



# Telemental Health

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- Zoom Poll





# What is Telemental health?

The use of communication and other technologies to provide and support mental health care. Examples include:

- Videoconferencing (synchronous)
- Telephone (synchronous)
- Internet and Email (asynchronous)
- Biofeedback remote monitoring (asynchronous)



# Questions to determine when telemental health should be used

**Is it in the best interest of the client questions:**

- Does it increase access to mental health services?
- Does it improve mental health outcomes?
- Does it increase the efficiency of providing treatment?

**Are you equipped to do it questions**

- Have I been properly trained?
- Do I have appropriate technology?
- Do my clients have appropriate technology?





## Is it as effective as face-to-face?

- Symptom reduction found for:
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - PTSD
  - Eating Disorders
  - Parent/Child Conflict
  - Addiction
  - Anger
- High patient satisfaction
- Strong therapeutic alliance

(Backhaus et al., 2012)



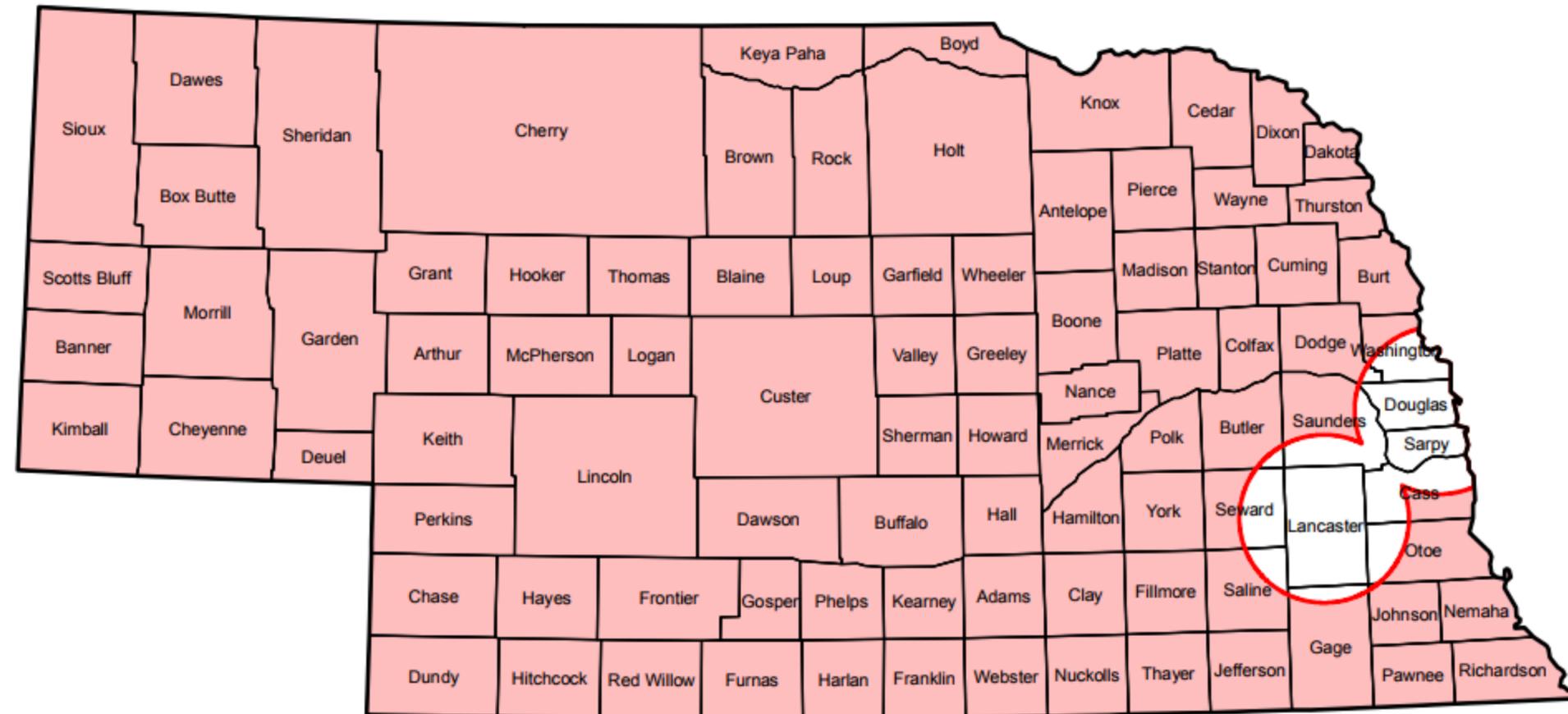
## Our experience of providing telemental health

