

Virtual Healing: A Guide to Expressive Therapy Techniques for Telehealth Practitioners



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This guide is dedicated to Councilwoman Risa Clay, Senator Vin Gopal and Governor Phil Murphy. Without their joint efforts at the onset of the pandemic, there would not be approved telehealth in the State of New Jersey. There are thousands of children and families in New Jersey who are receiving mental health services right now because of you.
Thank you.

We are thankful to our frontline workers and their families for their sacrifices.

We are thankful for the sage medical advice from Dr. Tamara Odell.

We are thankful to Governor Andrew Cuomo for his fancy power-points and guidance through a dark time.

We are thankful to our clients for their patience while we sort through the most massive paradigm shift in the history of mental health services.

We are thankful for Jason and his fellow preppers around the world for keeping us well-stocked and safe (we aren't laughing at you anymore).

We are thankful for our families and friends.

We are thankful for memes.

We are thankful for this technology that has kept us connected.

We all
have an
unsuspected
reserve of
strength
inside that
emerges
when life
puts us to
the test.

-Isabel Allende

Introduction

COVID-19 and the Rapid Expansion of Telehealth

Gretchen Morgan, LCSW, CPC

In mid-January, I was sitting in my apartment in London flipping through channels while waiting for my husband to return from work. There was a Breaking News Alert on BBC that caught my attention, and I paused to listen while they discussed “a strange, new deadly virus in China”. Within a week of that first announcement, the WHO declared a Public Health Emergency and on January 23, 2020, China locked 11 million citizens of Wuhan in their homes. It was very disturbing to watch the events unfolding, especially since friends and family from America were not receiving any details about the disease. My level of alert was incongruent with what was being broadcast back home, making me look quite paranoid when my husband and I began filling our Amazon carts with masks, food, and yes, toilet paper.

The night of January 23rd, my husband felt fatigued and had a slight cough. When we found out the next morning that his office mate also had a cough, and that he was in China and Milan two weeks earlier, we actually laughed at the irony because (at that time) the possibility of a Chinese virus getting to London that quickly seemed improbable. The night of January 24th, my husband coughed for ten hours straight. We decided the next morning that it would be safest if I left London and returned to New Jersey to care for our daughter (who was also sick with a cough).

My husband and I continued to prepare for a worst-case scenario where we would be locked in the house for an extended period of time. I attempted to educate my clients, colleagues and friends about the potential risks of the disease, but was primarily met with skepticism and/or disbelief. On March 11th, my husband received an email alert from his boss saying, “GET OUT NOW”, and was on a flight home to New Jersey ten hours later. We began isolating that day, and at the time of this writing have been in our home 34 days.

What does this narrative have to do with telehealth? First, it highlights that we can no longer ignore the fact that we live in a world that is deeply interconnected and interdependent. A person in London traveling to China can impact a family living in New Jersey. We cannot operate in an isolationist mindset, or an “us vs. them” mentality. For the first time in over one hundred years the entire planet is being impacted by the same disease. The fabric of our daily lives, regardless of cultural differences or geographical location, has changed. And, while the headlines focus on our medical and economic vulnerability, it is the restrictions on physical contact with each other that may leave the deepest scars when we emerge from our isolation.

The basic tenets of the clinical relationship are rooted historically in a sacred *shared* healing space, and within the span of a week, every mental health practitioner in this country had to pivot that space into a virtual forum. So how do you provide mental health treatment in a pandemic, locked in our homes? And for therapists and coaches who utilize movement, creative arts and nature in their treatment plans, how does that translate into a virtual space? When my team and I began to triage the complexities of mental health treatment within the restrictions of a global pandemic, our first decision was to close our physical office on March 13, 2020. People were initially confused by this, and some believed it was an overreaction. However, we decided that

the safety of our staff and clients was paramount and that we needed to model appropriate safety protocols in spite of the community-wide denial of the gravity of the situation. We implemented immediate access to telehealth treatment even though the laws in New Jersey were not clear about the rules of the modality.

Over the course of the next week, the team remained in constant communication about the barriers to effective clinical work. We also integrated feedback from all of our trainees and supervisees about what was happening in the field. Telehealth became approved federally, but was it covered by state malpractice insurance? Was it reimbursable by insurance companies? What happens with out-of-network coverage? Could in-home workers transition to telehealth effectively? Would Medicaid and Medicare provide coverage? How would community mental health operate without PPE? Can trainings approved for in-person continuing education be formatted online? It felt like with every solution there were five new problems that popped up. But, we persevered, and received help when we asked for it.

When we finally took a breath, we discovered that while the legal, ethical and financial barriers were identified and resolved, there wasn't an existing pandemic-based tool box for creative arts therapists, trauma practitioners and coaches to use in a telehealth form. We decided to create a simple manual to give out to front line mental health practitioners to use as a guide for their work.

It is important to note that there are two last pieces of legislation that are necessary for mental health to truly be accessible to all consumers. First, it is critical that license mobility/portability becomes law in every state across America. We are one country, and state lines should not be a physical barrier to mental health treatment. As it stands now, there are clients who are literally on the opposite side of a state line from their mental health practitioner and it is illegal for them to receive telehealth treatment because their counselor/social worker/nurse practitioner is not licensed in that particular state. It is archaic, it is absurd and it is dangerous. Additionally, as COVID-19 spreads across the country, the lack of license mobility prevents volunteers from helping marginalized communities with telehealth outside of their state of residence.

The second piece of legislation needed is for telehealth to become a permanent, approved and reimbursable method of treatment. There has been ambiguity for years about telehealth, and practitioners have been operating without clear guidelines for too long. Now that it is required that all mental health and coaching practitioners use telehealth in order to operate safely and effectively, it is time for the state licensing boards to catch up with the technology.

We hope you find these tools useful. If there is a section that isn't relevant to you or your practice, move on. We know we are missing activities (most notably for EMDR—we are leaving that up to certified EMDR trainers to handle), but this was not meant to be all encompassing, just an idea of what practitioners can do with clients through telehealth therapy/coaching.

Take what you like and leave the rest 😊.

Sand Play Therapy: Modifications for Virtual Work

Gretchen Morgan, LCSW, CPC

As a practicing Sand Play Therapist for over twenty years, I have seen many creative approaches to the use of sand, water and figurines as a therapeutic technique. Trained in both Jungian and Play Therapy modalities, I created the Lighthouse Sand Play Training Technique in 2005 in order to address the perception that formal Sand Play Therapy Training was too costly, required extensive travel and was too-time consuming to pursue. To date, we have trained over 3000 practitioners in Sand Play Therapy.

It is critical for mental health practitioners and coaches to receive formal training in order to implement the technique, so this section is designed for people who have already received at least 18 hours of Sand Play Training. I will focus on the techniques that have worked for the past month of telehealth therapy with my clients, as well as the tools necessary to safely and effectively complete the exercises.

Tools for clients that are needed in the home for activity:

- * Private room or area outside (porch/deck/yard) away from family.
- * Baking sheet with edges or large Tupperware container for sand.
- * Sand from beach or lake if accessible while socially distancing.
- * If natural sand is unavailable, box of Santastik sand from Amazon.
- * If boxed sand is unavailable, kinetic sand can be used.

Non-directive Sand Tray Exercise:

Invite your client to go on a scavenger hunt. Have them collect objects around the house/apartment that “call out to them”. These objects can be placed in a bucket while the client holds the phone/iPad with the practitioner with the opposite hand. If the client can safely go outside, found objects from nature can also be incorporated into the sand tray. After all the objects are collected, ask the client to place the phone/iPad in a space that enables the practitioner to see the full tray. Once the tray is visible on the screen, invite the client to “build a world” with the objects they have found on their scavenger hunt. The same rules for “holding the space” apply through telehealth as they would in the office. When the client has completed the tray, invite them to discuss their world.

Directive Sand Tray Exercise:

This can be designed to enable the client to process whatever they are struggling with at the time of building.

- * Build a tray about COVID-19.
- * Build a tray about being in your house with your family.
- * Build a tray about your feelings the past week.

- * Build a tray about someone you know who is sick.
- * Build a tray about having to leave school/work.
- * Is there a topic you would like to focus on for your tray work?
- * Build a tray about your future self (what life will be like when you can leave the house).
- * Build a tray to say goodbye to someone you have lost.

BODY MOVEMENT IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE:

A guide for therapists to engage their clients, and themselves, in moving their bodies and increasing body awareness

Bianca Valentini, LCSW

“Movement is a language, our first language. Nonverbal and movement communication begins in utero and continues through the lifespan...nonverbal language is as important as verbal language.”

-Adta.org

EFFECTS OF BEING QUARANTINED

- Causes the body to have lapses in everyday movement
- Causes the body to hold onto felt emotions longer than usual
- Causes tension in the body, clenching of the teeth, furrowed eyebrows
- Causes a desire to move while simultaneously feeling stuck

BENEFITS OF BODY MOVEMENT

- Can be approached and tailored to each individual's needs
- Promotes mind-body connection
- Increases body awareness
- Releases endorphins
- Increases self-esteem
- Enhances self-expression and creativity
- Emotional regulation
- Emotional release

INCREASING BODY AWARENESS

Increasing body awareness is crucial for healing, especially when body movement is used as a modality. Bessel Van der Kolk says, “every cell in your body is eavesdropping on your thoughts.” The body feels and interprets emotions as sensations such as: tingling, pressure, tightness, heart pounding, fast pulse, sweating, heat, cold, trembling, nausea, itching, headaches, muscular tension, butterflies in stomach, etc. It is vital to the healing process to become aware of these sensations, especially while feeling a particular emotion. When there is increased body awareness there is the opportunity to soothe the self sooner, allowing for more of a conscious response to the emotions felt and experienced, rather than a gut reaction. By doing this, one can take their power back and can start to grasp a bit of control and stability, which is especially beneficial to clients who feel they have lost theirs. The body carries all the tools we need as humans to heal, especially emotionally.

DIGITAL WORK WITH CLIENTS

Working with clients in a digital and virtual space may be new for many therapists and clients. Clients may report to you that it feels awkward or they don't like to be on video. This is an opportunity in treatment to break down some of those walls and help clients out of their comfort zone. A virtual space does not have to mean a lapse in treatment, in fact it's the opposite: it's an opportunity to see clients in a new way. The way you would engage these movements virtually would be the same as you would in person, so having them see you doing these movements with them will help to authenticate their experience. With that said, you must be able to see your client, and they must have enough space to complete each movement, which may mean arranging furniture and moving things around. Please make sure your client feels comfortable with this light setup, or that their parents can assist when necessary.

***DISCLAIMER:** Please be mindful of your client's abilities and meet them where they are. Slow small movements are just as well as fast big movements. Let your client tell you what is okay and not okay for them, there is no force here. This is an opportunity for clients to really get to know themselves on a physical level. It is important for clients to report what feels ok and what doesn't, especially in a virtual space where we are not physically there. Check in with them if they are not verbalizing how it feels for them. These practices are simple enough but if you do not feel comfortable engaging clients in certain movements/activities, do not utilize them. If there are preexisting conditions or illness of any type, it's best for clients to check with their doctors on movement that is acceptable for them.*

Most clients are feeling overwhelmed, stressed and stuck right now. Many clients also have anxiety disorders and trauma histories, which makes this an extra sensitive time for them. Clients may report that they feel unsafe in their bodies or feel they're in fight flight or freeze mode. These are clients who will need extra grounding and breathing. With these things in mind, we want to keep the movements simple, doable and engaging.

