Virtual Therapy Rooms
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Whilst creating and finalising the content for the webinar on Creative Approaches when Working with Children Online, I came across Virtual Therapy Rooms. I initially did not think it applied to the therapeutic work we do as it was more referred to as Virtual Classrooms. As I am not a teacher with a class, it did not feel so relevant. I did a little more exploration and I am now completely sold on the idea that these virtual rooms are amazing and so helpful in our work with children.

Are you running out of ideas when working online with children?
Not sure what else to do to keep children engaged in online therapy?
Finding the whole online process tiring and exhausting?

Virtual therapy rooms are probably what you need. I really think it could revolutionise ways of working as a therapist.

What are Virtual Therapy Rooms?
You create rooms in Google Slides or Powerpoint and insert your Bitmoji in the presentation. There are a few technical hurdles associated with getting the technology right initially, but it does then become second nature and designing the rooms becomes easier. I made mine in Google as I have a Google Drive, and it seemed easy this way.
Videos on YouTube and professional Facebook groups have shared resources to get you started. Therapists are also selling their rooms on the TeachersPayTeachers website to help you. I decided I really wanted to design my own so I could gear it specifically to the type of work I do and my own creative style. It is so much fun thinking about it all and bringing it together!

Yes you have to be particularly creative. This is what is so exciting!
Who does not like a bit of interior designing!

Below is a photo of my first virtual therapy room. All the objects are linked to other Google slides or web links. You can link worksheets from your Google Drive to the presentation. This is what is amazing!

All your therapy resources in ONE Google Slideshow!

Here is another example of a room about feelings where each of the big emojis lead to a different room with links about these different emotions.

You can have as many rooms as you want, depending on children's needs. Feelings' room, doll's house, chill out room and a Take a Break room, to name only a few. The opportunities are endless! You can also have a Parent Room where you have lots of top tips and information.

How to Use the Virtual Therapy Rooms?

In sessions, you present the slides and you show rooms using the shared screen function of the platform you are using. You can give remote control access to the client so that they have control over visiting rooms and clicking activities or the child can tell you where to click on the screen. This way you discover together different activities, rooms and resources. If a child is talking about a specific topic, you can direct the conversation to the room where information is shared on the topic.

The most amazing of it all is that you can share your Google Slides with clients with the Share button so they can revisit rooms or look at them in advance. You can also create a PDF and all links remain. You can then send a room to parents in an email with all the links you covered during the session.

What Does Not Change?

All your skills as a therapist are still needed, including clinical judgement, knowledge of the discipline and scientist-practitioner, all your essential competencies. This is just a way to store all your resources in one place, increase engagement with children in sessions, and support communication with parents.

What are the Benefits of the Virtual Therapy Rooms?

There are many benefits to this way of working. First, supporting the **engagement and participation of children in virtual sessions**, but also in face to face sessions when a video or an online resource needs to be shared. How fun to explore different rooms and activities! Sessions can be structured or

unstructured depending on the need of the child. Timers and visual boards can be added to the slides to enhance structure where needed.

It can help support **communication with parents** about a session and help empower parents in consolidating learning points in a therapy session or try the resources at home. Being able to share the PDF before or after a session with all the links can really help parents support their child as all links are in one virtual room. The parent can then explore with their child what was covered in session. It has a clear benefit for families speaking a different language at home as the visual presentation can support language and communication between parents-child, parents-therapists.

To support engagement of children, you can also create a virtual room with a child and use that room as a **storage room** of all the work you do together. For example, if you do an activity on the whiteboard, you can easily save it in that room, and share with parents after the session. This way you are guaranteed the work of the child is kept safe and in one place. For confidentiality and privacy, you may need to look into compliance of the Google Drive in line with privacy legislation, and minimise using full names.
The storage benefits are not necessarily just for sharing with a child and parents, but also to develop a **great toolkit as a team** and use this way of working for a team of therapists. This way all have access quickly to resources, work together to build a toolkit and also evolve this toolkit over time after attending professional learning workshops. It can keep all these rich invaluable resources in one place and all have the opportunity to trial them and use them. A new therapist joining the team can simply make a copy of the main master slides and start using these promptly. **A great way to never run out of therapeutic activities in a session.**

It also promotes a way of working that is **evolving over time** and **promotes creativity**. Since starting this process of creating rooms, I have been amazed at the potential and I have not stopped creating. After 25 years of working with children, I am trying to capture all the resources I have and bring these all together as well as creating virtually activities of what I typically do in sessions. It has been an amazing process full of creativity as well as a very inspiring process as I now have a way to bring all these activities together. Many activities can also be developed from the beginning.

It is possibly due to Covid-19 that many have discovered virtual therapy rooms, but their use will not stop once we return to the therapy room. Going forward, many may choose to continue working online for many reasons including health and safety. Covid safe plans may also be strict and restrictive. Although many may also return to the therapy room, virtual therapy rooms are here to stay as a storage and communication tool. We therefore need to prepare for **flexibility and adaptability** of teams and a dual mode of delivery where some therapists work on site and face to face.

The need to work using a dual mode of delivery is likely to become more and more common as the Covid-19 situation evolves globally with possible local outbreaks, therapists or clients needing to protect family for health reasons, localised closures, etc. Moreover, the global pandemic has made us highly aware of telehealth benefits such as working from home to achieve a better work-life balance, the convenience and easy access to therapy for many families joggling busy households and work commitments, and the ability to reach populations at risk in regional and rural areas and/or linguistically, culturally diverse and globally migrant communities. These clear benefits are here to stay and to be fully embraced.

Could Virtual Therapy Rooms Revolutionise the Online Therapy World with Children?
There are so many benefits as outlined above. It is such a creative way of working. I am such a visual person and also a creator-designer, love art work so this type of approach is completely revolutionary for me as a child psychologist but also for training! I love that it keeps all the resources in one place. Even when we go back to face to face work, this resource will still be useful for videos, web-based resources, and communication with parents. You could still use a virtual therapy room during a face to face session and as a team.

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Further Resources and Readings
https://3ppsychologies.com/2020/09/13/resources-56-bitmoji-therapy-rooms/
https://3ppsychologies.com/2020/03/21/resources-51-online-tools-and-10-activities-for-psychologists-working-with-children-online/
https://3ppsychologies.com/2020/03/31/resources-54-10-more-activities-with-children-for-psychologists-working-online/
3ppsychologies.com where lots of resources are shared

You may be interested in the following training and resources
Recording of a Free Live Event Recording about Virtual Therapy Rooms
https://learning.3ppsychologies.com/courses/free-live-event-virtual-therapy-rooms-an-amazing-resource
Learn how to create Virtual Therapy Rooms https://learning.3ppsychologies.com/courses/virtual-therapy-rooms
10 Self-Pace Modules about Creative Approaches when Working with Children Online, including 10 virtual therapy rooms; also applicable for face to face work
You can also register for the Creating Virtual Therapy Rooms and Creative Approaches courses as a bundle https://learning.3ppsychologies.com/bundles/creating-for-children-online
To Build a Toolkit Quickly
https://forms.gle/oGxAWhRGX6LTA9sbA