Amy D. Simons, M.Ed., LPC

Licensed Professional Counselor

3633 Wheeler Road • Suite 100 • Augusta, GA 30909

Phone 706.364.0252 • Fax 706.364.0269

www.cliniciansoffice.com

TELECOUNSELING GUIDELINES

**PLEASE read these tips for making the most out of your telecounseling session.**

**Thank you!**

1) **Prepare** – If you have not already sent us your signed *Telemental Health Consent* document, please go ahead and do that. Chances are that if you are reading this, you are already on our office website. If not, go to www.cliniciansoffice.com, click on the “patient paperwork” tab and there you will find the link to the consent form by my name.

There are different ways we may be communicating depending on our circumstances. For video counseling, we will be using a secure, HIPPA compliant service called Doxy.me. **Please make sure your video and audio are working prior to our meeting and follow the tips outlined below.** I really want to both see and hear you if we are using a video communication. The link to my virtual Doxy.me office is http://doxy.me/amysimons . Please type this link into your Chrome or Firefox web browser if using your computer. Android and IOS devices are also supported by Doxy.me. You may access this link and check into my virtual waiting room before your scheduled teletherapy appointment. Once you have entered the virtual waiting room, I will be notified you are waiting, similar to if you were waiting in person in my physical office waiting room. Keep in mind that our meetings may not begin exactly at your schedule session time and know that I will be with you as soon as possible.

If you feel nervous about using Doxy.me for the first time, you may check out this brief YouTube tutorial at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJf9N9sjDLI&feature=emb\_rel\_end. If I believe we may be having trouble connecting, I may call you from my cell phone, which will show up as a blocked number. Please make sure your phone will allow my call to come through. You may also call the office during regular office hours and ask to speak with me if you cannot connect and have not received a call from me. I understand some patients may not have access to internet/technology needed for Doxy.me. If this is the case, our sessions will need to take place over the phone with me calling you from a blocked number on my cell phone.

This is new for me too so let’s be patient with each other and I’m confident we will make it work out and get more comfortable with this new format of meeting as we go forward!

2) **Power & Good Internet Connection** - Please make sure your device has enough power for our session and/or you are plugged in. Also, please find a place where you have the strongest Internet connection to make sure you have enough bandwidth for Doxy.me, if that is how we are communicating.

3) **Confidentiality** - Please make sure you're in a place where you will not be disturbed by other people or pets (quiet, non-disturbing pets are fine :-). It's also important that other people don't hear us speaking.

4) **Audio** – It is a good idea to use earbuds or another type of headset. Many people use the earbuds that came with your smartphone. This helps to keep what I am saying to you confidential. If you don't have earbuds, then just be sure you're close to the microphone on your device so I can hear you well. Also, please be mindful of background noise, and be sure to be in a quiet, secure place (i.e., not on blue tooth in your car or while doing other activities).

5) **Video** -

* **Please be sure your entire face can be seen** by the camera and you're positioned to be eye-level with me if possible. **If you are using a laptop, tablet, or smartphone it's helpful to set your device on a stack of books or something that allows the camera to be positioned at about the top of your head** (about 8-10 inches high, depending upon the device). Holding a cell phones steady for our entire session is tough and also does not free your hands up to write notes or hold other materials needed for our session so please consider that as you prepare for our session.
* Please do your best to have **light shining on your face and not coming from behind you**. It is critical that you are looking at a window vs. having your back to the window, otherwise you'll be backlit. A lamp in front of you is also a good solution.
* Please also keep your device still vs. carrying it around with you because that can make me feel dizzy and it's difficult to focus. Our session time should not be done while you are doing other activities, like you might typically do while chatting with a friend.

6) **Focus** - Please, please, please focus on talking to me just like you would when we are sitting together in my office. Again, please refrain from doing other things rather than participating in your session. You may see me looking down or to the side to write notes about what you're saying, but I promise I'm not doing anything else!! :-)

7) **Stay Present** - Please try to stay present during your session and not leave. Of course, if you need a glass of water or to go to the restroom, that's totally understandable. Please just let me know you'll be back.

8) **Act as Though You're in Person** - **Mostly, it's just a lot more satisfying if we participate similarly to how we would while in person.** It may take a time or two to get used to this format. However, if everyone does their part and preps ahead of time, it can be super easy & really enjoyable. :-)

Please let me know if you have any questions, and I'll see you soon!