



Rapha Counseling

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TELETHERAPY

This Informed Consent for Teletherapy contains important information focusing on doing mental health counseling using the phone or the Internet. Please read this carefully and let me know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Benefits and Risks of Teletherapy

Teletherapy refers to providing mental health counseling services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of teletherapy 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 the client or clinician moves to a different location, takes an extended vacation, or is otherwise unable to continue to meet in person. It is also more convenient and takes less time. Teletherapy, however, requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of teletherapy, there are some differences between in-person mental health counseling, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because teletherapy 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. You should participate in therapy only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear the conversation unless you allow them to be a part of your session.
- Issues related to technology. There are many ways that technology issues might impact teletherapy. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to our private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, I will not engage in teletherapy with clients who are currently in a crisis requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in teletherapy, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our teletherapy work.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that teletherapy is about as effective as in-person teletherapy. 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

Rapha Counseling uses a software Doxyme to provide teletherapy services. You need to use a computer or cell phone that has camera capabilities to engage in teletherapy services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in teletherapy.



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For communication between sessions, I only use email or phone for communication. This includes things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters, and other related issues. You should be aware that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email or text. Therefore, I will not discuss any clinical information by email or text and prefer that you do not either. Please **do not** use email communication if there is an emergency. Immediately call 911.

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at your regularly scheduled sessions. But if an urgent issue arises, you should feel free to attempt to reach me by phone or email. I will try to return your call or email 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 and ask for the mental health provider on call. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, you may call my office and leave a message. I will try to reach out to you and if I am not able to, then I will ask one of our counselors at Rapha Counseling to reach out to you.

Confidentiality

I have a legal and ethical responsibility to make my best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our teletherapy. 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 try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up systems 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 teletherapy sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for teletherapy).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that I outlined in my Informed Consent in the Rapha Counseling Intake packet still apply in teletherapy. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Teletherapy

From time to time, we may schedule in-person sessions to “check-in” with one another when possible. I will let you know if I decide that teletherapy is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. We will discuss options of engaging in in-person counseling or referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services.

Emergencies and Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting teletherapy than in traditional in-person therapy. To address some of these difficulties, we will create an emergency plan before engaging in teletherapy services. I will ask you to identify 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. I will ask that you sign a separate authorization form allowing me to contact your emergency contact person as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

