

International Psychotherapy Institute

Getting Started on Zoom for Secure Videoconference Psychotherapy or Psychoanalysis during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

The patient-therapist dyad is being torn apart by the shelter-in-place national policy to halt the spread of the corona virus that causes the COVID-19 pandemic. To provide continuity of care, suddenly therapists are faced with a choice. Cancel all patient sessions for the next couple of months, or work from home using technology to support teletherapy for continuity of care.

Many of us at the International Psychotherapy Institute have been using teletherapy to reach patients in outlying regions for years. But we remember what it was like to make the jump from the traditional office to the teletherapy setting. You have to take control of technology and give up control over the physical setting in which the patient meets you. It is anxiety provoking, you have to set up a treatment space in your own home, and the learning curve is steep because of the COVID-19 shelter-in-place emergency. So here is help!

Preparing Your Office Setting

This section addresses preparations for your (a) internet connection; (b) physical setting of your office; and (c) camera and sound to get you ready to conduct distance-mediated sessions with a video component. Working from home in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, you will want to set up a neutral background similar to that of an office, and with a door that will prevent intrusion. A solid wired internet connection is best, but wireless works too. A laptop or desktop is best, but an iPad is fine and a cellphone works too. To optimize the strength of your wifi signal, turn off any wifi connections linked to your other devices (such as i-phones, i-pads, TVs, or other computers), and advise the patient to do so as well. The sound and the camera on your device will be good enough. If you want excellent quality transmission and reception you can use a headset (and ask the patient to do the same) and install a good quality camera at eye level, but purchasing these may not be a priority for you during this emergency. Not everyone is comfortable being seen on video, and so each patient-clinician dyad will need to decide whether phone work is preferable. You will need good lighting in front of you. You may need to set up a lamp in front of you for best lighting, and shade any windows in your office if strong light is coming in. Most patients prefer to see you against the familiar background of an office setting. If your at-home setting is too personal, you can hide your actual home by setting up a screen behind your chair, or selecting a virtual background (see section on software).

These arrangements can communicate your sensitivity to issues of privacy, secure connection, and ease of communication, especially in the context of conducting a session in the home setting.

When working with children and adolescents, it is recommended that a video component be used at all times, unless practically unfeasible. The parents need to help the child set up the connection, and then afford the child privacy. You will want to assess whether the parents will respect the child's space. It is best for the child to have a headset with Bluetooth capability, because this lets the child move about freely in the ways that they would ordinarily do in the office.

Your Choice of Software

You will want to select your software. There are many HIPAA compliant platforms that offer medical grade security and reliable transmission of sound and video such as Vsee, Doxy etc. The one we use is Zoom. The Zoom platform provides a significantly enhanced experience over many videoconference platforms with fewer interruptions to the video quality or dropped calls. Nevertheless, it is helpful to establish a contingency plan in advance with the patient. A simple solution would be to use the iphone for the audio component (if long-distance costs are not prohibitive), and the screen for the video component. When doing so, you would mute the audio for both participants to offset any feedback signal. For this back-up plan, both patient and clinician need to have a headset for the phone ready at hand at the start of the session. Each clinician needs to decide at what point that accommodation would be made, but a frequent rule of thumb is to transition to using both phone/laptop (ipad) after no more than three interruptions. When the patient is connecting to you on a phone, it may become necessary to use only an audio connection.

- Test your video and audio at zoom.us/test with a colleague before your first meeting with patients.

Downloading the Platform

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Zoom has provided a set of very useful resources on their website. To access live daily demonstrations, webinars, videos, zoom video tutorials, and free Zoom training, click this link <https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html>. From their materials and from our experience, we have produced the following short-cut guide.

Go to Zoom.us. (If you are a patient, you request free download of Zoom.) If you are a therapist, you go to Buy Now, and choose the business Zoom that offers a Business Associate Agreement which you will sign. This means that Zoom will notify you of any breach, and this agreement is what makes the service HIPAA compliant. You will receive a Zoom room number. The patient who connects to you on free Zoom is in a secure call as soon as he or she is in your private room. You invite the patient to a recurring session or sessions, and this invitation will state your private Zoom room number to your patient.

