to ensure payments are being processed correctly.

Know who is nearby to call if you begin to feel overwhelmed and need see someone in person, whether it's a friend or family member or a drop-in mental health or medical service. Have your picture ID available and keep in mind any codewords established to indicate your identity or to communicate lack of privacy. If video becomes impossible during session be prepared to take a phone call to continue services.

With telehealth, you can find your own way to create a space that feels safe, comfortable, and secure; qualities you would hope from a professional counseling office. A big advantage is that you get to accommodate to your specific, unique needs and make changes that suit you as needed! If you have any questions, ideas, or concerns please communicate with your provider.