"When your body surrenders to movement, your soul remembers its dance...Healing is movement. Disease is inertia. If you put your body in motion, you will change." Gabrielle Roth

Clients benefit from moving their bodies especially in times when they report feeling stuck or overwhelmed with emotion. There isn't a specific protocol, but a myriad of ideas and ways to be creative when engaging clients of all ages in moving their bodies at home or in your office.

Basic Deep Breathing- Making sure clients understand how to breathe deeply from their stomachs is essential for coping, especially when engaging in movement or mindfulness activities. Deep breathing is a skill you will want to make sure your clients know how to do properly.

To do a proper deep breath you want to inhale deeply through your nose while inflating/pushing your belly out like a balloon (this may feel counterintuitive) and on the exhale, breathe out of your nose letting all the air release from the belly, sucking it back in and letting the balloon deflate. It's helpful to do it with them and show them first if they don't know how.

For children, you can use the balloon example, or they can pretend they are smelling a delicious chocolate birthday cake on the inhale and blowing out the candles on the exhale. If they have

bubbles at home they can practice their breathing with bubbles.

Once clients have breathing down, engage them in a simple four-square breathing exercise: Direct them place one hand on their heart and the other on their stomach and then have them inhale for a count of 4, suspend their breath for a count of 4 and exhale for a count of 4. Repeat at least 3 times, this will help them feel their breath through their heart and stomach, fostering a greater connection to their bodies.

Clients can play around with breath count as they practice. Inhaling for a count 4 of, suspending for a count of 7 and exhaling for a count of 8 is another example of this. It can also be helpful to think of a short affirmation for the in breath and out breath to have something for their brains to focus on if counting isn't enough. Short affirmations can look like:

“I am breathing in, I am breathing out”

“I am at Peace”

“I am calm”

“I am safe”

To increase mindfulness, you will want to direct clients to sync their breath with the various types of movement, especially if they are engaging in a guided imagery/meditation. This may sound like “Inhale your arms up and stretch to the ceiling, exhale your arms down and reach for the floor.”

Children:

This 7 minute HIIT Workout from HES.extraordinary.com is great for helping kids with emotional regulation and gets those hearts pumping- set an interval timer and complete each animal movement for 45 seconds, with 15 seconds of rest in between. Do as many as you can! Add an extra layer of fun by having the kids make each animal's sound as they move.

Frog Jumps: hop back and forth like a frog.

Bear Walk: Hands and feet on the floor, hips high- walk left to right.

Gorilla Shuffle: Sink into a low sumo squat with hands on the floor, shuffle around the room.

Starfish Jumps: jumping jacks as fast as you can, with arms and legs spread wide.

Cheetah Run: Run in place as FAST as you can! Just like the fastest animal in the Sahara.

Crab Crawl/Walk: Sit and place your arms flat on the floor behind you near your hips. Lift up off the ground and crawl around.

Elephant Stomps: March in place lifting your knees as high as you can and stomping the ground...as hard...as you can.

Yoga: Children love to engage in yoga and chances are they already have at some point through school so they may even be able to teach you a thing or two! Below are some simple poses that just about any kid can do. I again encourage making sounds with each pose for a great laugh! You can also get creative by weaving the poses together to create a fun adventure story. You can also assign each pose to a side on a pair of dice and ask the client to roll a pair of dice (many games they have at home probably have dice they can use) and whatever side the dice lands on is the movement they have to do. You can do this with a bingo board as well, you and your client can create a paper bingo board and put each pose into a square, if the movement is picked they

can put a chip or button on the board and then do the movement picked. However, you choose to utilize these poses, don't forget to breathe!

Shoulder Shrugs: Sit with your legs crossed and put your hands on your knees and breathe in and shrug those shoulders all the way up to your ears and then breathe out and let them down. You can start slow and then move faster and faster. We can shrug our problems away!

Neck Rolls: Sit with your legs crossed and drop your head to the left side and start to roll your head to the right side, but not all the way back! Roll your head slowly from left to right while breathing in and out.

Butterfly: Bring the soles of your feet together and hold onto your feet with both hands and flap your legs up and down. Sing your favorite song while you flap your wings.

Cat/Cow: Get on your hands and knees and keep your back straight, then stretch your head back as your back curves and breathe in—MOO it's a cow. Now breathe out and stretch your head down so your chin is tucked into your chest and let your back arch up—MEOW it's a cat!

Cobra/Snake: Lie down and put your hands under your shoulders and push up until your arms are straight. Curve your chest upward and look up at the ceiling. Stretch as far as you can while keeping your stomach and legs on the ground and breathe in and out- hissing like a snake.

Seal: Lie down on your stomach and bring your arms out in front of you with the palms of your hands flattened together. Stretch your body up and pull your legs back and arms up without bending them. You can roll back and forth like a swimming seal too. Don't forget to breathe and bark like a seal!

Flamingo: Stand on one foot and see how long you can balance like a flamingo! Don't forget to practice your balancing on both sides!

Elephant: Stand up and bend forward with your arms hanging down. Clasp your hands together with your fingers locked and walk around the room bent over and swing that trunk then lean back and stretch your trunk high in the air and let out a big elephant horn sound.

Tall Grass: Climb through the tall grass by lifting your left leg and right arm high in the air and stretch, then lift your left leg and right arm high in the sky and stretch. Keep moving through the tall grass this way.

Dinosaur Walk: Stand up and then bend over and grab your ankles, keep your legs straight and walk around the room like a big dinosaur- be careful here!

Rag Doll: Stand up and then bend over and let your body hang like a rag doll. Let your arms dangle and you can sway back and forth.

Airplane: Stand up tall and put your arms out wide, zoom around the room like an airplane, where are we traveling to today?

Bicycle: Roll over onto your back and lift your legs up in the air and cycle your legs in large fast circles.

Windmills: Stand with your feet apart, not too wide, and bring your arms out to the sides breathing in. Now breathe out and bend and twist a little so you can touch your right hand to your left foot and your other arm will stretch up to the sky. Breathe in and stand up then breathe out and do the same thing but this time your left hand will touch your right foot. You can do this for a few rounds.

Seedling: Pretend you are a tiny seed and sit on your heels and put your forehead on the floor and arms lay at your side, breathe in. Breathe out and take one of your arms and pat your head gently to water yourself, then slowly start growing into your favorite plant or flower until you are standing all the way up with your arms stretched back to feel the sun.

Rain/wind: Make hip circles with hands on your hips and feet wide apart, breathe in and out like the wind. Be sure to circle to the left and the right.

Thunder: You can create thunder with your feet by stomping them around quickly or slowly. You can also make thunder by sitting in butterfly pose and using your hands to hit the ground.

It's beneficial to add positive affirmations to each movement so kids can feel empowered and strong when they engage like the ones below from childhood101.com:



“I am strong.” Pretend to be a surfer.

To do Warrior 2 Pose: From standing position, step one foot back, placing the foot so that it is facing slightly outwards. Take your arms up in parallel to the ground, bend your front knee, and look forward. Pretend to be a surfer and use your strength to catch tricky waves.

“I am kind.” Pretend to be a tree.

To do Tree Pose: Stand on one leg, bend your knee, place the sole of your foot on the opposite inner thigh, and balance. Sway like a tree. Think of trees being kind by offering shade, creating oxygen, and providing homes to animals.



“I am brave.” Pretend to be a skier.

To do Chair Pose: Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, bend your knees, and keep a straight spine. Hold your hands out in front of you, pretending to grasp ski poles as you fly down a ski run like a brave and fearless skier.



“I am friendly.” Pretend to be a dog.

To do Downward-Facing Dog Pose: Bend down and place your palms flat on the ground. Step your feet back to create an upside-down V shape with your buttocks high in the air. Straighten your legs, relax your head and neck, and look down between your legs. Think of being an eager and friendly dog.



“I am wise.” Pretend to be an owl.

To do Hero Pose: Drop your knees to the ground and come down to rest upright on your heels. Then pretend to be a wise owl perched on a tree. Twist your upper body one way and then the other.



Dance Party! Have your clients dress up in whatever they'd like and have them pick some of their favorite songs so you can create a playlist and have a dance party with them virtually. Kids doing therapy from their home space means they have access to toys and things that can be used as props which they can bring to the room and use while dancing. Dancing is the best way for kids to move intuitively and expressively. To expand on this practice when you're in your office, you can get long colored fabric ribbons to use. Kids can pick which color matches their feelings and then dance with it and wave it all around.

You additionally do different line dances with kids virtually like the Macarena, the Mambo #5 or

even the Electric Slide. You can even make up a short dance with clients to do together. Encourage parents to do any of these things with their kids when you're not in session for family fun! For more family fun, encourage backyard sports or fun exercise obstacle courses/circuits and during your session you can talk about it.

Teens and Adults:

Teens and adults can participate in the same poses as above, but without the animal sounds and adventure story/game (unless they want that and need practice finding their voice.) You can add any number of positive affirmations to each pose to increase feelings of strength, confidence and stability. Some may not want to do yoga poses but will be up for some exercise movements like **jumping jacks, sit-ups, push-ups, hopping on one foot, reaching for or touching toes, running in place, swinging arms back and forth, lunges across the floor, squats, etc.** Engage clients in one or two exercise movements if they are reporting feeling stressed, overwhelmed or stuck or if it seems they could benefit from it at some point in the session. You can ask what they feel like their body wants to do in that moment, if they aren't sure give them some ideas like the ones listed above or these: **waving arms out, shaking their body, standing up and stretching, patting their head while rubbing their stomach, shaking their head right to left, twisting, neck rolls, wrist and ankle rolls, sitting on the floor and curling in a ball then squeezing and tensing all the muscles and then releasing (you can direct clients to do this with each muscle and body part.)**

When clients feel stuck, physically moving will help put this feeling in motion (energy in motion=emotion) allowing for a release. This will also provide clients with more coping skills to utilize outside of session.

In time, you will find that clients will become more intuitive with their movements on their own without your guidance. If a stretch or movement feels any particular way, ask them to notice that or probe by asking "what happens next?" As Bessel Van Der Kolk would say, "once you start approaching the body with curiosity rather than with fear, everything shifts."

Encouraging clients to walk their neighborhoods or ride their bikes when it's nice outside are more simple body movement activities that can go a long way especially during quarantine!

Dancing: Teen/Adult clients will likely not want to dance with you in the way kids will, if they're up for it I encourage it otherwise I recommend you ask your client to pick a few of their favorite songs that really make them want to move. Have them create their own playlist and then ask them to host their own private dance party with themselves. When you check in on your next session ask them what it felt like for them to dance in this way, did they learn anything new about themselves or their moves? What emotions did they feel while dancing? What songs did they choose and why? Would they consider doing it again as part of a weekly routine? Did it feel awkward? Did they feel more comfortable as time went on? I often get reports of clients stating that they feel freer after intuitively dancing in this way. This is a great activity for self-esteem.

Facial Exercise: I love this type of movement because so often we forget to move the muscles in our face. You can instruct clients to blink their eyes, scrunch their nose, move their mouth and jaw, clench and chatter teeth, squeeze all the face muscles together and release, make silly faces,

puttering lips, widening eyes, moving tongue all around teeth and cheeks, sucking cheeks in like a fish, or engage in my favorite- “Lion’s Breath” where clients would breathe in through their noses and make an audible exhale through their mouths while sticking out their tongue and widening their eyes.

