How to Improve Our Internet Connection

Even with high speed internet service, a lot of factors impact the quality and continuity of the connection, which can drain resources and slow down loading time. Here are some tips to limit the pull so we can have the highest quality session possible:

- Quit out of all other programs before the session. Some examples of programs to quit:
  - **Skype.** If you have Skype installed, often the default is for it to run in the background every time you start up your computer. Make sure you have quit Skype, not just closed the window.
  - **Dropbox, Google Drive,** and other file synchronization/sharing services. These use the Internet in the background all the time as part of their job.
  - **Web browser tabs or windows**. Most websites and web applications do a lot of Internet back-and-forth, using up bandwidth while you have them open.
  - **Cloud backup software.** These programs are usually pretty careful about not draining bandwidth, but it's probably best to shut them down during sessions.
- Connect your computer to the WiFi router with a cable, or move close to the WiFi router.
- Make sure your antivirus program isn't scheduled to run during the session.
- Be sure not to allow a system software update to run right before or during a session.
- If others (family, roommates) will be nearby during your session, ask them to limit their streaming and high-volume internet activity (like gaming) while you are in session.

Things outside of our control that can impact internet quality:

- Stormy weather.
- When everyone in your neighborhood starts downloading things at the same time
- Damage or repairs to the communications equipment down the street from you.

These things are not frequent, but can happen. Should internet go down or be very unstable during our session, I will call you and we will plan our next step.

Privacy Tips with Video Therapy

The following safety measures help keep your PHI (Protected Health Information) confidential.

When receiving online counseling:
- Conduct the sessions in a private location where others cannot hear you.
- Password protect your computer, tablet, phone, and any other device with a password that is unique, long, and contains letters, numbers and at least one special character.
- Use a private window in your browser (Google Chrome="Incognito"), (Mozilla Firefox="Private") (Safari for Mac="Private") (Internet Explorer="InPrivate")
- Always close out of your sessions.
- Avoid having software remember your password. Sign in every time.
- Avoid sharing your passwords with anyone.

- Avoid sharing your computer if possible, and avoid visiting any other websites, when you are logged on to any counseling software.
- If you wish to avoid others knowing that you are receiving counseling services, clear your browser's cache (browsing history). On your phone, list your therapist by a name rather than as "counselor or therapist".
- Avoid downloading or storing personal information with your Protected Health Information (PHI) on it. If you decide to download anything containing personal information, only store it in an encrypted file.
- Have all of your devices set to time-out, requiring you to log back in after a set idle time.
- For information on securing your mobile device visit: http://www.healthit.gov/providers-professionals/how-can-you-protect-and-secure-health-information-when-using-mobile-device

Computer hardware
- Keep your computer updated with any recommended updates.
- Use a firewall and up-to-date antivirus/antimalware program.
- When online, do not login as an administrator.
- Router / Access Point
    - Only use a secure network for internet access using a WAP2 security key (this means, not using free/open WiFi like available at coffeeshops).
    - Use your own administrator ID and password (not the default) for your router or access point.
    - Choose a custom SSID name, not the default name.
    - Turn on the firewall.
    - Limit the range of your Wi-Fi by positioning it near the center of your home.

Paper
- Store any paper documents that contain your PHI in a locked cabinet.