- In 2001 started providing individual, couple, and family therapy to rural Nebraska communities with schools as end-user sites.
- In 2008 we received a USDA Higher Education Training Grant to develop an integrated collaborative care telemental health (videoconferencing) training program.
- In 2009 we began providing telemental health to 3 rural communities.
- Our students have provided approximately 7500 hours of therapy via telemental health



# State-Designated Shortage Area Psychiatry & Mental Health

## Nebraska



 State-Designated Shortage Area

0 25 50 100 Miles

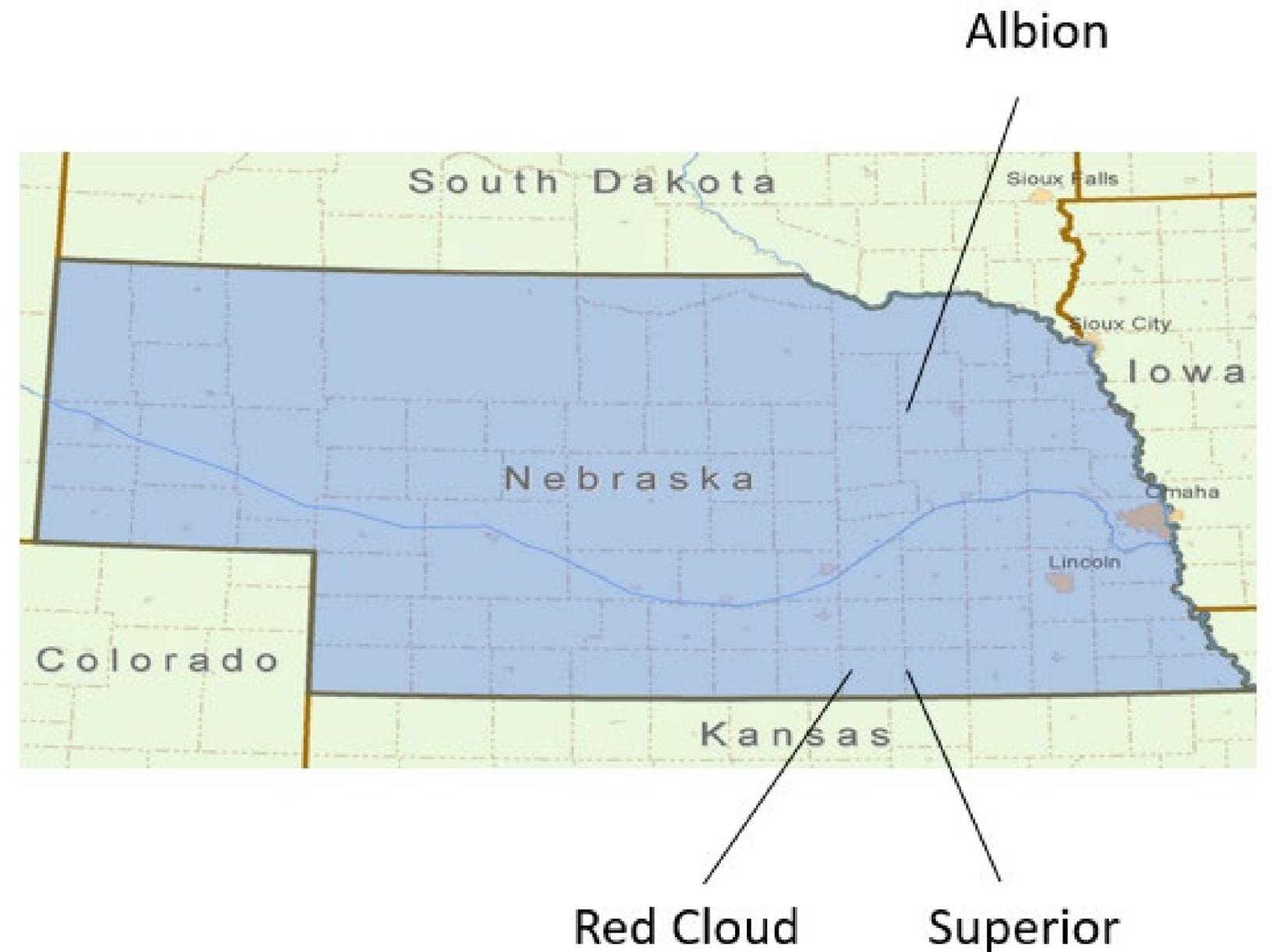
Source: Rural Health Advisory Commission  
DHHS - Nebraska Office of Rural Health  
Statewide Review: 2016  
Last Updated: Sep 22, 2017  
Location: K: RURAL\_HEALTH > Rural Health Intern > State Shortage Areas

