



3900 WEST BROWN DEER ROAD, SUITE 200
BROWN DEER, WI 53209
PHONE: 414.540.2170 • FAX: 414.540.2171
WWW.SHOREHAVENBHI.COM

Be Prepared for Teletherapy

Your doctors, therapists, and other medical helpers want you to get the most from your video-conference. Preparing for the conference will help make your psychotherapy more effective.

For the near future, the majority of outpatient mental health and substance abuse therapy is provided mostly by video conference. In mental health, we call that *telehealth or teletherapy*. For solving personal or family problems, **research shows most people find this service to be equally effective with in-person interviews**. When it comes to how teletherapy impacts clients, **research studies show clients recover equally well by in-person care or video conferencing**.

Video has some advantages. If you have a laptop computer, tablet (like an iPad), or smart phone, tele-therapy is convenient. Therapists, who are generally busy and tightly scheduled, may have more flexibility as they do not have to take time out to commute. Instead of confining themselves to the hours they are at the office, they may be able to meet outside those hours.

Psychotherapy is a well-researched, very effective process for helping with mental health symptoms and emotional or behavioral problems. It is not a one-time intervention the way a doctor visit may be. Rather, depending upon the problem, four times out of five it is a course of 8-24 visits that may run from three months to a year. For long-standing or complex problems, there may be no time limit.

Psychotherapy is designed to apply the principles of psychology to helping people make changes in their lives. Those changes will help resolve emotional symptoms, such as panic attacks, phobias, depression, family problems, couples' problems, excessive alcohol use, substance use, and many other challenges.



Therapy is confidential. That level of privacy is designed to make it safe to share your innermost thoughts, emotions, and experiences. There are very few situations in which therapists can reveal what you discussed. The therapist will explain at the first meeting or will send you a written document that explains any limitations on privacy. We understand people are occasionally reluctant to share family problems outside the family. Confidentiality helps make it safe to share.

Therapists in Wisconsin are required to have licenses. The minimum for that is a Master's degree – four years of college and two years of graduate school. Then the therapist takes another two years of supervised training. At this time, we have four major groups of therapists, Clinical Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists, Professional Counselors, and Psychologists. The

training for these professions contains similar classroom work and over 3600 hours of supervised professional practice.

Let's make sure you get the most out of your tele-therapy.

The Mechanics of a Tele-Therapy Session

1. Download the App. First, make sure your technology is working. You can set up a session easily by downloading a free app, such as Zoom, creating a password for it, and setting up a meeting. *You can use a laptop computer, a desk top with an attached camera, a tablet, or a smart phone.* The Zoom.com site has some tutorial information and you can find a number of brief instructional videos on YouTube. You will find it to be very easy and intuitive.
2. Practice. To practice using video conferencing, try it with a friend. Any of the apps or platforms allow you to email an invitation containing a meeting code. Some apps also allow you to have a passcode to make the meeting more secure. Note that few complaints about security have been publicized and the software is updated regularly to increase security. Send the meeting invitation to a friend or relative and make sure your device, camera, microphone, and speakers are working.
3. Set Up a Space.
 - Determine the setting for your meeting. Confidentiality and privacy are important to therapy. See if you can set up in a private place.
 - Your space should be a quiet one – no TV or radio in the background. Noises will be picked up by the mic and will be distracting.
 - it is best to sit at a table or desk. The therapist will likely prefer you not be on your bed. Sit at a ready-to-get-down-to-work desk or table setting. If you will be using a phone or tablet, set that device on the table with some books that enable you to have it propped up. Whatever you use, the camera should be as close to eye level as possible. That will make for a more realistic session in which you can make eye contact with the therapist.
 - A neutral backdrop helps. Bright windows should be in front of you rather than behind you. Bright lights also should be more to the front and not behind you. Dress as if you were attending a session in person. Now you are ready to have a valuable visit with a professional.
 - Ear buds, a Bluetooth ear piece, or headphones are helpful. While not necessary unless your situation lacks privacy, headphones help make the sound better.



4. Ready for the Session. The therapist will send you an email with an invitation to the meeting. Once you have the equipment working, have that email handy. You can click on the link a few minutes before the appointed time. That's similar to walking into the waiting room at the office a few minutes before your session. Click the link and make sure your video and microphone are on. Sometimes, when you join a meeting, those may need to be activated. An icon for a microphone and an icon for video will be on the screen and you may have to click on them. Make sure you have the sound turned up so you can hear the therapist.

Glitches! Even at the best, sometimes the Internet becomes slow, the screen freezes for a few moments, or the connection is lost. So that you can continue the discussion while problem solving the glitch, you and the therapist should have direct phone numbers handy.