Instructions to give to the patient

— Establish a quiet private space that is off limits for the duration of the session.

- To enhance privacy, you may wish to have a fan or white noise in the vicinity of the session. Many apps are available for free download that can create white noise.
- Turn off your cellphone notifications, set your phone and other devices for “do not disturb”, eliminate other noises from phones or equipment in your room or in a neighboring room, and close all other tabs open on your computer. Augment the zoom interface so it is full screen to avoid other distractions during your session.
- Ask people at home to respect your space by not intruding or making noise nearby. You may want to leave a ‘do not disturb’ note on the outside of your door while in session.
- Lock your door, so cats, people and noise do not intrude.

If your patient elects to use phone only, then the above instructions are sufficient.

- If you are in analysis, set your couch against a simple background (preferably not a window) and position your device nearby on a table or chair approximately where your analyst would be sitting in relation to you in the office, and somewhat elevated above the level of the couch to facilitate proper viewing by the analyst.
- A headset wired to your device will work best, but a remote headset can work too.
- Set up a lamp in front of you for best lighting, and shade any windows.

Instruction and Invitation to Send to the Patient to Join Zoom

If you do not already have Zoom on your computer or device, you should download it before the meeting from the www.zoom.us website at this link: https://www.zoom.us/download#client_4meeting. This will be free to you. Once you connect to my Zoom room, you will be in a secure, confidential space. This is medical grade, secure Zoom. Download the “Zoom Client for Meetings”, or if you are using a smartphone or tablet, scroll to the bottom of the page to choose the correct app for your device.

That done beforehand, then you will be able to use Zoom to accept the link I send you for joining the re-occurring meeting. You can join from a hand held device or laptop or desktop, or you can call in using the phone numbers shown below. Remember to turn on your video. You will follow the instruction below for how to join the session on the agreed appointment date and time. For example:

(Your name and email address here) is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: <https://zoom.us/j/> your room number shows here

Or iPhone one-tap :

US: a zoom phone number and/or room numbers will show here

Or Telephone:

Phone numbers will show here

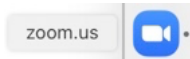
Meeting ID: your meeting id will show here

International numbers available: f <https://zoom.us/u/bIN4RMfrNInstruction>

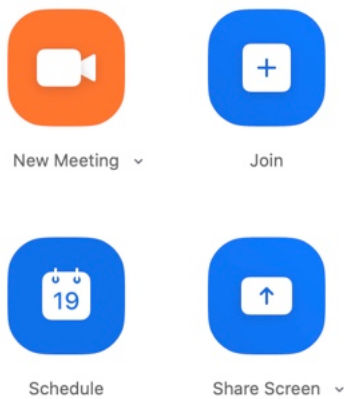
Instructions for Therapists on Starting the session

You go to the Zoom Home panel and click on “New Meeting” and then “Join with Computer Audio”. You will see yourself on the screen. When the patient arrives, you invite the patient in.

You open the room a couple of minutes ahead of time. That means, you click on the zoom icon on your dashboard.



When the Zoom screen comes up, you click on “New Meeting.”



Click on “Join by Computer Audio”. Remember to check that your video is on, or click on the camera icon to start it. The patient calls in one minute before the appointment time.

Join Meeting

Meeting ID or Personal Link Name
111-222-3333

Your Name

Don't connect to audio

Turn off my video

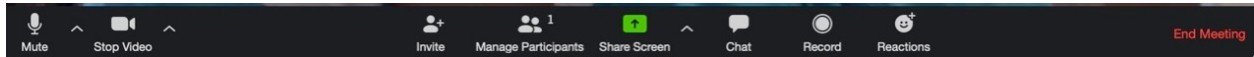
Cancel Join

Once the session begins, you lock the room.