Cartography: Andy Pedley | Community & Regional Planning Intern | DHHS  
For: Marlene Janssen | Exec. Director, Rural Health Advisory Commission  
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- Mental health care is integrated with local medical services
- Clients go to the medical clinic/hospital for mental health care
- Student therapists are physically present in rural communities monthly
- Telemental health is integrated into the COAMFTE training program





- Community engagement
- Collaborative care
- Blending of research and clinical work
- Task shifting
- Advances in technology





# Therapeutic Environment

Physical Environment

Virtual Environment

Therapist

Client

Therapist

Clients



# Physical Environment: Limitations in control over the environment

Case Example



## Physical Environment: Limitations in field of view

"There was one time I didn't even know she brought her husband into session... until she finally looked over at him and I had to ask 'who are you looking at.'"



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# Virtual Environment

Select technology that will best facilitate treatment outcomes

- Characteristics of the technology
- Quality of the technology
- Client Access
- User friendly
- Security

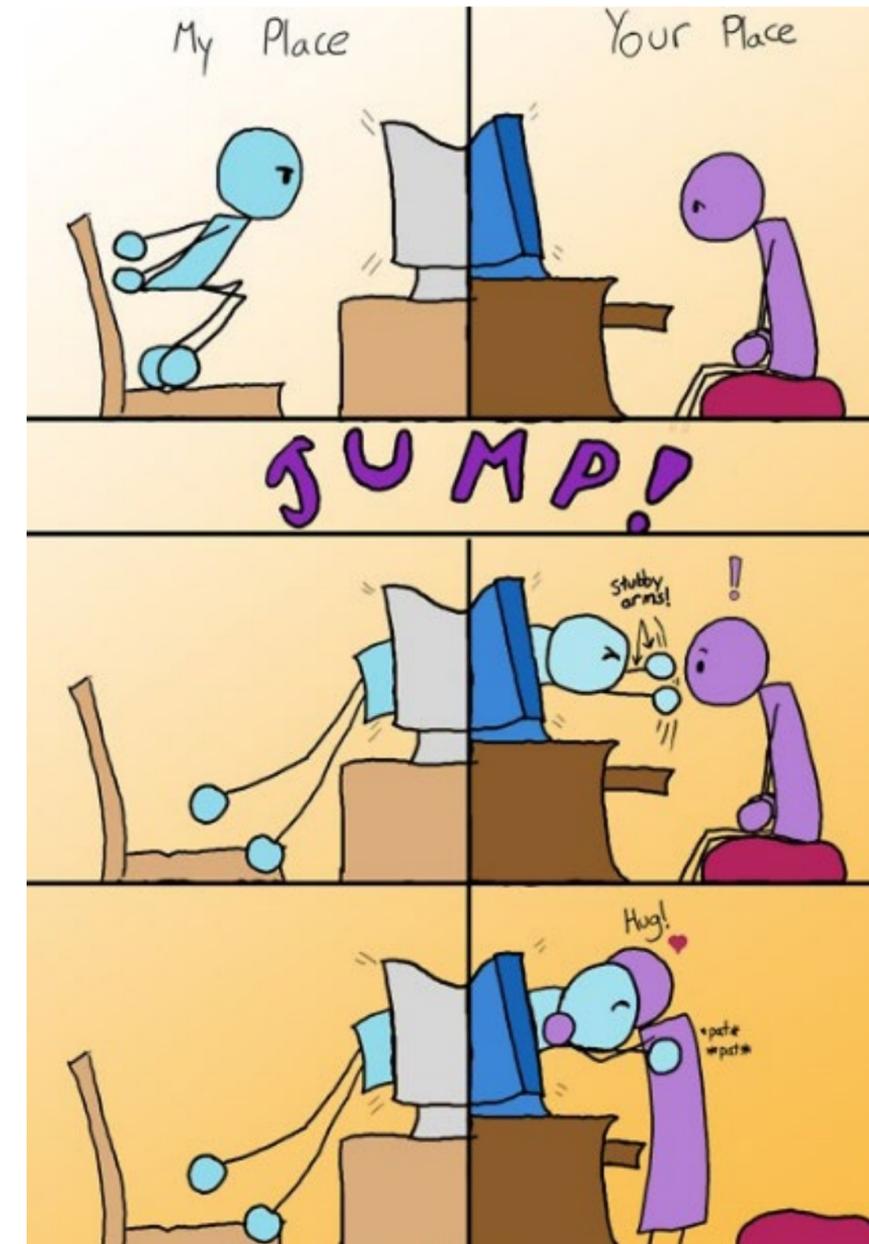


# Virtual Environment

“Sometimes technology just sucks.”

# Virtual Environment and the Therapeutic Alliance

“It takes more time to build trust through a screen than in person.”





## Virtual Environment: Limited sensory stimuli

"I think it's a lot easier to miss things when you're looking at a screen. So much of therapy for me is being very observant. You know, the body language, where are they looking, are they making eye contact, just movement. Stuff like that is harder to track on the TV than when I'm sitting in front of someone."



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# Self-of-the-Therapist

“I was kind of skeptical at first, wondering how you could really develop rapport if you weren’t sitting there with them.”

“Could it be effective? I worried about how comfortable the patients would be with it. If they would buy into it.”

