

Gympass

Making the most
of virtual therapy



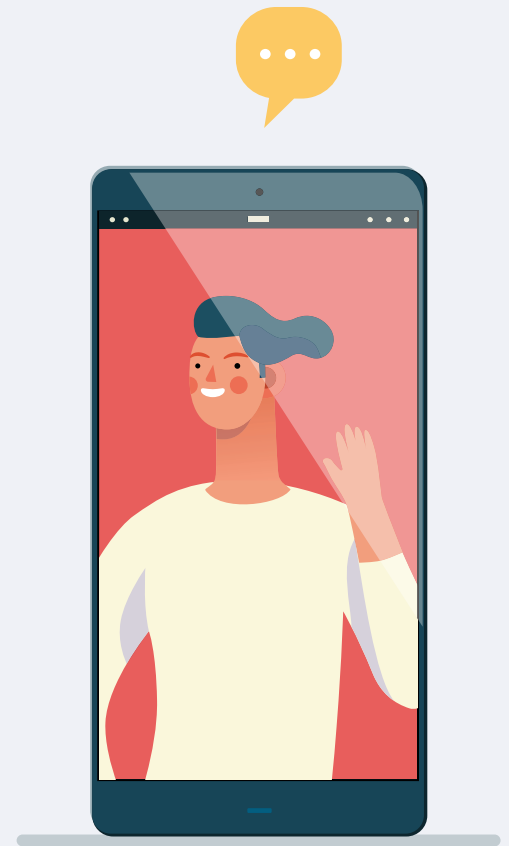
Summary

COVID-19 and the lockdowns that came with it have transformed the way we look at online therapy. Now that people are realising it works, it's here to stay.

- 1. Mental health comes first**
- 2. The perks of endorsing virtual therapy**
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1. Mental health always comes first

There are many different mechanisms to help us cope with stress, anxiety and frustration. By the time we reach our adult lives, these techniques become more evident and hopefully, more effective. Some seek comfort from loved ones, and others get their endorphins flowing with exercise, turn a passion into a talent through art or sports, or learn to express feelings through writing. The methods out there may work well; however, sometimes dealing with life's challenges can become overwhelming to handle alone. That's when professional support may be the solution.



Research has shown that verbalising feelings have a significant therapeutic effect on the brain. Talking about problems, concerns, achievements and expectations with someone specially trained to help you understand and manage your feelings is a huge step forward for your well-being. While many people believe that personal feelings should not be openly discussed, shutting down emotions can culminate in more severe problems, such as chronic respiratory diseases, cancer, diabetes, and depression.

The current state of uncertainty generated by COVID-19 has changed several aspects of people's lives and increased the demand for psychological support. Due to recent social distancing measures, many professionals and patients have moved towards online therapy solutions. The effects can be life-changing, and here's why.

2. The perks of endorsing virtual therapy

Online therapy is not something new. It started growing alongside the rise of the internet back in the '90s. People have benefited from it since then, and research suggests that online therapy works just as well as regular face to face sessions. Many other studies also show that the quality of the relationship between therapists and clients are equal in both situations, confirming the value of therapy in the digital era.

While mental well-being is a largely addressed topic, older generations still aren't very comfortable seeking therapeutic help. However, one of the most surprising effects of COVID-19 is that online therapy has opened doors for those who wouldn't otherwise seek help, in particular patients who feel stigmatised or intimidated by a professional sitting right across the room and staring at them.

Online therapy sessions have made it easier for people to open up and acknowledge their feelings.



1

People are looking positively at digital self-care

When meeting another person through a video camera, people tend to act naturally more frequently than they would do when face to face. Online disinhibition is real and leads people to get involved and more inclined to hear about solutions to their issues. It's worth highlighting other factors that influence positively the habit of getting psychological guidance, such as: being home, having a private space, not having to drive to an appointment, not worrying about childcare, and more importantly, not being concerned about finding a professional of your choice that works in your area. The ability to choose amongst therapists all over the country also helps to find a successful match.

2

Companies experience a better engagement rate from employees

Companies have already noticed that providing online therapy sessions is hugely positive to business results. This initiative comes along with the knowledge that depression has become the leading cause of health issues worldwide, and lack of support for people with mental disorders, coupled with the fear of stigma, prevent many from accessing the treatment they need to live productive lives. Depression is the leading cause of reduction of productivity and absence due to sickness. Low employee engagement rates are the top causes for poor performance and loss of talents, and digital mental health care options offered by your organisation can make it easier for teams to feel supported, promoting all sorts of achievements.

3

Professionals seek new methods for improvement

Most traditional psychotherapists were forced to adapt their practice to online counselling, guiding patients to overcome any type of resistance. While therapists are fundamentally trained to interact with clients in daily interactions, they first learn to stay focused on how to support their patients sitting across the room with simple gestures that are used to create an atmosphere of comfort. The loss of these, on the other hand, encourages creativity and stimulates clients' attunement, self-regulation, supporting progress over time.

3. How to start the conversation

Now that we now how powerful digital therapy can be for mental health improvements, you may be wondering how to recognize the right tool for your organization.

