

To whom it may concern,

As a patient who has received outpatient counseling through many stages of life, do I prefer in-person care? Absolutely. I thoroughly enjoy building that relationship with my counselor face-to-face, and sometimes her encouraging hug gave me the strength I needed to face the real world.

However, as a pediatric Physical Therapist who offers "after school" appointments, my new job hours make it impossible for me drive to my counselor during her (or just about any clinicians') working hours. And while I was clinically stable pre-pandemic, I cannot imagine navigating layoff, relocation, a new job, and LIFE without the professional support of my mental health professional.

Telehealth makes that possible. We were all skeptical of it, but we found out together it works. While we missed our loved ones during this uncertain time, FaceTime and Zoom helped us connect in ways that sustained us through a tumultuous year. We didn't just get to read their text or hear their voice; we were able to see their smiles, tears, body language, and share connection. Like I continue to do with my counselor every telehealth session.

Sure, at some point I may determine I would prefer to find a counselor I can meet in person logistically, but until then, let me make that choice when I am ready to start that vulnerable search all over again. Please don't force my hand by paying less for telehealth because we all know that means I will have to cover the difference.

Thank you for not shifting that cost burden to me,
Rebecca

P.S. The ease and anonymity of telehealth also convinced my dear friend to "try it out." He won't submit his own testimony, so I'll thank you for removing the barrier of that stigma for him.