Mindfulness in the body/relaxation:

You can help your clients experience and increase body awareness just by having them lay down or stay seated in their chair in stillness. You can help clients mentally scan the parts of their bodies by directing their attention to different areas, to notice the small movements their body makes or to feel into any possible tension they may feel. If they report tension, ask them to breathe into that area or tense up the muscles in that area and then release.

The script provided below is an example of a progressive muscle relaxation/body scan/imagery that I put together from my own years of experience and one that I utilize with clients in session often. You can find many different versions of the progressive muscle relaxation/body scan online as well as many different guided imagery and meditation scripts:

(Use a soft, slow, calm voice while guiding clients through this)

Start by sitting where you are with your feet flat on the floor and your hands softly resting on your thighs. You can lie down on the floor or a mat if you are comfortable doing so. You can close your eyes if this feels comfortable for you, if not find a spot that isn’t moving on the wall across from you or on the ground that you can focus on.

If your teeth are clenched- gently release them and allow your tongue to float freely or rest on the roof of your mouth. If you feel your eyebrows furrowing- release them. If your shoulders are creeping up to your ears- relax them. If you feel any extra tension in your body, tense those muscles up tight and then release them while continuing to breathe into that space.

If at any point you become distracted from thoughts, just imagine them as cars passing by on the road and come back to your breath and the sound of my voice.

Take a big deep inhale through your nose and exhale with a big sigh out of your mouth (repeat 3x)

You can continue to breathe deeply or you can return to regular breathing, whatever suits you in this moment.

Imagine a stream of light coming down from the ceiling, take notice of its color; its shape; its size; if it makes a sound; is it solid or transparent; is it warm or cold; really materialize this light stream and as it moves through your body, imagine that its taking any tension, tightness or discomfort with it.

The light stream is now going to move through your body, take notice of how this feels for you as it enters the top of your head and (say each body part slowly here) moving through your face, neck and shoulders; through your chest and torso; through your upper arms and forearms; moving through both hands and all ten fingers; traveling down through your hips and thighs; feeling lighter as it moves through your knees, calves and ankles; and now moving through the tops and bottoms of your feet and out of all ten toes and into the ground.

Feeling lighter in your body now, imagine a fresh clean light coming up from the ground and moving back up through your body

(say each part slowly here) your toes and feet... ankles... shins and calves... knees and thighs... hips... stomach and chest... all ten fingers... hands and arms... shoulders and neck... and

through the top of your head, this time wrapping you like a warm comfortable blanket. Allow yourself to sit in this warm blanket of light, feeling grounded, safe and calm, continuing to breathe gently and slowly. Notice how this feels for you (pause here for a few minutes)

Now slowly begin to deepen your breath

Keeping your eyes closed, start to wiggle your fingers and toes and allow yourself to slowly come back to the room.

Feel yourself in the chair (or on the ground), come back to the sounds of the room, and when you are ready you can slowly open your eyes, arriving back fully.

Check in with clients on how this meditation was for them, some may report it was difficult to concentrate but the more you do this with them the more focused and aware of their bodies they will become. This is also something they can do on their own for self-soothing and emotional regulation.

Movement for Therapists- SELF CARE!

We all know how important self-care is, but I want to emphasize it during these times. We are carrying a little extra energetic weight and stress and I encourage doing these poses and stretches during short breaks or at the end of your day to reset, relax and renew. It is recommended you close your eyes if its comfortable and stay in any of these poses as long as you'd like:

Mountain Pose: Stand tall with your feet firm on the ground and let your hands hang at your sides, palms facing outward, spreading your fingers wide and staying active. This is a really grounding pose that even clients can enjoy.

Child's Pose: Sit on your heels and put your forehead on the floor and arms stretched out in front of you, breathe in and out. If this is uncomfortable place your arms at your sides.

Legs up the Wall: Sit on the floor next to a blank wall and let one shoulder face the wall with your legs and thighs parallel to the wall. Lay on your back, swinging your legs up the wall to rest there. You want your buttocks close to the wall but not lifting off the floor. Make sure your lower back is resting flat on the floor, comfortably. This should feel relaxing and comfortable, adjust accordingly.

Desk forward bend: Put your chair (no rollers) in front of your table or desk so that you can lean forward and lean on your desk. Sit at the edge of your seat with your feet flat on the floor and lean forward folding your arms so you can rest your forehead comfortably on your arms. Close your eyes if it's comfortable and rest here.

Chair forward bend: Sit at the edge of your chair (no rollers) with your feet firmly on the floor, about 2 fist distances apart, slowly bend forward until your chest rests on your thighs. Let your head hang down and your arms dangle.

Basic Relaxation: Lie down on a blanket or mat and breathe deeply, release tension and allow your body to melt away. If thoughts intrude, picture them as feathers and watch them float away. You can put an eye mask or towel over your eyes and put on calming music or nature sounds for an extra sense of relaxation.

In summation, body movement can implement positive change in any individual's life especially if it's not something they're used to doing regularly; one small change can have a domino effect. When we can move our bodies in a way that feels expressive, even if we are just standing still in

grounding, we make space for our mind to come out of its thinking brain and into the knowing body. Have fun with these, practice them yourselves and don't reinvent the wheel, the virtual space doesn't have to be much different from in person!

Resources:

<https://adta.org>

<https://childhood101.com/yoga-for-kids>

<http://HES.EXTRAORDINARY.com>

Fly Like a Butterfly by Shakta Kaur Khalsa

Restful Yoga for Stressful Times by Judith Hanson Lasater, Ph.D., P.T.

My experience with teaching children's yoga and utilizing yoga in therapy sessions- I completed a children's yoga teacher training with *Radiant Child Yoga*

My own experience as a yoga practitioner, 5 rhythms practitioner and overall lover of dancing and moving

Favorite quotes from:

Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk, psychologist and trauma expert
& Gabrielle Roth, creator and founder of 5 Rhythms

USE OF COLLAGE IN TELEMEDICINE

Mary Pat McGeehin, LCSW

DEFINITION

Collage therapy is a form of art therapy that requires little in the way of special materials making it ideal for the teletherapy method. It can be a doorway to your client's inner life, a way of expressing thoughts, feelings and issues that they may not be able to verbalize. Like with Sand Play Therapy, the symbols, colors, construction and emotional response tells a story both conscious and unconscious.

BENEFITS

- Facilitates emotional release through symbols
- Challenges the creative brain
- Can be guided through telemed mediums
- Can stimulate storytelling
- Can be directive or spontaneous
- Can be used with individuals or family
- Is easy to create
- Uses simple materials
- Is less threatening than drawing or painting

THEMES

Family

Client can do a collage about their family or an individual in the family.

Emotions

Client can use various approaches to express emotions thereby making difficult emotions more available to them.

Inside/Outside Collage

Client makes a collage of how everyone sees him/her on the outside and then, on the back, do one of how he/she is on the inside.

Beliefs, Hopes, Dreams

Clients can organize and focus on ability to move beyond present issues.

Resources

Clients can explore resources that they will need to develop to assist them in the present difficulty.

Grief

Client can create a ritual collage to express grief or honor the deceased.

Childhood

Client can create a collage about his/her childhood allowing a clearer impression of the impact on adult responses to life.

Trauma

Client can focus on impact of a single client or can do a collage of a trauma timeline.

Inner Critic

Client can create an impression of the inner critic and its messages.

Self Portrait

Client creates a self -portrait.

Calm and Safety

Clients can create a collage representing calm and safety. It can lead to discussions about mindfulness, deep breathing and meditation.

ELEMENTS NEEDED

Large paper or poster board (cardboard can work in these days of social distancing), glue, magazines, pictures, colored paper, pens, pencils, paint (optional), scissors (can also tear), fabric, ribbons.

APPROACH

Clients can assemble the collage while connected to therapist by video. The client then can talk about the work with the therapist while working or when finished.

Clients can construct collage between sessions and the discuss at next session.

There is a lot of freedom in this approach. It also allows the client to have a concrete representation of the work they are doing along with the satisfaction of accomplishing a creative activity.

TELEHEALTH COACHING TIPS AND TOOLS

Sally Nilsson, LLB, CPC

To start with, an introduction: I am an English girl living in the jungles of Costa Rica, a Certified Professional Life Coach and Equine Experiential Learning Facilitator. My practice already includes on-line coaching, as well as in person coaching with horses and mindfulness retreats. Adding the horses creates a powerful experiential element, and the vibrant natural setting of Costa Rica is a powerful sensory “recharge”. Finding ways to tap into this sensory recharge online is also a powerful offering for clients.

The Transformative Power of Feeling Safe

There are a number of key elements that I prioritize in my work that have become particularly relevant in the current pandemic where fear is prevalent and there is a perceived lack of safety in the world for many:

- The power of staying in the present moment
- The importance of the body senses
- Breathing as a language
- Connection

These focus areas are hugely significant when people come for physical experiences, as well as in coaching online. In reality, when we are lost in our digital devices, fast-paced lives, stress or various numbing tactics, these are the things that go astray and yet these are the key ways we can create feelings of safety for ourselves and stay (or move) out of the fight, flight, freeze, submit reaction. So, whether supporting clients in creating new physical experiences and cellular memories (with the horses in nature), or helping them find and recreate those places/experiences themselves (through online coaching), all my tools are designed or adapted with these elements in mind.

I find that these are often the starting points for deeper dives into self-discovery with all my clients and, in the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, they are often now the primary focus as people struggle to find a “tool-kit” to handle the continual cycle of fear and other emotions that this unprecedented situation is bringing up.

Don’t be afraid to spend whole sessions with clients just exploring breathing or body sensations, as this can be just as useful and powerful as “doing” or talking about something. You are helping them build the muscle, tolerance or comfort level for being physically present in the moment, which is an invaluable resource they can use for themselves at any time.

It is hugely important in these times to keep doing your own practices to feel grounded and safe, and to process your own material, so that you can show up for your clients and be able to support them through theirs.

Coaching/Therapy in a Digital Age

If telehealth is something new for you, you may be surprised by how effective and natural it can become. When I did my first telephone session with a client, I was amazed at how much of the

non-verbal subtleties I could pick up. In fact, with my full attention honed down the phone line and totally tuned out of my own surroundings, I noticed that I was even more sensitive to the significance of silence, timely pause or certain language. I had expected to have a sense of “missing out” on these things but it is not at all the case. Something else I notice is that in the comfort of their chosen surroundings, often with a pet nearby, clients can actually feel more relaxed and open. With others it may take some adjustment, so the more encouragement and support you can offer for this stepping out of the comfort zone, the more empowered they will feel to do so.

