Tips and Strategies for Successful Telehealth ABA Therapy Sessions

Cigna Behavioral Health Series

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Agenda

- Overview of Telehealth
- Telehealth in ABA
- Candidates for Telehealth Therapy
- Preparing for the Session
- Challenging Behavior
- After the Session
- Generalization

Overview of Telehealth

- What is Telehealth?

- History of Telehealth

- Why the need for Telehealth in ABA?
    - COVID-19
    - Loss of therapy is detrimental to some children; thus, telehealth format provides medically necessary therapy

"Telehealth is the use of communication technology to deliver healthcare services" – Ferguson et. al., 2019

Telehealth in ABA

- Individual Therapy
- Group Therapy
- Parent Training
- School Meetings

- Various other uses including other therapies, doctor visits, business meetings, etc.

Candidates for Telehealth therapy

Child development skills needed

- Cooperates with adults
- Sits and attends
- Developing play and language skills
- Answers questions and follows instructions

Candidates for Telehealth therapy

Parent skills needed

- Knowledge of basic ABA strategies
- Understanding of the child's goals and implementation
- Work with therapist to manage challenging behavior

Getting Started, The Basics

- Scheduled time with provider
- Ensure you have a link, login, or phone number to the session
- Confirm access to the video application service via browser or download
  - Teams, Zoom, Cisco Webex
- Strong Wifi connection
- Enabled microphone and web camera

Preparing for the Session

Prepare the environment

- A set space promotes structure:
    - Specific room, desk, area, etc.
- Quiet environment
- Limit distractions
    - Remove toys within reach, turn off the TV, limit visual distractions

Preparing for the Session

Get comfortable with the technology

- Do a practice run with accessing the link
- Test your microphone and video
- Test your Wi-Fi strength
- Create a backup plan with the BCBA or therapist if you lose connection
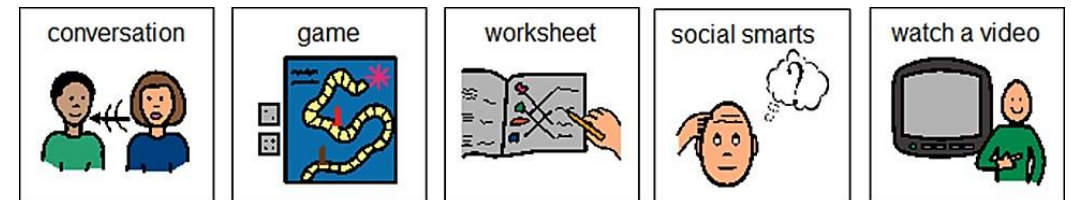- Troubleshoot any issues

Preparing for the Session

Use visual schedules
- Both prior to and during the session
- Can be written or visual

My Daily Schedule

1. Get dressed
2. Eat breakfast
3. Online school
4. Eat lunch
5. Online school
6. Take a break
7. Telehealth session
8. Free time
9. Eat dinner
10. Get ready for bed

conversation   game   worksheet   social smarts   watch a video

Preparing for the Session

Set expectations for the child

- Have a conversation before every session
    - Look at the screen
    - Stay in the area
    - Answer questions
    - Follow directions
    - Ask for help if needed

Preparing for the Session

Learn about ABA Strategies

- First, then
- Token boards
- Reinforcement
- Motivation

Preparing for the Session

Prepare your materials
- Get a list of activities from the therapist in advance
- Have a variety of toys/activities available, you never know when the child's preferences may change

Preparing for the Session

Stay nearby
- Be available to support if there is challenging behavior
- IT support

Session in Progress...

What if there is Challenging Behavior?

- Don't panic!
- Ask for help and communicate
  - The therapist will coach you through it

Challenging Behavior

Do	Don't
• Tell your child what you want them to do • Help and coach your child to do what they need to do • Teach your child to ask for help • Wait for your child to be successful • Be patient with your child and yourself	• Focus on or talk about what your child is doing wrong • End an activity because of challenging behavior

After the session

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Review with the therapist

- Ask any questions you have about the session, goals, or strategies used

Generalization

Practice

- Replicate the activities with your child
- Try the skills in lots of different activities
- Practice with siblings or other family members

References

- Ethics guidance for ABA providers during COVID-19 pandemic. (BACB, 2020).

- Ferguson, et. al., 2019. Telehealth as a model for providing behavior analytic interventions to individuals with autism spectrum disorder: a systematic review. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders. 49(2), 582-616.

- Wacker, et. al., 2017. The long-term effects of functional communication training conducted in young children's home settings. Education and Treatment of Children. 40(1), 43-56.