

More Issues with Video Conferencing / TeleDBT

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Are old clients making contact?

Mine are. I am offering them a single video session to create a Cope Ahead plan for the next few weeks. The only caveat is that they can't be in a life-threatening crisis. There is a dialectical tension between being helpful and deciding that a person needs to return to treatment. I am trying to continue to keep people out of treatment.

Getting Familiar with the Office/and their Environment

When I start with new clients, I "show" them around my office. I pan the camera around to show them where they would be, if they were in a live session. If you client has been to your office, that's not needed. What I do like is to have them show me where they are during sessions. I just look at the environment, but I am also scanning for ways that they can distract/avoid during session, i.e., things on their desk that they can play with, televisions.

It's helpful to orient your client to "normal" behaviors that occur online.

Like conference calls, people often start talking at the same time. there aren't as many interpersonal cues. If that happens, it's not problematic. We just ask one person to go first.

There is a good mindfulness practice to normalize this. Have the group count from 1-10. There is no order of whom says the next number. Someone calls out "1" and someone else says "2", etc. If two people call a number at the same time, we start over at 1. When (if) we get to 10, we start over. There will be some people who never say a number because they are anxious or have shame. Everyone has to say a number. It's a good practice online to get people used to talking online and not being attached or judgmental if multiple people talk at once.

Some people talk more, and others talk less. To keep people involved, we say their names and call on people randomly more than in person. This is not "calling people out" but keeping people involved.

In Vivo Exposure

Because of shame and fear much of the in vivo hierarchies for our clients are not available, e.g. returning an entrée at a restaurant or going to a mall. I am having clients do imaginal exposure to those events and telling them that we will probably need to return to the in vivo hierarchy after the crisis. I can imagine that some people will habituate, and some will not.

How to Run Mindfulness in Group

Start with easy practices, e.g. observing and describing
Don't be afraid to do participation practices like standing up and singing/dancing
The pressure to do "fun" mindfulness practices to keep people involved

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or additional needs.

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