

BASICS FOR VIDEO RECORDING SESSIONS

STORAGE OF RECORDED SESSIONS

It is best to be very careful with security for your recordings. Ideally, buy an external hard drive, and once you've had a chance to watch your recording, move it to the hard drive. Keep the hard drive somewhere separate! (I have a friend whose laptop AND his external hard drive got stolen.) You can organize files on your hard drive by client. Each recording probably needs to have a date so you don't get lost, and I often put asterisks on the label, or a note to myself, eg: "Rob B, 11/22, ***defense work, m.28."

ON ZOOM:

-Best to use side by side view of your client AND yourself. (I put a big sticky note over my own face on the screen so I'm not tortured or distracted by my own image!) Recording yourself as well will enable you to track your own behavior: facial expressions, gestures, etc. It also helps us notice "bad" habits, like fiddling with our hair or looking away from the client, when it is important for us to be tracking closely. (Yes, it's torture at first, but it's also egalitarian; it is another way to show our clients that we don't see them as "specimens", or a collection of symptoms, but rather as collaborators in the process.)

-When you watch yourself, you'll notice how it looks when you write a note about something: it looks as if you might be checking your phone! Better to make it explicit when you write a note, so they don't feel your drop in attention: "If it's OK with you, I'll be taking a few notes. But if it feels bad to have me look down, will you let me know?" Best of all, don't write, stay present! You'll have the recording to consult. I merely make a note of the time when something "special" seems to happen, eg "moment 35; state shift?". Or if I do need to make a note, I try to make it explicit, and collaborative: "I want to write that down so we can return to it; so important!" so there's no guessing.

When you finish a session, the Zoom recording "converts" from the zoom program to an mp3 file on your desktop. A dialog box should open on your screen after you close out of the zoom meeting. If a session seems worthy of saving and reviewing, I move (drag and drop) the file off the dialog box onto my desktop, re-label it and then move into a file for viewing. For security it's best to keep as few videos on your computer at a time as possible. Employ your trusty external hard drive.

RECORDING IN PERSON:

-Ideally, you will want to try to record yourself in this situation as well as your client, but at the beginning it can be cumbersome and daunting, so do what feels possible. The only drawback is that for those of us whose clients move around a lot, or even get down on the floor, the camera doesn't capture the "action". This is an extra reason to be certain that the sound quality of your recording method is as good as possible.

-CAMERA:

You can spend thousands of dollars on a fancy video system. Or you can get a cheap but extremely effective camera on line. If you got for the “budget” version, the main consideration is the quality of sound the camera captures. Read reviews.

-SMARTPHONE:

However, many people nowadays seem to be happy with the results they get from their smartphones. You can simply prop it on a small table beside you, where you can see that it is capturing your client, or you can buy a tripod. They come in mini and full-sized versions. The drawback with a phone is that video eats storage. You’ll probably need to upload your videos to your computer between sessions. And, since we aren’t going for great art, you can adjust the settings on your phone so that your recording fits in a smaller file, using less space. So you can select a resolution and frame rate. Using the 4K options take the most space. If you want to significantly reduce video file size, choose between 720p and 1080p HD at 30 fps.

-COMPUTER:

To get a wider view, and possibly better resolution and sound quality, a laptop or even a desktop computer can be used to record: you can connect a moderate quality external camera, and a decent external mic, and you’ll be very pleased with the results. A tripod will help you position the camera, especially if you want to get fancy and include yourself.....

-TO INCLUDE YOURSELF IN THE PICTURE:

Use a mirror! It could be a full-length one propped on the floor at the right angle, or a half sized one angled to capture you while the camera is pointed at your client. A rough guide to this is that if when you’re sitting in your chair you can see the camera over your shoulder, you’ve got the mirror situated well. Trial and error will show you how to make it work.

INVITING YOUR CLIENT TO AGREE TO HAVING SESSIONS RECORDED:

The key to encouraging people to agree lies in our own attitude. I genuinely know that the clients whose work I record and watch later get the best version of my therapeutic presence and skill. There is nothing as supportive and encouraging for me as knowing I am being supervised.... Even if it’s by myself. It really sharpens my focus!

Some people have the “permission to record sessions” form included in their intake packet, if they use one. I try to remember to mention that I record sessions in the first communication I have with a prospective client, and I say it confidently and positively, almost as if I’m saying “you’ll be glad to hear I record my therapy work”, and I very rarely have anyone refuse. Saying something like “the model of psychotherapy I follow means that I rely on video recordings of my sessions to self supervise. This helps me be as useful for you as I know how. I’ll send you a consent form that enables you to give me explicit permission to record, and how the recordings

are protected, and so forth. Then you can ask me any questions about it at any time during our work together.”

Kate Halliday 2021. Use and adapt freely.