Tips on Setting Up a Digital Session

A lot of these will be things you apply automatically already in your in-person practice, but it is good to think about them in advance to create the same atmosphere for your online practice:

- *Setting up the call:* Practice using your chosen technology with somebody a few times beforehand. This will increase your own comfort levels so you can transmit this confidence to clients. If possible, have someone on standby in case of any technical difficulties during your call.
- *Video or no video:* Coaches often ask me about this and for me it comes down to personal preference. The benefits of being able to see your client are obvious, as you pick up facial and body cues. However, if the image not clear and they find it distracting, the session can feel even more focused without the video as you will pick up more tone and pauses. I would suggest trying both and see what works for you and your client.
- *Safe space for client:* Ensure your client has a safe, quiet, uninterrupted space where they can talk freely (it is good to suggest this to them before the call so they can plan accordingly).
- *Safe space for you:* Ensure that you also have this safe, quiet, uninterrupted space – it sounds obvious, but you are not in the office now where these things are clear and when you are at home and there are other people around who are used to having full use of that space, it is often good to create some clear agreements/boundaries about this so no-one is making a noise outside the room, or comes in by mistake.
- *Access to nature:* In the virtual setting I include, and encourage clients to include, nature as much as possible. I am fortunate enough to have the sounds of the jungle in the background when I coach, but access to a window or even an indoor plant can create a calming focus and can be referred to during the session as a source of calm and grounding. Plants keep on growing and their roots stay planted in the soil, whatever the “drama” around them.
- *Starting the session:* Start the call with a breathing or grounding exercise (ideas in the section of this manual entitled “Body Movements in the Virtual Space” and also some below) – just like you might take the first 5 minutes in your office to settle into the space, it is important to allow for that online too as your client may have been running around to set up the call and may not yet be fully present. Movement is also a powerful tool here, maybe they have been sitting at the computer/phone all day and need to stretch to get the energy flowing again.
- *Unexpected interruptions:* If something unexpected happens during the call – like a technology blip or a noise or interruption in your or their surroundings, it is helpful to name it and consciously bring both of you back to your connection together (rather than just carry on and pretend it’s not there). Think of this as just the same as being in your

office – you cannot control all the circumstances surrounding you and that is totally ok, just trust yourself to handle it. Sometimes this can be a great opportunity to teach another tool for being present!

Some Tools to use in Online Coaching

1. The Power of Staying in the Present Moment

It may feel more challenging for clients to stay focused and present in the current times, due to their surroundings, disruption to their usual routine with you, picking up on fears from the news etc.

Therefore, teaching them some tools to keep coming back to the present moment (and explaining why) becomes ever more important. Clearly acknowledging the fear and the activation of the sympathetic nervous system is helpful to normalize things for your client, and helping them understand that the present moment is what they are actually experiencing right now – and they are currently safe with no action needing to be taken – helps the fear relax.

Things to increase: Finding out what helps *them* come back to the present will be important as they are most likely to do this regularly once they've identified it as a tool. Other tools below are helpful. I like to use the expression “going back to grazing” like a horse, as an analogy for being scared, calming down, and then going back to doing something relaxed.

Some things to note:

- The internet is a powerful tool for the imagination – and what you focus on expands. So, if clients are reading lots of scary news stories, so the fear expands. Creating awareness around this can be very helpful for clients so they can choose to practice “mindful media”.
- Given many are spending a lot more time online than before, helping them create an *intentional* focus of what they are watching (rather than just following the clicks and watching things randomly) can be powerful – otherwise it can create a feeling of constantly looking for something and never finding it. If we don't know what we are looking for, how can we find it? So, getting clear on intentions before browsing is helpful. What is the feeling they are looking for? Which speaker/internet site/kind of material satisfies that feeling?
- Some questions to ask them, or they can ask themselves, about the content they are looking at might be:
 - o Why am I looking at this video/article/image right now?
 - o What am I looking for here?
 - o Do I really need this information right now?
 - o How is my body feeling as I see/read/hear it?
 - o When will I have seen enough for right now?
 - o What kind of images create a feeling of calm and peace for me?
 - o Who/what do I choose to find/read/watch online?
- Nature is very calming and grounding, for body and mind. In recent times, I have been posting videos on Facebook videos of the horses and sights and sounds of the jungle, to enable clients to tap into this sensory experience and feel the peace and relaxation it offers even for a few minutes. There are plenty of ways to experience this online, if not physically available, so this is a good resource to suggest.

- Self-talk and the inner critic may be wildly out of control right now, so this is a great area to support and explore with clients.

Things to decrease: Finding out what is activating them into the sympathetic nervous system right now is also helpful – e.g. noticing who they talk to, seeing the news, the stories they are telling themselves. It may be different or new in their current situation, so putting attention on this with you may create new awareness. These are things they want to start noticing and decreasing to keep supporting themselves through difficult moments.

2. The Importance of the Body Senses

Tapping into the body or senses is the best means we have to become more physically present. If you guide a client through a tool in the session and they feel the benefit, they are more likely to use it themselves when they need to.

a) One nice tool (there are many) is doing a body scan, to create focus on physical sensations.

One great way to do this is noted in the section of this handbook called “entitled “Body Movements in the Virtual Space”.

b) Another tool, especially useful if a client is in their head a lot and struggles to connect with their body or to visualize silently, is to use the 5 senses to connect in with the body and the physical surroundings actually present right now. This can be a good lead-in to a breathing tool:

- Name (out loud) 5 things you see.
- Name 4 things you can feel touching your body right now.
- Name 3 things you can hear around you.
- Name 2 things you can smell.
- Name 1 thing you can taste.

When complete, encourage them to notice how present they feel in their body.

3. Breathing as a Language

This is the quickest, simplest way to come back to the body and the present moment: focusing on breathing.

- It is helpful to remind clients that the body knows how to do this and does it without us even thinking about it all the time, so we can trust it to carry on and to teach us things.
- It can be helpful to point out that noticing what breathing is doing is a great way to gauge how we are feeling (and if we need to take action in this moment to calm ourselves down). Rapid breathing is a sign of the sympathetic nervous system. Slow, regular, even breaths are a way to come back to the parasympathetic nervous system, particularly when done in conjunction with focus on a positive image.
- Focusing on a positive image (ideally a snapshot picture of something they know to be positive – a memory might change into something less positive as they think of it) can hugely increase the impact of breathing exercises and creates faster access to the parasympathetic nervous system. If they make this image their screensaver on their phone, they have quick access and a reminder to breathe.
- There are many breathing exercises around (again see section entitled “Body Movements in the Virtual Space” for more on this), but a very simple one is to focus on the in-breath while saying “In” to yourself, and focus on the out-breath while saying “Out” to yourself. This gives the brain something to do so that it can stay quiet! Another one is to count breaths. Start with “In, 2, 3, 4” then “Out, 2, 3, 4”. Repeat for a few cycles. Add in a

pause at the top and bottom of the breath: “In, 2, 3, 4, 5” then “Pause, 2, 3, 4” then “Out, 2, 3, 4”.

4. Connection

Feeling connected to something is (according to Polyvagal Theory) is an important part of feeling safe. Helping clients explore what they feel connected to, and how to connect in a non-physical way, is powerful. The act of you connecting with them online is significant in this regard as they can stay connected to you – and can perhaps explore other ways to move out of the comfort zone and connect with others too.

Meeting Needs of Connection

Something I notice coming up from clients right now is a disconnection from previous life and people they are not physically with. A helpful tool for this is asking them about times they have also been away from these people (e.g. while on vacation) and still felt connected; to explore what the need is from this connection right now and how they might still meet that need in other ways (be it through online communication with that person or a different thing from someone else); to find tools to process the feelings that come up around disconnection – as ever it is an opportunity to explore what is going on beneath the surface as this is likely something that was already there before and showing up in a more heightened way now.

Finding Connection through Gratitude

Another way to feel connected is to cultivate a gratitude practice. Asking a client what 3 things they are grateful for (in their life / today / in this moment) gets the brain searching for positive neural pathways and connections (rather than the fear-based ones). Simple things like a smile from someone or a flower or the sun can bring gratitude - it doesn't have to be human connection - animal or natural world connections are incredibly powerful.

Connecting to Future Self in a positive way

With all the prevalent fear around the future, an activity that can be helpful is asking clients to write or create a story about their hero/heroine's journey from the perspective of after this “plot-twist” virus scare / lockdown is over. What do they want their story to sound like – how will they tell it? What will they have said, done, felt etc.? Encourage them to really make themselves the hero/heroine of the story, with good times, challenges, ups and downs, but coming through it all. They could focus on what they will have learned from all this, or how they will have grown. This encourages focus on the idea that this *will* all be over at some point, as well as empowering them to see themselves as a hero rather than feeling so out of control or a victim to circumstance. They can either make the story up in the session and tell it you, with prompts or questions from you, or do it as a written assignment and read you the story in your next session.

Overall, trust yourself! This is a great opportunity for us to step out of our own comfort zones into vulnerability and try some new things with our clients, and thus grow ourselves.

This poem was written as a reflection and guide to some of the mind and body techniques we can use to get through this difficult period.

Powerfully Present

by Sally Nilsson, April 2020

Deep breath in and deep breath out...
What else must I do without?
Air flows in and travels down...
How can I release this frown?
Follow flow of breath inside...
We all need a place to hide!
Oxygen flows where it needs to go...
When will this end? How can I know?
Breath feeds the system, then it releases...
The world as I know it is falling to pieces!
Out breath of air finds its usual way...
The fear and anxiety increase more each day!
Releasing what's not going to serve the whole...
I can't stop these feelings, it's out of control!

Deep breath in and deep breath out...
Whatever mind and thoughts may shout:
Come back to the breathing happening still -
Your senses can help the mind with this drill.

Breathe in, breathe out, stay present with me.
Use your eyes to notice things that you see:
What is around and beside you right now?
Changing the focus will start to allow
You to see what is real, enjoy what it brings,
Familiar and safe, your home and your things.
Or connect with the natural world with your eyes
As you breathe and let go of the thoughts that arise.
The plants are still growing, they know how to be.
The rivers still flow and the wildlife roams free.
The sky ever-changing – black, red, white, blue.
Let their natural energy flow right into you.

Use your nose and your smell sense to keep yourself here,
As here in this moment, there is nothing to fear.
Be aware of your voice and the things that you say -
What you hear and share has a great deal of sway
On the things that you think and thus that you feel.
We tell stories of fear that may never be real.
We imagine ourselves in a terrible plight
And our minds can create a freeze, fight or flight.
The fear and anxiety are helpful in part
To notice precautions we needed to start,

Yet when they take over, they spiral and spin
And we can lose sight of our own strength within.

“I am safe in this moment. My body is here.
My feelings pass through me. I’m handling fear.
Emotions will come – they always subside.
I can stay with my breath and follow this ride.
I am here in my body, it’s housing me well,
And this is the story I’m going to tell
When my thoughts take a spiral or body feels fear
Come back to this moment and process it here.”

Touch something solid, like feet on the floor
This sense is important for feeling secure.
Your physical body is present right now -
Allow it to show your mind and thoughts how
To stay in the moment: breathe in and out,
Connect with the truth and not with the doubt.
The clothes on your skin, the beat of your heart,
Your internal systems each playing their part.
Scan down your whole body, note what you feel.
All these sensations are physically real.

It’s amazing the impact it has on our fear
If we give some attention to what is right here.
These things are all true without any doubt,
As we stay in this moment and breathe in and out.

“I am breathing, my heart beats, I’m feeling the ground.
My senses are showing what’s really around.
No action to take in this moment - and so
It’s safe to relax and allow peace to flow.”

We can use, in each moment, our body and senses
To chart our way through emotional fences,
And not to get stuck or go down rabbit holes
With our stories of danger or unfulfilled goals.