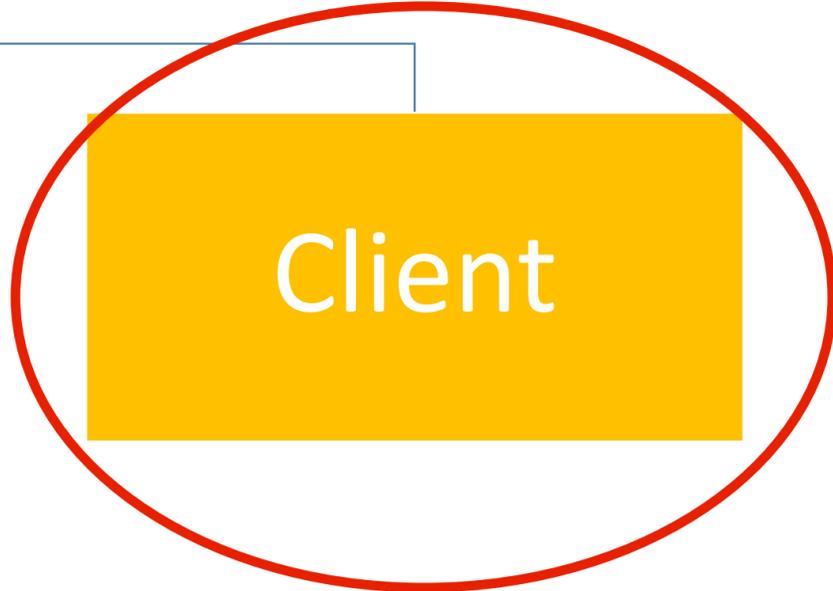


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# Clients

- Reactivity to the therapist
- Sophistication with technology
- Readiness
- Severity of problems
- Confidence in the referral source and/or what they have heard about telemental health from other people

- **Intentionality**
  - in eliciting information
  - In planning for sessions
  - Addressing the therapeutic relationship
- **Managing sensory awareness**
- **Adjust timing and pacing to accommodate the virtual environment**
- **Using the technology as an intervention**

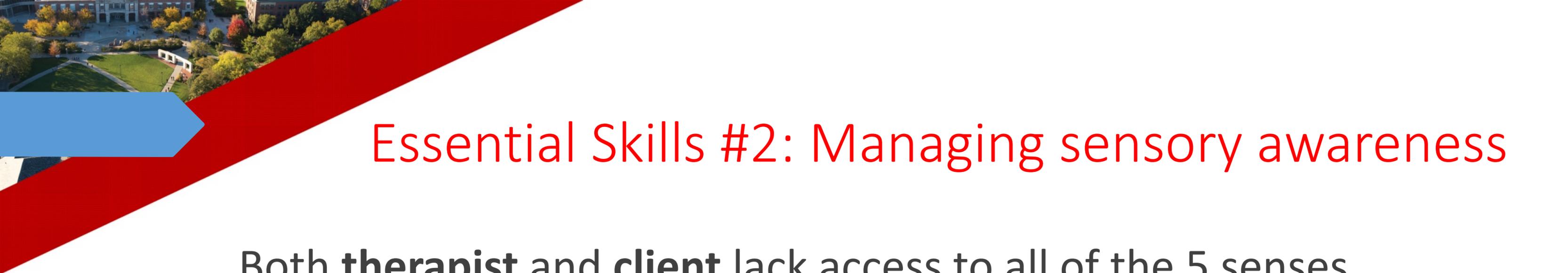




# Essential Skills #1: Intentionality

Therapists must be more intentional in almost every aspect of therapy

- Addressing challenges with technology
- Spend more time on relationship building
- More planning and preparation for sessions
- Session management and structuring



## Essential Skills #2: Managing sensory awareness

Both **therapist** and **client** lack access to all of the 5 senses.

- Ask about and comment on what you see and hear
- Use voice, intonation and even the technology to intervene
- Recognize that clients are also limited in sensory stimulation
- Exaggerate non-verbals to ensure they are being used to facilitate communication



## Essential Skill #3: Adjusting timing and pacing

"You have to be really aware of when you're talking at the same time – it's easier to talk over each other because of the delay. Kind of like talking on a cell phone. You have to repeat yourself a lot. Sometimes the screen goes blank right when someone's making an impactful statement and you have to ask them to repeat themselves."



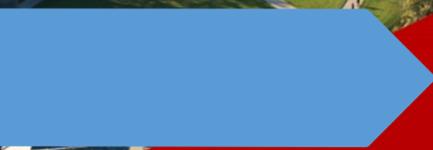
## Essential Skill #4: technology as intervention

“You’re talking to a screen right now, I’m not there. You can get to anxiety, nervousness with someone that withdraws, that’s just uncomfortable... The [technology] is a therapeutic tool because it’s something new they might not have had before and you can pick up some other patterns or something.”