Some behaviors can be alarming and are clear indicators there may still be some discomfort about it. The triggers below may help you guide people through the process of seeking help.

Watch out if...	How to approach the therapist
People can't stand staying connected longer, and the exhaustion is visible.	Can you help me find an option to stay close to people but not having to check social media?
There is no boundary between work and personal hours.	What's the best way to talk to my boss about it?
My team is feeling a lot of more anxious than usual.	How do I recognise if I have anxiety attacks? And how to cope with them?
Employees can't stop worrying about COVID-19.	What can I do to redirect my thoughts?
People seem afraid of losing their jobs. That already makes them less productive than before.	Is that normal? How can I get back on track?
The behaviour of peers or leaders is negatively impacting teams during the quarantine.	How can I protect myself without harming our relationship?

Other questions can come in handy in the first chat with a mental health professional. Share that with your teams.

- ▶ When is the best time of day for me to read the news and inform myself?
- ▶ What's the difference between thoughtfully and anxiously focusing on this problem?
- ▶ What does it look like to be responsible for my health during this time?
- ▶ What anxious behaviours or habits might get in the way of a healthy relationship with work?
- ▶ What people in my life are examples of maturity which can be useful to me at this time?



4. Making the most of the virtual sessions

Discussing mental health care openly, and implementing it daily across your organization has several benefits. It eliminates many barriers and brings people closer to a healthier state of mind in all aspects of their lives. Sharing some tips on how to make the most of online therapy is an essential part of your new role as a leader. Here are some benefits that online sessions offer with no restrictions.



Therapeutic process is more consistent

Remaining involved and committed to therapy is not the easiest of tasks, but having the chance to do it online makes it much more manageable. When we stop to think about how online therapy decreases absenteeism due to poor weather conditions, schedule issues or sickness. The convenience of an online environment allows patients to maintain regular attendance, and the progress can be accelerated or even be more significant.

No more stigma

Online therapy has become an ally when it comes to eliminating the social stigma associated with counselling. Therapists reveal that accessing patients' problems and beliefs became easier once they saw the news, social media and their friends [talking about the benefits of seeking support](#) in difficult times. Given the fact that it became a trend in the past few months, more people had the chance to overcome their fears and now understand that therapy is for all of us, something helpful in a reality that leads us to believe we are not supposed to be fragile.



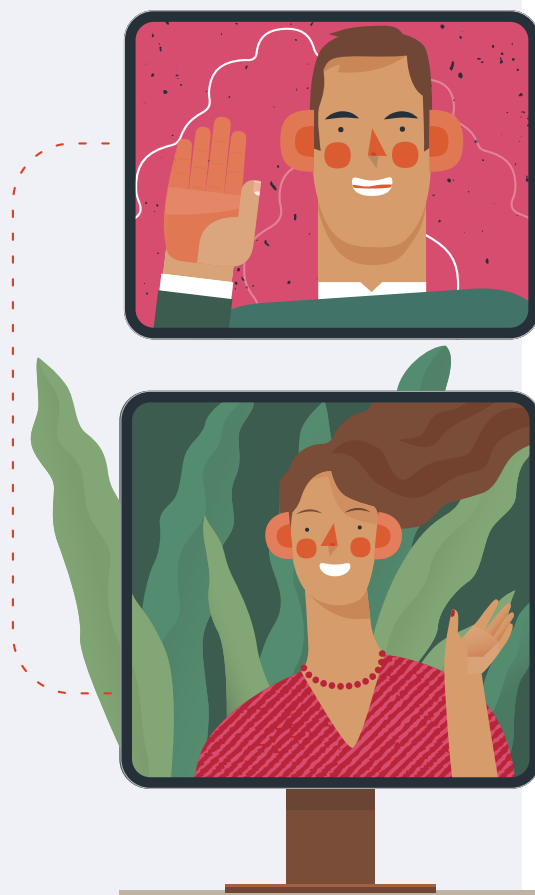


Feedback is more frequent

Virtual sessions are not only new to patients but also therapists. A lot of professionals who recently shifted online are looking to develop, improve and ultimately constructive feedback. Not everyone knows how best to transform their in person expertise for the digital world but now is the chance to learn and become an advocate in this process. Encourage your team to talk to the therapist about technical issues such as the platform itself, sound and video quality. But also make a plan to share honest and transparent feedback of their experience. Be curious about how it makes them feel during and after the session, and throughout the week – especially during work hours. Assess if the sessions are useful from a professional point of view and if the new service coverage is being helpful somehow.

Persisting is uncomplicated

The primary benefit of therapy is that its effects are long-lasting. While working through issues, patients are also developing the best tools to help them manage future feelings and situations. It doesn't only apply to professional life; it goes way beyond. It is proven that happy people treat others better, express and work better. Reinforce the idea that digital therapy solutions are out there for practical purposes only, even though employees might feel they don't need to address work-related topics. If they look closely at their thoughts and actions, learning how to express feelings about their lives, the whole process gets internalised quickly, the methods will continue to be applied, and the effects will last a long time.



5. Become a Gympass partner



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