We are wiser and stronger than each of us knows,
And energy flows where intention goes,
So, using your power come back to the now
And start using your senses to show you how.
We *are* here in this moment, we *will* find our way;
With the small things we find we’ll brighten each day;
With our values, priorities all re-assessed;
With the reasons we’re thankful and how we are blessed;

New ways to connect, understanding of more;
The natural world breathing, much stuff to explore;
We are all here together exploring anew
What we mean to each other, and pulling us through
This new rollercoaster - hold on for the ride!
And know that you have what you need inside.

Your senses are present, your body is wise.
Your mind can create more fear in disguise.
So, remember that you are not *just* your mind
And your body, soul, spirit are where you will find
More resources and strength to carry you tall.
Being powerfully present, you can handle it all.

Virtual Sessions with Children

Barbara McGinley, LPC

As we move to a virtual format, many therapists are struggling to find ways to connect with their young clients. Often therapeutic sessions with children require more preparation and an engaging environment, using a variety of items such as sand trays, toys and games. A virtual format voids the therapist's control of the environment and can make drawing out children's participation more challenging. The following list includes 15 therapeutic activities to encourage engagement, sharing and fun in a video session format.

1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxations are a tool I often utilize with my young clients. It is a fun, physical way to cope, de-stress and connect with body cues. The following is a simple, favorite and free PMR exercise sourced online:

<https://depts.washington.edu/hcsats/PDF/TF-%20CBT/pages/4%20Emotion%20Regulation%20Skills/Client%20Handouts/Relaxation/Relaxation%20Script%20for%20Younger%20Children.pdf>

2. Read a Book

Many therapists who engage in play with young clients already have therapeutic reading materials that can be shared and now is a wonderful time to bust out those books!

Reading to a child engages their mind and emotions and provides an opportunity to reveal deeper thoughts through discussion. If you don't have access to therapeutic books, many mainstream children's books are a valuable read and sufficient substitute.

3. Feelings Charades

This is a game I love to play with my young clients in the office and translates well to video sessions! First, the child and I develop a list of feelings together. As we are apart, I offer to write the feeling down and hold it up to the video when needed (without peeking, of course). We take turns picking a feeling and either a) acting it out or b) telling a story of a time we felt this way. The other person then guesses what feeling is being referenced. This game is valuable in developing good emotion-oriented communication skills and is just plain fun!

4. Guided Imagery

Utilized with both adults and children, visualization exercises can be a powerful tool in providing our clients the space to both cultivate strength and a sense of peace and calm in their lives. There are many free guided imagery scripts for kids found online. Here are three favorites I use often with my young clients: -

https://www.imageryforkids.com/art_HealingGarden.html

<https://depts.washington.edu/hcsats/PDF/TF-%20CBT/pages/4%20Emotion%20Regulation%20Skills/Client%20Handouts/Relaxation/Child%20Relaxation%20Script.pdf>

-

<http://kidsrelaxation.com/uncategorized/treehouse-relaxation-script/>

5. Art

Art activities provide a wealth of opportunity for self-expression and connection. As long as the child has some basic materials at home (crayons, paper), they can engage in any number of directed or undirected art activities. As you would do in session, ask the child to create while you meet and then engage in discussion of their artwork when it is complete. While the following activities are centered on drawing, take advantage of any and all art supplies your client has on hand! Encourage creativity and process what develops. Some directed art activities include:

-Self Portrait

-Tree of Strength- Ask child to trace their hand on a paper and add leaves to their “arm tree”, writing a strength of theirs in each leaf.

-Three Trees- Draw three separate trees. The trees are meant to represent the child’s past, present and future. Process each drawing.

-Three Animals- draw three separate animals. The first animal is representative of how others see the child. The second animal is representative of how they view them self. The third animal is representative of what they would like to become, their future self. Process each.

-Draw Your Ideal Place -Family Portrait -Draw Your Heart

6. Practice Coping Skills

One of the foundations of therapeutic work is strengthening our client’s coping skills so that in moments of challenge or even crisis, they have tools to pull from their figurative

toolbox. Even if you have developed these tools within session, taking the time to practice, strengthen and bring them to the forefront of the child's mind is valuable. Done easily in video session format, engage your young clients in deep breathing, Emotionally Focused Tapping, creating a coping skills list, singing our worries out loud and Distraction ABC's (a favorite to do together).

7. Share 5 Items

Engage the child in choosing five important items from their home to share. Discuss each item's importance in the child's life and the reason they chose to share that specific item.

8. My Favorite Photos

Ask your young client to gather photos from the different years/times of their life and bring them to share during your video session. Engage parents or guardians in helping your client to prepare if they are especially young, but encourage helpers to allow the child autonomy in picking and choosing which special photos to share.

9. The Question Jar

This activity works for young kids all the way up to teenagers. I have a prepared jar in my office of questions, mounted on different colored construction papers. When doing this activity virtually, your client can say "I choose a red question", etc. and you then read the question. Some clients enjoy this activity all on their own and some prefer to engage in taking turns with the therapist. Here are ten questions from my jar, but feel free to get creative and add your own: -If you could have any superpower, what would it be? -Tell me about someone who is a hero to you. -What is your favorite memory? -Tell me about your strengths. -Tell me about your weaknesses. -If you could meet anyone, who would it be? -Tell me about a time you felt disappointed. -If you could be any animal, what would you be? -Tell me about a family member who is special to you. -Tell me about a time when you felt scared.

10. My Life Timeline

Assist the child in creating a physical timeline of their life, noting important moments and memories. Either the client or the therapist can write and maintain the timeline and I would allow your client to choose.

11. **Pajama Session**

Engaging in therapy via video allows us a unique opportunity to create fun and out-of-the-box sessions with our young clients. Ask your client to pick out their favorite jammies to wear for an upcoming session and encourage them to gather any comfort items they may have in their home to create a comfortable safe-haven. Encourage your client to share why these items communicate comfort to them and lean into the fun of your “pajama party” session.

12. **5 Senses**

Practice the mindfulness technique of paying attention to our 5 senses (sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste). You can ask the child to grab a favorite snack or drink to utilize for “taste” and a favorite item to use for “touch”.

13. **Share Your Favorite Song**

Encourage your client to choose a favorite song to listen to and share with you during the session. Pull up the lyrics online and have a discussion about the song’s meaning and the emotions it evokes.

14. **Introduce Me to Your Pet**

If your client has any pets at home, you now have a unique opportunity to meet one of the most important pieces of their life. But we can get more from meeting our client’s pets than a few cute moments. We can encourage our client to invite their pet to join the session, to discuss how connecting with their pet makes them feel and discuss how to utilize this valuable connection to cope, calm down and recharge.

15. **Read My Face**

Both the child and therapist take turns expressing a different emotion, using ONLY their face. The other player has to guess the emotion and a point is awarded each correct answer. The guessing player can ask for 1 hint, if they are struggling to identify the facial expression. This game can be silly and goofy, but strengthens the important skill of reading the facial cues of others.

I encourage my fellow therapists to remember that while video sessions can pose some difficulties, it also offers us the unique opportunity to have a window into the world of the

children we are treating. Where we may have otherwise only been able to imagine our client's home environment, and the subsequent impact on their functioning, here we can get a real sense of their space. Additionally, challenges can force us to engage our clients differently and sometimes, this change in tempo and routine may be for the better. You may discover an otherwise untalkative client feels freer to chat with the separation of space. You may find that a child who was hesitant to play is now feeling free to share. Ultimately, when working with children in a new way, we can find powerful techniques to add to our very own toolbox of treatment.

RPG Narrative Therapy Interventions for Remote Telehealth

Bill Heath, LCSW

RPG guided therapy is generally considered to be a social learning and social skill building modality. This might not sound like the most effective set of techniques to utilize via telehealth but the creative and narrative aspects of RPG's, specifically character creation, decision making, and storytelling can be useful interventions for some clients. Utilized effectively, RPG guided therapy allows clients to engage with their thoughts and feelings from a safe distance and without judgement by displacing them onto a created character. They embody these thoughts and feelings only to the level that they feel comfortable and within the rules set forth by the game. The only materials needed are a pen and paper and some preparation. Utilizing this approach is a combination of the following:

- Narrative therapy – separates a person from their problems and helps them externalize solutions in a collaborative way. Gives the person an opportunity to look at the situation from an outside 3rd person perspective rather than identifying themselves as the problem.
- Social Stories/Articles – a simple and direct story that addresses a problem, the skills and actions needed to address the problem, and the rules of how to interact in the situation. Setting up a specific order of events and guidelines for expected behavior.
- RPG – a role playing game wherein participants create their characters with specific attributes and must follow the rules set forth by the game master in accordance with their character's chosen and developing skills, attributes, and personality traits to accomplish a task or quest.

Simply going through the character creation process can elicit insight into the client's priorities, self-image, needs, desires, and current understanding of their resources for addressing life situations. This process is a way to engage the client in imagining what it is like to inhabit a different role than their own. It is a creative and self-reflective exercise that can be the starting point for many different lines of discussion and inquiry into thinking, motivation, and insight.

It is important to assess the client's level of understanding as it relates to the magic, adventure, and fantasy qualities of the character creation process or if they will respond better to more realistic concepts. Characteristics and skills should be directed at issues the client is facing and strengths/weaknesses they possess themselves but with some element of magical or wishful thinking.

Traditional character creation starts with identity. It is important to encourage creativity and give possible examples but allow the client to come up with these characteristics on their own. Be sure to take notes and have the client keep their own. Basic RPG character sheets can be found on the internet or created and customized easily. Much of the following information comes from the "Basic Roleplaying Quick Start Edition" by Chaosium Inc.

A very basic character sheet includes:

- Identity
- Characteristics
- Skills (Tangible abilities – fixing things, computer skills, cooking, psychotherapy, etc.)
- Weapons (Tools)
- Armor (Defenses, Coping Skills)

Identity

Name: a suitable moniker for their character, can be done after deciding on attributes

Race: Human, animal, monster, etc.

Gender: any and all

Handedness: not completely necessary for therapeutic purposes but interesting to discuss

Height and weight: can be specific or vague

Description: brief physical description, might include coloration, demeanor, style of clothing

Age: an appropriate age for the situation

Distinctive Features: using appearance as a guide, could be a scar, crazy hair,

Profession: career or occupation

Characteristics

Strength: physical strength, not necessarily related to size

Constitution: toughness, resilience, how much injury can be suffered before dying

Size: not necessarily height or strength but overall size

Intelligence: measure of how smart a character is, reasoning power, problem-solving, intuition

Power: personal will, spiritual energy, think superhero power

Dexterity: coordination, speed, agility

Appearance: can encompass many different aspects, charisma, grace, beauty, appeal to others

Usually in RPG's the levels of these characteristics are decided by the roll of dice. Other methods of deciding can be but are not limited to:

-Dividing a total number of points among the different areas. Start with 50 total points and allow the client to divide how they see fit. (similar to stats in a video game)

-Pulling playing cards from a deck randomly and assigning points

-Assigning value by level of perceived importance to the client

Ideally, the therapist will be the game master and will set forth some sort of quest, situation or challenge that will be addressed by the client's character.

The Alignment system:

This is the categorization the character's moral and ethical perspective of characteristics. It can be somewhat complicated for inexperienced or younger clients but can be simplified. The concepts at play are the characters views on "good vs. evil" and "law vs. chaos."

