



FACILITATING GOOD COMMUNICATION IN TELEREHABILITATION

Clients with cognitive issues

There are some specific considerations for working with this client group.

Dr Rachael Rietdijk suggests:

- Minimise potential distractions which could occur in the telehealth space. For example - remind the person at the start of the session to close browser windows / email applications which may send notifications.
- People with cognitive-communication issues value the social contact aspect of therapy sessions. Having a bit of time and space for “small talk” during a telehealth session is often appreciated.
- Setting some “ground rules” for communication during the telehealth session may be helpful. For example, aiming to wait until the other person has finished speaking before talking.
- Use screen sharing during the telehealth session to support the conversation depending on the person’s needs:
 - A series of simple PowerPoint slide with the key question / task you are presenting to the person can be helpful.
 - Summarising what the person says (typing onto the screen sharing slide) can help with (a) checking you have understood the person correctly, (b) keeping track of where the conversation is up to.
 - If the person is getting onto off-topic information, you could also use the screen sharing slide to note topics to come back to after the core session content (e.g., a smaller text box to the side labelled “Things to talk about later”)
 - You can use screen pointer tools / highlighting text as an extra “non-verbal” communication cue to indicate which topic / task currently being addressed in the session.
- Alternatively, emailing any text / visuals for printing off in advance of the session can be helpful to support and structure the conversation.
- Make use of the telehealth context to integrate more real-life tasks into therapy (e.g., opportunities to include other family members in tasks).
- Fatigue and loss of attention can be harder to monitor during a telehealth session. It can be good to explicitly check in about this more frequently than you would in-person. The telehealth space can also offer opportunities for people to take short breaks and then reconnect to the call.
- It is helpful for people to have something concrete to refer back to after the session. For example, send the person an email after the session with the key points discussed. If there are particular strategies, send this as an attachment which can be printed out and put on the fridge as a reminder.

Contact Felicity.bright@aut.ac.nz for corrections, updates, additions