

An OT Guide for Pediatric



Parents who have opted for online therapy (also known as Telehealth or Teletherapy) are grateful after analyzing the progress of their children who have utilized online platforms. In telehealth or teletherapy, parents are linked as an active participant or co-therapist with the support of the OT - to implement therapy strategies at home.

Role of the occupational therapist:

The OT, continues all the clinical responsibilities just as s/he would in an in-person session, including but limited to: assessment, setting goals, documentation, parent training, evaluating progress and revising goals. Telehealth does not remove any existing goals of an OT.

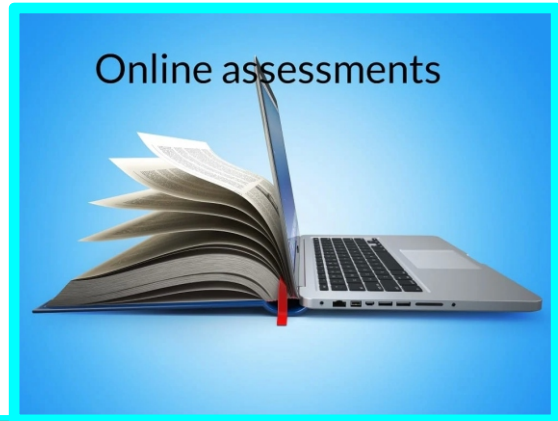
Role of the Parent

Parents play a key role as an onsite support person to follow therapy instructions and assemble materials required for the sessions. They are involved in physically guiding the child wherever necessary and work along with the occupational therapist as a co-therapist. Parents also follow a home program offered by the OT, just as they would during in-person sessions.

Tech Set-Up

A good internet connection, laptop/I-pad, a camera to track and analyze the response of the child, audio supports, phone by the side to communicate during any technical glitches are essential.

Parents unable to afford expensive gadgets may connect through WhatsApp calls for consultations.



Online Assessment and Documentation

Telehealth by VIRTELCO can be utilized in familiar environments including home, school and play area. It provides comfort during initial assessment especially for children with Necrophobia or a fear of hospitals as they may not cooperate in a clinical set-up the first few visits.

An online assessment procedure would involve the therapist observing the child during a live online session supported by video recordings from parents. Therapist will also collect information from caregivers through interviews, editable checklists, and caregiver questionnaires. All of this put together makes documentation more effective and transparent. A report is generated following the detailed evaluations and relevant goals are set aiming for progress.

Environment

The child's work station or workspace at home must be free of clutter without distractions to facilitate optimal learning. Children with visual hypersensitivity may get distracted easily ; hence, setting comfortable illumination and movement breaks are essential. A calm workspace can further improve attention and focus of the child.



Intervention

Share screen option and whiteboard, can be used for sharing videos, texting, drawing and coloring for the student. The therapist will also use physical demonstration of activities to help children and parents learn strategies virtually.

As for children with difficulties in sitting and focusing the therapist may recommend activities before the online session which can help the child stay calm and be more receptive during an online session.

Here are OT teletherapy ideas and activities that can be easily utilized by occupational therapists

Scavenger Hunt

Facilitating a scavenger hunt can be an excellent activity for the initial session. A scavenger hunt offers a chance to observe your client's ability to attend, follow directions, navigate around a room, locate and transport items, use appropriate force for picking up items, and more. This activity allows for natural social interaction when the client shares their finds. Another bonus of beginning with a scavenger hunt? Get an idea of materials that they have available by asking them to find items such as paper, tape, beads, and something they can write with. Take note of what the client shares so that you can use the items in future interventions. A scavenger hunt is a low-prep activity that can help build rapport, address a variety of skills, and help with future intervention planning.