For example, a "lawful good" character typically acts with compassion and always with honor and a sense of duty. "Chaotic evil" characters tend to have no respect for rules, other people, or anything but their own interests. They usually do not work well with teams.

These concepts can be simplified to **good guys** vs. **bad guys** who **always, sometimes, or never** follow the rules.

Activities:

***Be prepared to discuss characters, events, roadblocks, thoughts, feelings, motivation, etc. within the metaphor of the fantasy world.**

1. Create a character with the client. Ask them to divide a sheet of paper into the sections above and write down their responses. Discuss reasoning, and thought process regarding these decisions. Have them write down their decisions and keep the document for ongoing sessions.

2. Create a party for the client's character. Create up to 4 other characters who will assist the client in forthcoming or imagined quests or adventures. They can be created as versions of people in their real life (helpers, friends, bullies), completely imagined, or any combination. Use the same process as their personal character creation.
3. Create "one-shot" adventures i.e. social stories for the character to engage with. Incorporate some of their real-world issues, supports, feelings, and characters while staying in the metaphor of the adventure. Ensure that the rules and protocol for solving the problems are consistent, solid, and understandable. Make them long and complicated enough to elucidate the purpose, rules, and resolution of the problem but short enough to be comprehended and discussed in one sitting.
4. Allow the client to create a "game master" who will decide the adventures, rules, and strategies needed. Let them discuss how the "GM" will make decisions and what their motivation will be in setting the rules and guiding characters through quests.
5. Allow the client to create a character and quests for the therapist. Give them an opportunity to have the therapist discuss decision making and problem solving in the environment of the fantasy world.
6. Create a longer ongoing quest with multiple separate smaller tasks that mirror the real world of the client in some way and follow the rules and structure at work in session and in other role-playing activities.
7. Encourage the client to use expressive art to create a physical representation of the characters and/or the world that has been created. Drawing, painting, clay, play-doh, Legos, dolls, action figures, stuffed animals, collage, costume or any other materials the client has on hand.
8. If and when you are able to see this client face to face, all of these can be reviewed, replayed, and even played out in a sand tray or similar.

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Alignments (Dungeons & Dragons) Wikipedia page

www.carolgraysocialstories.com

www.goodtherapy.com/learn-about-therapy/types/narrative-therapy

www.takethis.org

www.rpgresearch.com

Dragon Talk Podcast with Dr. Raffael Boccamazzo – D&D and Autism 5/5/2016

Dragon Talk Podcast: Gardens of Fo

Building Parent/Caregiver-Child Interactions and Relational Security Linda Law, LPC

Strong relationships have been proven to be a component of healing for various types of traumatic events faced throughout our lives.

The Covid-19 pandemic is one of those traumatic events.

These ideas can help you to use your relationship to build resiliency for your child.

This pandemic is a time like none we have ever experienced in history. As adults, our own ability to cognitively understand and metabolize the impact and changes we are all experiencing is limited. We sometimes forget how much it impacts our children as well- thinking they are not as impacted because they have “less to worry about” or “less responsibility.” *This is a misconception.* Our children feel and experience all these changes as well and are less adapted to respond to and understand these changes; they are less resilient. They take in the changes in our physical presence, our moods, our facial expressions, the tone of our voice. This overload of confusing emotional input can contribute to increasing the intensity of this traumatic impact to us, them and all our nervous systems. This can cause a ruptured sense of safety in both us and our children. Specifically, for those who have had prior trauma, it can also be a consistent trigger. You may witness behavioral regression by your children- this is a natural response. Rather than reprimand them for it- try to be understanding and nurture them through it.

We, as parents or caregivers, can try to use this time to build the relationships we share with our children- even if you are a parent who doesn't live with your child. Though many parents may still be working, the activities have ended, the busy schedules have subsided and the ability to spend more “boring” time together has increased. That time of boredom can be filled with activities that can build the bonds we share with others. If you live separately from your child, now is a great time to write and mail them letters, draw them pictures- creating a story together that you mail back and forth and wait to read when you get it- share stories from your youth that they have never heard before. Let them get to know who you were when you were their age. Most likely you are already staying connected through the various internet or phone methods of connection- now is a time to share them the novelty of old-fashioned ways as well. These are just some ways to reach out help them feel more seen and connected. Creating positive memories and one-on-one time when possible is vital in all good secure relationships.

Below I have compiled a list of just some ideas for bond-building activities. These can be adapted to use with either young children or teens simply by sensing how best to meet your child at their age. Never worry about ‘looking silly’ in front of your children- those are the times we model vulnerability for them.

- Increase your attention to creating MINDFUL activities and do them with your children around the home during this quarantine event; cooking, working on puzzles, teach them new card games-let them teach you a game, draw together,

play board games- or create a family trivia game, go on outdoor walks, bike rides, play frisbee, play catch, kick a ball around. Stay in the moment and remind your children to do the same-validate that sometimes it is difficult to not be thinking about our worries. *If you have more than one child- try to set special time alone with each if possible.*

- Help your child create a space where they can put all their miniature toys out and then let them create a world with them- see how the play happens and validate their ideas- let them LEAD. *Some children will communicate the emotions they struggle to identify through this form of play.*
- Allow the child to have an hour or ½ hour a day where they get to “**be the boss**”- they get to decide what you’re doing for that time period. Let each child take the lead- this allows them to feel empowered- it may improve their calm throughout the other times of the day, and it will build their self-esteem.
- Create space for open play with your child and use the skills of a) Reflection- repeat their words and ideas, b) Imitation- take the lead from them and do what they do, c) Description- just describe what the child is doing in order to help build vocabulary and engagement. Mirroring their facial expressions can also be a helpful bonding tool. Play Simon Says.
- Create a Future Fun board- using drawn pictures or pictures from old magazines or printed off the internet, let each family member create a set of ideas or goals for exciting things to do when the restrictions have been limited.
- Create a Gratefulness Jar- every day write one happy memory from the day and place it in a jar. This will be a great keepsake to reflect on at year end, or @ the Thanksgiving table this year.
- Sit together and create a MEMORY gift jar to be given to a loved one at some time soon. During the time of confinement- write one special memory of a time with Grandma/Grandpa/Aunt/Uncle/ etc. and then later decorate and give them the jar as a gift.
- Practice breathing and tapping exercises with your children to *model* the behavior:
 - Starfish breathing- 1- Close your eyes and breathe deeply. 2- Spread your fingers out like a starfish on one hand. 3- Take your finger from the other hand and trace around your fingers and hand. As you do this, concentrate on only how it feels and let other thoughts float away. 4- Continue until you feel relaxed and calm.
 - Square Box Breathing- Give the visual of a box for breathing in, holding the breath, then breathing out and pausing. Repeat when in need of a calming technique.



- Alternate leg tapping- breathing slowly in and out model tapping the outer thigh area for a count of ten. This will calm both the brain and body-creating connection.
 - Learn the Butterfly Method of tapping. Cross your arms with hands flat on biceps- alternately tap methodically back and forth- this engages use of both sides of our brains and interrupts anxiety, panic and overthinking.
 - Use the internet together to find breathing exercises that feel most fun for your child- there are many! These can all help to instill the ability to self-regulate-by modeling it you reinforce the importance of it.
- Spend time focusing on identifying your child's strengths. These skills can also help with decision making and understanding the perspective of others. One way is to get some index cards or small pieces of paper. Sit and create cards with descriptive words on them along with your child-draw pictures of your child doing something positive, like being a good helper or being a good teacher, a positive role model, a brave sister or brother, a leader, exemplifying caring, thoughtfulness, expressiveness, calm, etc. Then bring them out and use them as CHARADES. Also remember to notice your child's positive behaviors and tell them when you see them.
- Create or search online for an at home Scavenger Hunt to do together. It's also fun to personalize it and make up your own- make it family specific. PLAY with your children-let them see the child in you.
- Help your child create a "Calming Corner" where he/she can go to be still and isolate themselves when they find they are feeling overwhelmed. Let them make a blanket fort- put a few of their favorite things in it and then have them go there when they notice themselves getting upset or agitated. This will help them start to learn to tune in to their body/brain cues. By allowing them to create and use this space- it validates their feelings and reinforces awareness.
- Teach and Learn about the Mind/Body connection with emotions and where we feel them in their bodies. Explain how our emotions cause reactions in our nervous systems and bodies. Discuss how emotions feel in your body- headache, stomach-ache, heavy chest, jitters. Perhaps watch the movie Inside Out, discuss how the different emotions look on Riley and how they impact her body language. Talk about how they impact yours and then how your child thinks they impact their own.
- Create a secret handshake with your child- for only the two of you. Also create a secret code word that your child can use to indicate that he/she's feeling overwhelmed. This helps them learn to identify their sensations of overwhelm or worry and reinforces their ability to share their emotion. When they use the code word- help them by reminding them of one of their coping skills ("Maybe it's time for your calming corner, how about we take a break from this? Let's jump around and get rid of that worry!")
- Read books with your child. Talk about the characters and how their EMOTIONS played into the story. Talk about times you've had those emotions and what memories you have of being a child and having them as well.

- Use the NAME IT, TAME IT, REFRAME IT technique when emotions feel overwhelming to the child. This involves ‘naming the emotion’ that is feeling too much for them, ‘taming it’ by identifying their coping skills and how they can use them to calm down and then ‘reframe it’ in to a positive. I.e. You had so much energy when you felt overwhelmed- how can we use that in a more helpful way? This is where you can also use those emotion cards discussed above, and you can create a list of coping skills to use in the Tame it portion, as well as a list of Positive reframes as you learn them.
- At the end of the day/bedtime- incorporate a Progressive Muscle Relaxation or do some Yoga movements to help them calm down, regain the mind-body connection and mark the transition into bedtime and sleep. There are many available on the internet- but here is a quick narrative you can use: “Lie down in bed and get comfortable and ready for sleep. Now focus on feeling your toes- wiggle them, now make them still- imagine your feet are so warm and still and relaxed, move up your legs and let them feel heavier and more still-then notice your belly- take a couple of deep belly breaths and then let your belly and chest relax, now wiggle your fingers and then let them be still and calm- let your arms relax and then moving up toward your shoulders imagine they feel heavy and let them sink in to your comfortable bed, relax your neck and now your jaw, wiggle your nose and then let your face muscles relax; lastly lets focus on your wonderful brain that has been so busy all day and let it try to calm down and feel softer- imagine you are turning off a switch and letting your brain go to sleep and relax for the night”
- Simply sitting on the couch or floor and cuddling can go a long way to reinforce security and calm for your children. Remember- *the chores can wait*. Take time away from screens and find your own unique ways to treasure the gift of time with your child.
- Finally, Practice Active Listening with your child throughout the day. Set two or three minutes to simply listen to your child- don’t respond with anything other than smiles, head nods or “mm hmms” -give them the chance to be the center of your world for those uninterrupted minutes.

Remember how good it feels to be seen and heard- pass that simple gift on to them.

References

While many of these have been pulled from memory and various life experiences, some were also taken from below:

www.biglifejournal.com

www.nurtureandthriveblog.com

CBT Toolbox for Children & Adolescents - Phifer, Crowder, Elsenraat & Hull- ISBN:9781683730750

CHD Parent Educator Program (*During my time as Direct*

Telehealth and Addictions

Heather Koenigsfest, MA, LPC, ACS

During this time of a stay at home pandemic it is important to find supports and keep a regular schedule. As we move to a virtual format, many clients are struggling without an in-person connection. Often therapeutic sessions with addictions require more preparation and an engaging environment, using a variety of techniques.

