

## **Online therapy (Teletherapy): What, how, why?**

In this digital age, there have been lots of advances in technology and the therapy world is no exception. Beyond advances to technology we often use in sessions, such as communication devices, technology now allows us to deliver therapy online in an engaging and interactive format. Most importantly during this time, it allows for the continuation of therapy in safe manner during these uncertain times and is social distancing approved!

You may be wondering if teletherapy really works or if it could ever be suitable for your child. Rest assured, teletherapy has been used for many years in the allied health fields. In fact, there are now providers who exclusively offer teletherapy and don't have an actual clinic and you never meet the clinician in person. At Young Allied, we've previously used teletherapy to connect with clients in remote locations, however, there is no reason we can't use this platform to connect with our local clients. There is an increasing body of evidence that teletherapy can be just as effective as 'in person' therapy. So just because the world needs to shut down during this pandemic doesn't mean your child will miss out of therapy and lose the valuable progress they've made.

### **What is teletherapy?**

- Therapy delivered through online technology. At Young Allied, we use 'Zoom'.
- Teletherapy can be used to work on many therapeutic goals, such as speech, communication, self-care and daily living skills, parent training, monitoring home programs.

### **Benefits of teletherapy:**

- Allows for continuity of therapy
  - Your child doesn't need to miss out, even if we can't open our physical building!
  - There is no knowing how long therapy may be affected for from the COVID-19 pandemic. There needs to be an alternative to just stopping therapy progress for 6 months and losing your child's valuable progress.
- Promotes safety and reduces risk of transmission of germs
  - Allows therapy to continue even in self-isolation and quarantine
- No travel required
  - Cuts down on time required as there's no driving to and from the clinic. No need to worry about what snacks and toys to pack, just turn on the computer or iPad and you're all set.

- The activities can be completed using objects and items from the child’s natural environment – this makes therapy super functional.
- The parent or caregiver gets to learn a lot!
  - In face-to-face therapy, often the therapist is the one ‘doing’ the therapy, and the parent may join in or sit back and watch. With telehealth, the therapist supports the parents like a coach – it can be the parents who are physically doing the therapy while the therapist provides real-time feedback, problem solving, and direction. This allows your therapist to help you get better at helping your child!
- Siblings? No worries!
  - It’s much easier to occupy siblings for a telehealth session in their own home, rather than getting them all to attend a clinic and sit quietly in a wait room.
- Screen time? Yes please!
  - Lots of kids find screen time and technology really reinforcing in itself and may be highly motivated to attend to teletherapy.

### **What to expect in a teletherapy session?**

In many ways, it’s just the same as any regular therapy session except the clinician is on a screen instead of in the room.

- Your therapist will gather information about your child by asking questions, getting feedback, and observing your child
- Your therapist will use their clinical reasoning skills to formulate a session and therapy plan tailored to your child’s needs
- Your child’s therapist will engage with your child using interactive games, lots of praise and reinforcement, and regular therapy activities.
- Your child’s therapist will give you feedback about your child’s performance and provide feedback on how to correct any areas of difficulty
- Your therapist may set homework for you to complete before the next session

### **How?**

You will be sent an email link to your child’s scheduled ‘Zoom’ appointment. We recommend you click on the link ahead of time (at least 30 mins prior to appointment) to make sure it will work properly on your end. For the first time you use Zoom, there is a quick download. Once you have the program open, you can test your sound and video. Please see the ‘Steps to Zoom Guide’.

### **Give it a try!**

In response to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the sudden need to swap to telehealth, we understand that telehealth may not be a mode of therapy previously considered by many clients. We encourage families who are interested to just have a go, you might be pleasantly surprised!