Yoga

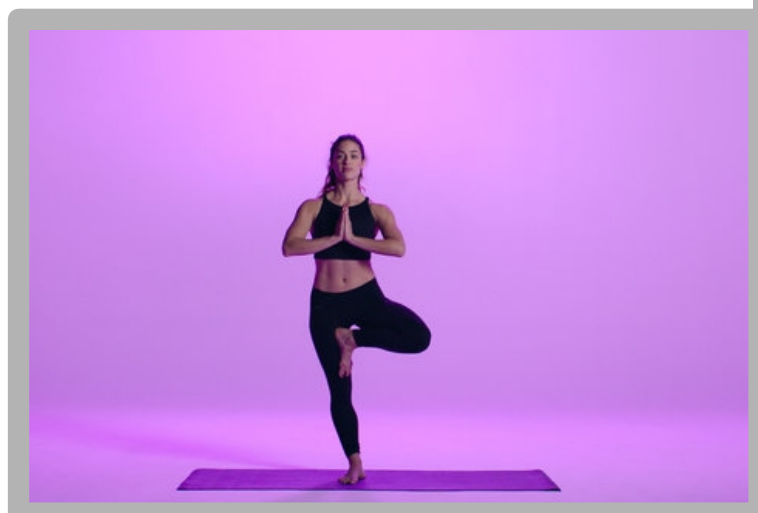
Yoga is a therapeutic intervention that addresses many common occupational therapy client needs. From body awareness and sensory regulation to following directions and working on interception skills, yoga is a flexible activity that is great for teletherapy. If your client is a visual learner, share pictures of the poses on your screen. Working on sequencing? Teach and share a variety of poses and have your client teach them back to you in order. Clients who attend for shorter periods of time can do a brief yoga pose (with the aid of a visual timer as needed) in between other therapeutic activities.

Manipulate Household Materials

Another OT teletherapy idea involves manipulating household items. How many things can you do with a just a stack of pennies? Palm-to-finger manipulation; finger-to-palm manipulation; build a coin tower; spin them on the edge; flip them over to make alternating heads and tails patterns; use them to make outlines of shapes; put them in and take them out of your pocket; use a pincer grasp to cross the midline and put them into a cup . It can be a challenge to coordinate having the same materials on both the therapist and client end, but using one accessible material for multiple purposes can reduce the need for the client and/or caregivers to focus on organizing materials. Instead, that valuable time and effort goes into intervention time. Additionally, these materials can spark creativity for clients as they come up with their own methods of using the material. Other simple materials to explore with your client? A sheet of paper, pen or pencil, elastic band, cotton balls, and clothes pins.

Let's Play a Game

Is your client motivated by a little bit of friendly competition? Share a digital board game on your screen. If it is appropriate, make up the rules together with your client. If your client needs more structure, provide a visual guide. The content of the game should address your client's goals and may include challenges like 10 crisscross jumps (for a midline crossing goal), drawing a rectangle (for a visual motor goal), or bear walking to the door and back (for a client who is working on sensory regulation).



Obstacle Course

Many pediatric clients get wide-eyed at the mention of the words 'obstacle course.' They will be so thrilled to learn they can make one in their own home. In teletherapy, an obstacle course might look like crawling under a chair; completing animal walks; climbing over couch cushions; laying in prone to draw a picture; log-rolling from one area to another; tossing socks into a laundry basket; jumping over a rolled-up towel, etc. The heavy lifting involved with setting up the course will offer a great proprioceptive benefit as well. Does your client benefit from visual schedules? Draw a schedule on the virtual whiteboard to encourage more independence.

Write a Letter

Here is another easy to implement OT teletherapy idea. It is always so meaningful to both write and receive a hand-written letter. Allow your client to think of someone they would like to write to. It could be a special grandparent, cousin, or favorite aunt or uncle. If a friend's birthday is approaching or your client recently celebrated their own birthday and needs to write a thank you card, even better! If that doesn't strike an interest for your client, suggest that they write their letter to a hero or their favorite fictional character.

To check out all therapeutic activities contact us on www.virtelco.com.