Locking the Room

Once the patient joins, you should lock the room to keep anyone else from accidentally intruding. If this is a conjoint session (or a group) do not lock the room until all have joined. Then go to the bottom of your screen to “Manage Participants”. In full screen this is now at the bottom.

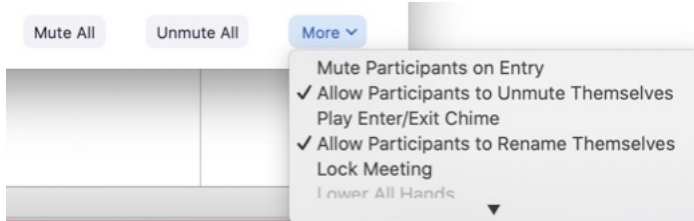
Click on “Manage Participants” mid-way along the bottom menu bar.



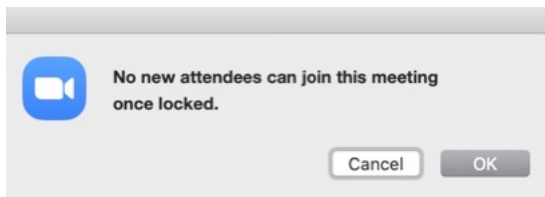
Click now on “More” to the right of that same menu bar.



You will see “Lock Meeting”. Click on “Locked Meeting”



There will then be a dialogue box to ask if you are sure that you wish to lock the virtual room, and then you click “OK” and then click on the “X” to remove the dialog box that is blocking your screen.



(If you are not in full screen, “More” is to the right side. The rest is the same.)

Once you master this, you may select an even more secure way to use Zoom. You can set up separate “recurring meetings” for each patient, so each one has a different meeting ID, and then you do not need to lock the room because it is impossible for anyone else to join. You can also enable a waiting room feature to show up when you schedule a new meeting by going to the settings page of your Zoom account. <https://zoom.us/profile/setting>. Then you use the Zoom virtual “waiting room”, and then “admit” them to the your Zoom room.

Choosing a Screen View

At the top right side of your screen you can select Full Screen (the icon for that is a larger single square). By hovering the mouse arrow in the right-hand corner of your screen just below the top ribbon, you will see the words “Gallery View” or “Speaker View”.

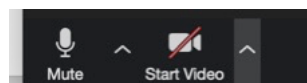
Gallery View shows side by side images of you and your therapist/analyst.

Speaker View shows whichever of you is speaking full screen, plus a small image of the other.

By clicking on one or the other, you can switch between Gallery and Speaker views if you want to (but for the patient lying on the couch this is irrelevant).

Controlling the icons for microphone and camera at the bottom left of your full screen.

On the bottom of the screen at the left-hand side you will see a microphone icon and a video camera icon. You can click on the video-camera icon to turn it off and stop yourself from being seen.



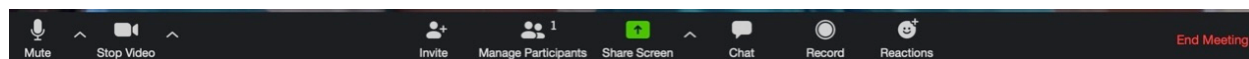
You can click on the microphone icon to mute yourself. You can also mute yourself by clicking on the “Mute” sign at the top right-hand corner of your image.



Three things to look out for.

- 1) Once you mute, it says unmute but that does not indicate you are in the “Unmute” mode: it is just to indicate that if you want to unmute, you must click on it.
- 2) Once you are in Gallery View, it says Speaker View, but that does not indicate you are in the speaker view mode: it is just to indicate that if you want to change to Speaker View, you must click on it.
- 3) Look at the camera or at a point just below it, and move your eyes from there to the patient’s face and back again.

When the meeting is finished, click on “End Meeting” at bottom right, or the “X” at top left or right of your menu bar.



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