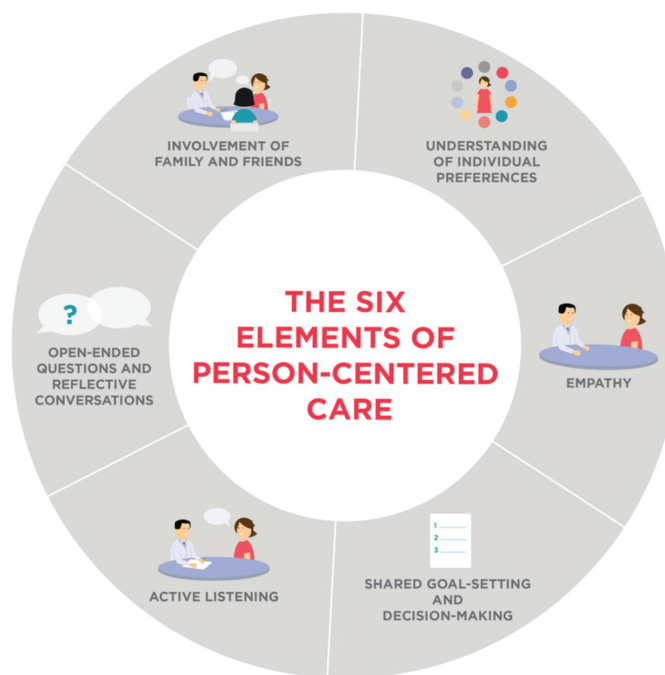# Delivering the six elements of person-centered care online

Many of the skills for delivering person-centered care (PCC) are directly transferable from in-person to online appointments. But there are some techniques unique to remote care. Here, we look at the six elements of PCC and how you can deliver them successfully online.

THE SIX ELEMENTS OF PERSON-CENTERED CARE

INVOLVEMENT OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

UNDERSTANDING OF INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCES

EMPATHY

SHARED GOAL-SETTING AND DECISION-MAKING

ACTIVE LISTENING

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS AND REFLECTIVE CONVERSATIONS

Active listening

- When your client speaks, pay close attention to their facial and body language to really understand what they're saying and how they're feeling – this can be a little harder online as you can't see the whole person.

- Sit (or stand) in an open posture and lean forward. Don't sit with a window or light source directly behind you and make sure your face is well-lit.

- Put your phone on silent and pause or silence other PC/electronic notifications too, to avoid distractions.

Open-ended questions and reflective conversations

- When appropriate and without being intrusive, ask open-ended questions about relevant things you see or hear in the background, e.g. a barking pet dog, a family photo, or a noisy air conditioning unit. You can then better tailor your recommendations for technologies or communication strategies.

- Embrace pauses in the conversation, especially if you've made a statement or asked a question. There could be a delay on the call or your client may need time to think about their response.

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Empathy

- When you speak, look into the camera at least some of the time, so your client feels you're making eye contact. Move the video call window showing your client as close to the camera as possible and encourage your client to do the same.

- