

Creating Warm and Welcoming Telehealth Settings for Behavioral Health



With increased demand for mental and behavioral health services via online delivery, below are a few tips to create comfortable, calming environments for telehealth appointments:

- **Go multi-dimensional:** "Zoom culture" has mainstreamed meetings that literally put us head-to-head with the other person in the virtual room. This dynamic can be especially intimidating for a patient who is experiencing a crisis or is simply nervous about beginning therapy. An immediate way to alleviate this concern and instead create a welcoming setting for patients is to open up the camera view to show the full room. Ideally, this will reveal a comfortable-looking seating area that includes a chair, such as Stance's Verity seating, in which patients may imagine themselves relaxing during the session. By taking in more than just a face in their view, patients might more easily envision themselves in an actual therapy session, rather than being unnerved by the up-close shot of a care provider.
- **Project humanity and relatability:** As we think about other ways to expand outside of this one-dimensional setting, care providers and healthcare designers should consider displaying familiar objects in the space to put patients at ease and instill their confidence in the process they've just virtually stepped into. Some ideas for this include displaying aesthetically soothing or recognizable works of art, including paintings; arrangements of flowers and other living plants; or academic or industry insignia.
- **Conjure a sense of calm:** We always focus on supporting healthcare spaces like hospitals and therapeutic areas with color, texture, and products that encourage patients, providers, and visitors to relax and feel at ease. In our virtual settings, we should strive to replicate this impact. One example of how to support such a space is selecting soothing tones, such as earth-inspired or spa-like hues, for the walls and furnishings – similar to many of the color palettes we use on Stance's Behavioral Health website. Another is choosing soft lighting and conducting



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trial appointments to test the lighting's display on different devices. Halo lighting is also recommended to bring life to the care provider's face and remove any shadows.

- **Ditch “the desk” and invite the patient to sit in comfort:** In the first point, we mentioned showing patient seating in view during a telehealth appointment. Doing this allows patients to envision themselves in the room – and while we're thinking about that, let's reframe the way we depict the provider's seating area, too. Typically, a therapist will sit behind a desk in Behavioral Health settings, but the current trend is leaning toward a more

conversational seating arrangement. This may include a settee and lounge chair scenario or multi-use table seating, thanks to more comfortable, yet safe seating options like Stance's Flo Dining Collection. Approachable seating options to engage at the same level with patients in a supervised in-person or telehealth setting is the goal. We can mimic this virtually by replacing the view of a physician behind a desk with that of a care provider sitting in a relaxed position that invites conversation.

By using these tips and working with an experienced healthcare design team, providers can achieve a supportive, trusted space for consultative therapy.