The Process of Tele-Therapy

Be Prepared for Therapy

1. Since the object is to help you change, grow, resolve mental health symptoms, and to be more functional in your life, you want the session to be as close to a regular session as it can be.
2. If this is the first session, make sure you have a list of your medications or have the bottles with you. The therapist will want to write down your medications and dosages. The therapist will also want to know any medical conditions you may have. The therapist will ask if you have had any therapy in the past, where it was, why you went, and how it helped. Try to have that information with you.



3. Have the name, address, and telephone of your primary doctor and your psychiatrist, if you have one. The name and address of a previous therapist will also come in handy. The therapy may benefit by communication between the therapist and your psychiatrist. Therapists often write for past records.
4. The therapist may have sent you some forms. Make sure those are complete and ready to return to the therapist. These consent forms are legally required in order to proceed.

Understand What the Therapist is Asking

5. Over the years, we have learned the kinds of information that will help us understand why you are having problems. So, the therapist will ask you about the specific symptoms you are having, what has changed in your life in the last 6-12 months, what happened most recently that propelled you to seek help, how long your symptoms have been affecting you, and many other questions related to your mental health.
6. The therapist will also work to define from one to five goals for your therapy. A goal is the desired outcome of your work together. Essentially, we want to know how you want things to be different, what changes you want to see, and how you want to feel at the end of the work.
7. If this is not the first visit, the therapist will ask how you feel you are progressing on the goals of your therapy, any successes during the week, and any challenges that have come up.

Therapy is Effective, But Takes Time

8. We should let you know that about 50% of people feel a lot better in 8-10 sessions of 40-60 minutes over 6-12 weeks. Another 30-35% feel a lot better by 24 or so sessions over 16-30 weeks. About 20% of people have psychological or emotional problems that are more complex or chronic. They may need therapy from a year to an indefinite period of time. Notice from these ranges of weeks that sometimes the therapist will recommend seeing you twice a week. But for some problems, we will recommend once a week or even once every other week. The frequency is determined by the severity of your problem and the urgency you feel to resolve it.
9. Effective therapy requires a few efforts on your part – make sure to discuss your expectations for the session, be prepared to commit yourself to a course of help, share whatever is on your mind, answer the questions honestly, discuss your reservations.
10. Also, and very crucial, share any mixed feelings you may have about therapy. It is not unusual to have some doubts. Share any doubts you may have about the process. The therapist will be willing to talk with you about that.
11. It is not unusual to have some practical challenges, such as your work schedule or the other people in your home. So, explain that to the therapist.
12. Therapists will ask over and over certain questions that we know are the foundation of helping to understand you and your problems. “What are you feeling? What are you thinking? What comes to mind about that topic? Tell me more about that. “
13. Do not just stop therapy without a discussion and do all you can not to miss sessions. If you cannot attend a session, ask how soon it can be made up. Therapists need advanced

warning the day before a missed session so they can help someone else who is waiting. So, give a day's notice if you cannot attend.

We hope you find your tele-therapy to be very helpful.

The Cost of Therapy

We should comment on the cost of therapy. For the most part, therapy is very economical. If you have "state insurance," that is, Badgercare/Medicaid, you have excellent insurance. Medicaid in Wisconsin supports psychotherapy. The Medicaid HMOs such as Anthem, Children's (CCHP), Molina, Trilogy, United HealthCare, and others, also cover therapy. While there are no co-payments when children are the clients, adults may have a very small copayment.

Medicare also supports therapy. There may be a copayment. If you have both Medicare and Medicaid, the copayment is very small. The Medicare Advantage plans are HMOs that cover therapy.

The commercial insurers from employers also cover psychotherapy. These policies tend to be subject to deductibles and copayments. Payers through the Affordable Care Act also cover therapy.

Some therapists do not accept insurance. So, inquire about payment before making a first appointment.

Lastly, some clients do not have insurance and cannot afford to pay the full cost. Therapists often work at a clinic, such as Shorehaven, that adjusts the fee based upon your income, what we call a "sliding fee scale."

In conclusion, therapy is available. To come for therapy, you do not have to have serious problems. Any distress, anxiety, depressed mood, problems in relationships, or personal concerns are a good reason to consult a therapist. Therapy works faster when you come for help quickly after problems arise. Most people are highly satisfied with therapy. Therapy works.

Don D. Rosenberg

September, 2020

Shorehaven is a mental health and substance abuse treatment clinic with offices in the Milwaukee and Racine areas. In addition to serving the north side of Milwaukee for over 25 years, the clinic provides in-home therapy throughout eastern Wisconsin. Shorehaven accepts most Badgercare/Medicaid insurance as well as commercially insurer clients. Referrals and inquiries: 414-540-2170.

drosenberg@shorehavenbhi.com

www.shorehavenbhi.com

www.facebook.com/shorehavenbhi