

Informed Consent for Telepsychology

Benefits and Risks of Telepsychology

Telepsychology refers to providing psychotherapy 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. This can be helpful in ensuring continuity of care if either the client or clinician is 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 psychotherapy and telepsychology, as well as some risks. For example:

- **Risks to confidentiality.** Because telepsychology sessions take place outside of the therapist'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 is also important for you to protect the privacy of our session on your cell phone or other device.
- **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.
- **Crisis management and intervention.** Usually, I will not engage in telepsychology with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support 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 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

We can have video sessions using Doxy.me or we can use the telephone. If you chose to do our session by video, please click on the link below just before our appointment time and you will be taken to my virtual “waiting room”. When I see you are there I will connect and start our session. <https://doxy.me/drtanco>

If you would prefer to have our session by telephone, I will telephone you at the scheduled time. Please advise me as to the best number to call.

For communication between sessions, I only use email communication with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. This means that email exchanges should be limited to administrative matters such as appointment scheduling and billing matters. You should be aware that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email. Therefore, I will not discuss clinical information by email and prefer that you do not either. Email 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, please phone me at 604 220-8183. 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.

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. I will use updated encryption methods, firewalls, etc. 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 general therapy Consent Form still apply in

telepsychology. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

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 services. At the end of this consent I will ask you to provide me with 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. 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 and then reconnect and I will re-contact you via the telepsychology platform on which we agreed to conduct therapy. Alternatively, I will try to call you on your phone number on file.

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 or third-party payor does not cover electronic psychotherapy sessions, you will be solely responsible for the entire fee of the session. Please contact your insurance company prior to our engaging in telepsychology sessions in order to determine whether these sessions will be covered. Payments are to be made via e-transfer to drstanco@shaw.ca (no security question is required) prior to the start of our session and I will email you a receipt.

Records

The 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 Consent Form that we agreed to at the outset of our clinical work together and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement. Your provision of an emergency contact Person and their number stands as your consent that I may contact them in the case of an emergency.

Emergency Contact

Phone Number

Provision of your name and signature below indicate that you understand and agree to the terms and conditions set out in this Informed Telepsychology Consent Form.

Name

Signature

Date