Benefits of telehealth

Telehealth allows clients to have a feeling that their health is in their hands (ex. cell phones). Helping patients make healthy choices is one of the goals as a therapist. Allowing clients to make choices in their own environment allows them to take initiative in their treatment decisions.

Another benefit is allowing clients to log their triggers, emotions and coping skills on a regular day to day basis. This allows them to address these issues quickly before they become too intense.

For addiction treatment, that challenge is compounded. Many addictions rise up in the wake of other health issues. It's a great way to maintain quality of care. Working on comorbidity is very important in treating any addiction.

In a helping profession where, frequent check-ins and a strong patient-provider relationship could save a life, telehealth has a huge potential to make a difference.

Overall, web-based telemedicine services have been found to be more effective at reducing alcohol consumed per week than comparison conditions. This allows for clients to access services in times of crisis in the comfort of their own home. This gets rid of the stress off scheduling time off of work and the stigma of seeking recovery services.

The following list includes therapeutic techniques and coping skills to encourage engagement, abstinence and support in a telehealth session format. Using a multi-faceted approach is the best way to treat addictions. Now the client has the power to take greater control over their life, health and happiness. You don't have to practice all of them or try to utilize them all at the same time. Recovery takes a varied path for each person, hence, the combination of coping skills that bring the greatest benefit will vary from person to person. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with each technique, as overtime, life experiences change, exposing you to new situations that might be challenging in different ways. You can't anticipate every scenario, nor plan to the T how you will react or cope. This doesn't mean you shouldn't consider these things, as preemptive prevention can often be the best defense.

Techniques and skills

Tracking and Action

Along with recording patients' conditions, you can use telemedicine to create healthy behavior patterns. By combining tracking and action, you strengthen continuity of care and show patients the way treatment truly helps solve problems. Consider recommending basic behavior-based apps and programs, like fitness and brain-training games. Or, choose a program built specifically around mental health, show patients how to act in their lifestyle changes. When you suggest new, healthful habits around communication and connectivity, you're showing patients the benefit of consistent communication. In other words, you're displaying the benefits of telemedicine in real time and encouraging patients to keep communication up.

Create a Social Support Network

It is common for a person struggling with an addiction to withdraw from healthy relationships and turn to others with the same self-destructive habits. Especially during this time of pandemic starting to isolate is a red flag. Developing meaningful and supportive relationships can help to bolster your sense of belonging, self-confidence and even self-awareness. Not only can they help to banish loneliness, but they can be a sounding board throughout your journey. Joining various support groups may be more difficult at this time but utilizing telehealth by video, online groups and phone calls are greatly beneficial. Here are some examples.

- Faith-based groups
- 12-step
- Peer to peer
- Obtain a sponsor
- NA, AA meetings online
- Call a friend or family member
- Increase sessions with your therapist
- Smart recovery (meetings, chats, forums, worksheets, etc.)

Enhance Interpersonal Skills

The quality of your relationships and support systems can improve by learning how to establish and honor boundaries, how to react to and around these people in social situations, how to cultivate healthful ways of expressing needs and how to understand the role of healthy intimacy. When you're struggling with thoughts of drug use, you need to be able to reach out to those who care and communicate the danger you're facing and articulate that you need help.

- Convey your needs
- Listen effectively
- Understanding others
- Relaying your thoughts and feelings honestly

Spiritual Practices

Spirituality or religiousness has been shown to offer great benefit to those who practice these elements both during and after substance abuse treatment. Not only are these things sources of hope, inspiration, and empowerment, but they allow you a means by which to keep yourself accountable.

- Daily Prayer
- Church or other house of worship, online streaming.
- Bible study
- Faith based support group
- Gratitude journal

Mindfulness Practices/Meditation

Mindfulness practices have an increasing support and massive momentum within the world of addiction treatment and recovery, and are even supported by research. Too often, a person who is struggling with an addiction, or striving to manage their recovery, finds their thoughts stuck in the past or lingering too heavily in the future, in a way that detracts from the power of the present. Mindfulness encourages a person to be present at the moment. In this way, you deal with things as they come, neither berating yourself for your past behaviors nor creating an unhealthy environment of stress and expectation over the future.

When successful in doing this, you will be better able to accept your situation and access the power and skills to change it.

Aspects of Mindfulness:

- A moment to reaffirm your direction and pursuit of wellness
- Time to empty your mind and refresh
- Self-control and temper impulsivity
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Breathing exercises
- Spending time outdoors to clear your mind

Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness meditation can be useful as coping mechanisms to bring about self-reflection and make people more in tune with their bodies. By learning how the mind, body, and spirit are connected through breathing exercises and meditative techniques, for example, these connections can be strengthened and help to form healthy ways to manage stress and tension

Emotional Regulation Skills

Negative emotions can wreak havoc on a person, creating an imbalanced state that makes them more susceptible to drugs or alcohol. Emotional reactions are present in most situations and are something you cannot avoid.

DBT therapy skills can be helpful in:

- Learning to moderate and control your reactions
- Being mindful to crush the negative and cultivate positive ones

- Learning how to process negative emotions and let them go, so you can move forward.

Anger Management

Anger is an intense emotion, one that influences not only your mind but also your physiological state. Your blood pressure, heart rate, and body temperature may rise, fueling your awareness that you're feeling out of control. Collectively, this state may lead you to consider managing these feelings by substance use. Instead you can:

- Articulate your anger in a more assertive way that is not aggressive or confrontational
- Use anger to incite change and lessen the instance of a confrontation.
- Take time away from the conversation
- Immerse yourself in physical activity to calm your mind and release tension

Stress Management

Stress is hugely implicated in addiction. Stress is a normal part of life, however, sometimes people are unable to properly handle it, or they encounter situations that have excessive amounts of stress. By learning how to more effectively manage your stress, you reduce the opportunity for thoughts of using and balance your emotional state to avoid further cues that could perpetuate substance use. Managing stress in a healthful way include:

- Counseling
- Exercise
- Family support
- Learning to confront issues head-on instead of letting them build and fall out of your control

Engaging in Enjoyable Activities

When a person has an addiction, they often let activities that were once meaningful or enjoyable to them fall to the wayside, as they devote increasing amounts of time and energy to the pursuit and use of drugs or alcohol. Now is the time to reconnect with these interests, or branch out and find new hobbies or activities that can distract you and foster a sense of fulfillment, accomplishment, and well-being. Various hobbies may spark your interest, including:

- Gardening
- Crafting
- Sports
- Reading
- Playing an instrument
- Listening to music
- Cooking

- Volunteering is another great option, as it forces you out of your head and your own concerns by allowing you the opportunity to care for another individual or cause.

Develop Healthy Habits as an Outlet

As an addiction accelerates, a person may forget about important aspects of their self-care. The lack of these things all contribute to a general state of disrepair and feeling unwell. To counter them, it is important that you begin to develop better habits, taking care to nurture yourself, body and mind.

- Self-grooming
- Healthy eating
- Exercise – releases endorphins
- Nutrition

Exercise

Healthy doses of exercise release endorphins and help to reduce tension, stabilize moods, and improve self-esteem and sleep habits. Staying physically active can boost both emotional and physical health and manage stress, therefore helping to control cravings and prevent relapse.

Humor

Humor is considered a healthy coping mechanism, as laughter can help people to see things in a lighter frame of mind.

HALT/Strategizing Your Behaviors

Avoiding high-risk situations is key towards protecting yourself from cues or triggers. Within recovery, there is a handy acronym “H.A.L.T.” that can help you to remember the most common mindsets that may lead to substance abuse or thoughts of relapse. This stands for Hungry, Lonely, Angry and Tired, situations that might aggravate you towards using drugs or alcohol to reduce these feelings.

If you can't avoid a situation that makes you feel this way, say an intense day of work, be mindful or control of what you can. When you're hungry, angry, lonely, or tired, you're more likely to feel tense and stressed. And as we already know, tension and stress may lead to relapse. To combat these triggers, use the defenses you've built up and try to relax.

Art, Journaling or Creative Expression

Creative outlets can provide a way to express oneself in a healthy manner.

- Dance
- Painting

- Sculpting
- Drawing
- Writing
- Playing a musical instrument
- Composing
- Journaling

Giving Back

Volunteering for a charity, mentoring others, or putting energy into a positive outlet can be a helpful way of reversing and channeling negative emotions in order to help others.

Evaluating Your Decisions

Similar to mindfulness, essentially bringing your attention to your actions, in a way that observes, anticipates and evaluates what will happen if you make specific choices. Instead of blindly making a seemingly innocuous choice, you will take a step back and look to see if it has any potential for self-harm or harboring cues. In many cases, by doing so, you can avoid these negative consequences.

Problem Solving/Positive Reframing

Sometimes a difficult situation is unavoidable, and instead of being reactive (and turning to drugs or alcohol) you need to be proactive and mindfully and deliberately strategize your behaviors or actions to achieve the best and most positive outcome possible. Instead of becoming overwhelmed by the result, look to the root of the issue and see if it's something you can change to alleviate the negative result or temptation.

Practice Refusal Skills

This is a powerful skill. You cannot always shield yourself from cues and temptations. Because of this, you need to develop the confidence to be able to assert yourself and articulate the answer "no." It may sound silly, but practicing different ways of saying "no" to drugs or alcohol, out loud, and even in the mirror, may be helpful.

Final Thoughts

Use these tools with your client and have them work on them at home. Providing support at a time like this is crucial with all the liquor stores open and delivering alcohol as well. Come up with a relapse prevention plan with your client and develop supports while maintaining

boundaries. There are many applications they can download and track their sobriety, skills app's and resources. Maintaining abstinence with supports is the best treatment for addictions.

Support Contacts & Links

Smartrecovery.org

<https://timetothrivetherapy.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/The-addiction-recovery-skills-workbook.pdf>

<https://aa-meetings.com/new-jersey/>

<https://m.narcoticsanonymousnj.org/Meetings/default.asp>

12-step yoga recovery training – <https://yogainternational.com/ecoursey12sr>

SAMHSA's National Helpline – [1-800-662-HELP \(4357\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/1-800-662-HELP)

Applying a Therapeutic Outlook

Toni Zachos - Kaplan, LCSW

Pandemic Preface.... or is it a Prologue?

On one of the first few nights of this new reality, I sat outside on my deck. I watched and listened to an eerie silence. It smelled different. The scent of outside changed throughout this timeless night. Something was definitely happening. I felt it in my soul, I sensed it at a cellular level. Dark grey clouds hovered over me and encompassed me. It was eerie, chilling and symbolic of what was yet to come. I took a picture, as that's what we do. It didn't capture it. I took another one. That's what our brains have become conditioned to do. It doesn't do it justice.

We went from such a busy, over-scheduled, go-go-go life style, to the polar opposite. Stores, schools, businesses, socializing, and life as we knew it has essentially stopped.

What are our priorities now? The health and wellbeing of our families and loved ones. We are caring about the safety of strangers within our communities and around the world. People are what is most important, nothing else.