## Case Example

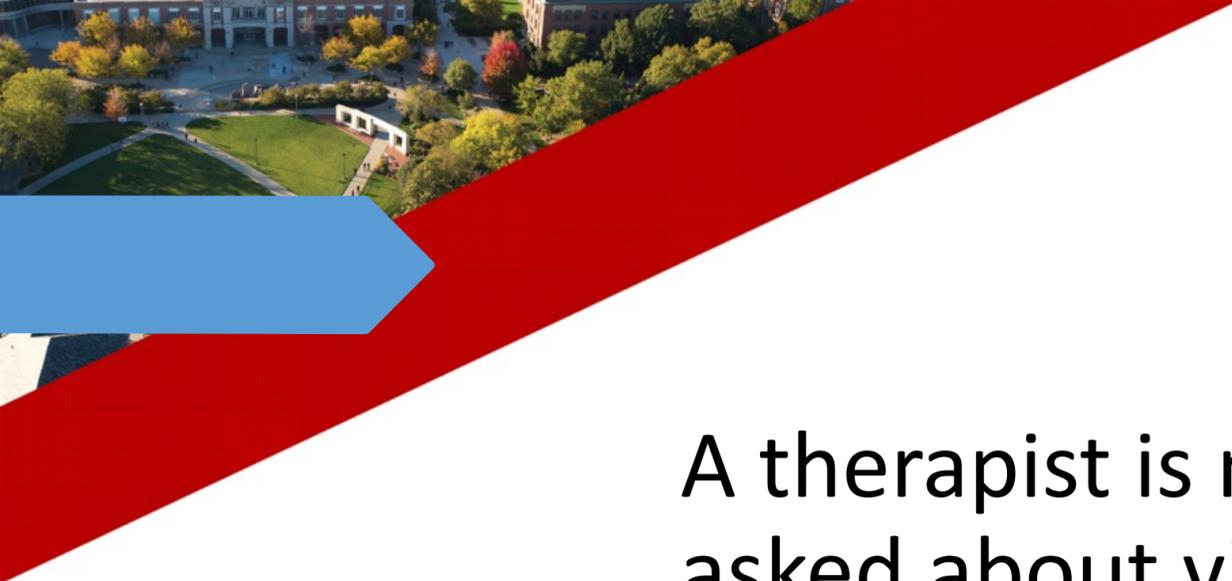
A blended family came in for treatment because the children were beginning to act out. The therapist decides that a family sculpt would be helpful to portray each members perception of the family and their place in it.



## What our therapist said...

*"I would have to ask more specific questions of how close are you to this person. Depth perception is one of the things that's really limited by the cameras... I would just have to ask a lot more clarifying questions of how close you are to that person, can you touch each other, can you reach others from where you are at."*

*"It would take longer because I would have to ask more questions... We would have to figure out how we need to move the camera."*



## Case Example

A therapist is meeting a new couple for the first time. When asked about violence in the relationship, both partners reported no history of violence. When asking the couple what brought them into therapy, the wife begins describing how the husband is not responsive to her needs. Immediately, the husband begins arguing with the wife. They are no longer talking to you as a therapist, and are beginning to raise their voice at each other. They quickly escalate and are calling each other offensive names.



## What our therapist said....

### Screen Sharing Intervention

- "They just kind of see something out of the corner of their eye, or if I change something on their screen usually one of them will look."

### Intonation

- "I could stand up and make more movement, but then it freezes more... I think I have to be louder than normal."



## Case Example

A therapist has been working with an 11 year old trauma victim for 3 sessions. They have tried to get him to express his emotions and thoughts, but he would just provide short answers without much processing. The therapist decided to do a sand tray intervention with him.



## What our therapists said....

- "I would want a clear [sand tray] so I can see some of the things a little better. I can't do the leaning in part to oversee all of it. I would just ask them to describe it again and ask a lot of the same questions, but just a little louder."
- "I might ask them to flip it up where I can see it a little better."
- "I would cover up the screen...so they can't see me."