We are struggling to find water and toilet paper. No delivery times available for weeks on all different delivery sites. The very groceries we could have had at a touch of a button, we now have to scour the internet for, or put on gloves and masks, while we wait in line, six feet apart.

How dire is this pandemic? We all feel it. I can't think of anything else that has connected every person in our country, no less the entire world. Regardless of race, class, religion, gender, sexuality, status or political views, we are all afflicted by this. Let's recall, these were the very issues that were so prominent in our world just a short while ago. These were the issues that dominated, and divided us so greatly.

Crisis is the opportunity for change.

What were some of the biggest issues monopolizing our county and world prior to COVID-19?

Division: Political, racial, class, religious, gender, sexual identity. How important are these issues now? Could this crippling pandemic connect us?

If we have to find the positives, in even the most awful of situations, (a skill we often learn in therapy and strive to practice at all times) what are they?

Gratitude: Again, a practice we teach in therapy all the time. What are you grateful for now that you may have taken for granted in the past? I am grateful for my job, when millions of people have lost theirs. I am grateful for my family, when millions have been threatened. I am grateful for food, when so many food bank supplies have dwindled. I am grateful for my friends, I can't wait to see them again. I am grateful for following the rules, as I hope staying home will keep me and my family alive. I heard of a medical professional who became grateful for the feeling

of a breeze across their face, as so much of their time has been spent behind a mask. We stand outside at 7:00 each night and applaud our first responders and medical communities. These are the members of society (among others- thank you to teachers, counselors and all the other helpers) who should be idolized all the time.

Humanity has come together during this time. Individuals and industries making masks, where they never had before. Distilleries making, and donating, hand sanitizer rather than alcohol and profits. Can we continue to perpetuate unity for the greater good? COVID-19 knows no barriers. We are all people of the same composition on the inside, regardless of where we live, the color of our skin, our religious, sexual, ethnic or political backgrounds. We are all susceptible. We are connected by the same issues and concerns. Can we take this opportunity to live as a nation and world connected rather than divided? What will the take away from this be? Those are up to us.

Today, I got news that my Theo (Greek for Uncle) Steve died of coronavirus. Not my uncle by blood, but like a brother to my father for longer than I have been alive.

Steve was a veteran, a pilot, and a proud and active member of his Greek church and community. These, and his family, his children and grandchildren, were things that were important to him. Last year my family celebrated 50 years of marriage and his 80th birthday with him, his friends and family. There's that gratitude we keep talking about. His family is blessed to have had him and the wonderful life he created. Back to focusing on what's important. Talk to your family and friends, listen to stories about their lives, cultures and history. People have a lot to teach, we all have a lot to learn.

Steve and his family have couldn't have had more opposing political and social views than my family and me. None of that matters. Can we come to understand that there are many differences in this melting pot of a world? We will never all be the same. Can this lead to unification rather than division? We are now all connected on the same level.

Aside from the grief I have for his family and loved ones, I will think about the gratitude I have for the quality person he was. I will be grateful for the impact he has had on his and our families' and friends' lives.

To Theo Steve and the thousands of other lives lost, rest in peace. Let's let them live on in our hearts as we remember the impact these individuals had on our lives and on society.

A Guide for Families

This pandemic has brought us back to the basics. It has put the focus back on family and spending time together. Since that is the case, let's figure out how to strengthen the family unit, rather than put an incredible strain on it.

Here are some ideas:

Outdoor Activities.

*10 minutes of sunlight provides us with mood boosting Vitamin D.

*Exercising and moving our bodies contributes to increased physical and mental health.

*Play some old school games. Your kids will get a kick out of learning to play some the games you played as kid:

Red Light, Green Light	SPUD	Red Rover	Mother, May I?
Hide and Seek (set boundaries in your own yard)	Freeze Tag	Simon Says	

*Family bike rides, walks and hikes: Add a list of things find on the way for added fun. Everyone pick two items-purple flower, bird, the #3, etc.

Indoor Activities:

*Dance party, Freeze Dance, make TikTok videos. At the very least, have music on in your home. Music has healing and feel good properties. Spontaneous dancing makes children laugh at their parents.

*Use Zoom, HouseParty, FaceTime, or whatever else to have dinner with extended family, happy hours with friends, or simply to keep in touch. Isolation is a hazard during these times.

*Eat dinner together as a family.

*Do arts and crafts. Dig into that bin of colored paper, glitter, paint, etc. At the simplest level, draw pictures of each other, how you feel during this time, whatever you want. Michael's is delivering-get your craft on!

*Make cards to send to family members, first responders or people in nursing homes who can't have visitors.

*Learn a new skill (cooking, baking, sewing, magic, art,) a new language, how to play an instrument (lots of us have instruments at home we don't know how to play) online. Many companies are offering free classes online.

*Play board games. Have family members take turns picking a game.

*Meditation is a proven stress reliever. YouTube has free meditations, CALM, Headspace and many other apps offer free or low-cost versions

*Look at old family photos/videos together. Make family photo albums from the pictures on your phone or on the cloud. Picture storage was one of those stressful things in the back of many of our minds. Sites like Snapfish, Shutterfly, Google Photos, Flickr and Amazon Photos allow you to make photo albums (digital and hard copy), as well as share digital prints with family. What a great way to spread some joy! Make photo albums to use as upcoming gifts.

*Have a scavenger hunt. Look up "scavenger hunt at home" to find many different free ideas.

*Family book club: Let each family member choose a book and read stories out loud. Take turns reading. Make sure to have drinks and snacks- book themed if possible!

*Family Movie Night: Let each family member pick a movie. *Pick a book that is also a movie. Read and watch both. What did everyone think?

*Make your own version of a family show you like to watch: Chopped, American Idol, America's Got Talent.

*Discover a TV series to watch together. Maybe a show or two a night?

*Do your kids play instruments? Have them put on a concert. Helps them practice, and great for their self-esteem.

*Take turns making it a day (like schools do): Crazy Hat Day, Crazy Sock Day, Team Jersey Day, Crazy Hair Day, Pajama Day, Inside Out and Backwards Clothes Day. Get creative and have fun!

*Finding the Positives (Another skill we learn in therapy and aim to practice consistently):
Pandemic Perks- notice them when they occur. We have to find the positives in even the most awful of situations. Allow for and highlight: extra junk food, staying up a little later, not having to wake up so early, extra video game time. If not now, when? Many children play video games that allow them to play, talk to and connect with their friends. This is a way for them to socialize at this time.

*Within crises, opportunities lie. Many of our children are missing the life skills we know they will one day need. Here is the time to teach our kids how to:

-Cook. Make meals together.

-Do laundry and fold it.

-Change sheets on a bed.

-Dusting, vacuuming, mopping, cleaning bathrooms.

-Balance a checkbook.

-Clean up the yard. It will be ready to enjoy in Spring and Summer!

-Clean out closets.

-Clean out and update children's bedrooms. Nothing like a new room! Donate clothes that are too small and toys no longer played with to charity.

Although the relaxed nature of not having to adhere to a schedule may work for some families, for others it may not. Many children and adults do better on a schedule. The predictability can be helpful during this time. Simply make a daily schedule on a white board, computer or phone calendar. Kids arguing over what activity to do? Use "Wheel Decide" (wheeldecide.com). Spin a wheel of various choices. What to do under quarantine wheel is already made, or make your own.

Divide and conquer if there are more than one adults or parents in your family. At times, break it up so family members are getting quality one on one time with each parent.

Although we are focusing on embracing time with our families, this would also be a great time to teach the skill of alone time. We will all need some of that to get through this! This is a time to practice self-care.

We've been forced to slow down and spend time only with our immediate families. Take the time with your family as a blessing. Many of us felt we didn't get enough of it before. Ask yourselves again, what is important?

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A New Reality
Charlotte Stant, RYT 200

I am a sixteen-year-old girl from New Jersey and have lived here my entire life. I am a Certified Yoga Teacher (200 RYT) as well as a Dance Teacher for marginalized children ages nine through thirteen at my local Salvation Army. On the weekends, I work as a volunteer Spanish translator with the Mobile Mexican Consulate and have been taking American Sign Language once a week for ten years because of genetic bi-lateral hearing loss. Lighthouse Counseling hired me to provide private yoga sessions to interested clients, with a focus on generating well-being from a series of yogic movements. It has been my personal experience, as well as what I have witnessed with my students in yoga and dance, that movement is one of the best ways to release negativity.

In the midst of a global pandemic, life has been quite chaotic. It has been a challenging transition for everyone as we adjust to the new normal. As a teen who turns 17 in less than a month, this timing is less than ideal. My “normal” life, along with the lives of millions of others, has come to a full stop, and I may never get to experience the things many teenage girls look forward to. I’m being forced to stay inside with my family, and although they are extremely supportive of me, it is not where I am supposed to be during these years of my life. People my age are supposed to be out with friends taking full advantage of the years that we will never be able to experience again. “You’re only a teenager once” is such a cliché phrase, yet through this experience I’ve found it to be entirely true. At first, the possibility that prom, spring break, graduation, and getting my license could be cancelled infuriated me. I could not believe that everything I’d been looking forward to for so many years would just not occur. But as the days passed, I realized that this was not the way to handle this situation, because it is completely out of my control. After watching the infection count rise dramatically every single day since we moved into quarantine, I now realize that missing a prom is a minuscule problem compared to the dark reality of the situation for others. Millions have filed for unemployment, thousands are dying, and healthcare workers are working endlessly without PPE to combat the virus. While I do not think it’s productive to diminish the emotions that we are experiencing (like resentment about being trapped), I think that it is important to realize that by staying home, we are saving lives, flattening the curve and helping the economy to open sooner. We all must make these small sacrifices now in order to ensure the country is happy and health in the coming months.

Personally, I have tried to make the most out of every day stuck in the house, by focusing on all the good that has come into my life in the past year, as opposed to manifesting negativity. I honestly think that certain aspects of the current situation have benefitted me. The end of Junior year is horrifically stressful between AP exams and the SAT/ACT, and I probably would have been strung out and sleep deprived if life were normal. The quarantine has also given me time to explore things I now enjoy, like painting for my friends or going for a run every morning. I never would have sat down to paint anything if not for the quarantine, nor would I ever have gone for a run as my work-out since I have been in ballet training since I was two years old. Yoga in my room has been a helpful outlet for any stress or negative emotions that I am experiencing, and I am thankful to finally have the time for a consistent daily practice. Movement has been of extreme benefit to me during this time, because it allows me to focus on something other than what is being broadcasted on the news all day long, or my fears about my parents or grandmother getting COVID-19.

This experience has allowed me to talk with those with whom I am close, and not to interact with those I am not. School can be a very stressful environment, and forced interaction with one thousand people every day is both physically and mentally draining. Now, I can focus on the relationships I hold close to me through FaceTime and Snapchat.

I think it's important to find the good in every bad situation. Although it seems as if the whole world is currently falling apart, I think there are many silver linings. This pandemic has taught me, and I believe many people, to be grateful for every single day that you can go out, travel, be with friends and family and experience life to the fullest. The environment has also benefitted from the pause in human travel, and I enjoy reading about decreases in carbon emissions and marine life thriving with less pollution in the water. I think that it is important to acknowledge the good and not to obsess about the bad. I am hopeful that this will all be over soon, and that we can return safely to normalcy, with, hopefully, a new appreciation of all the little things we used to take for granted.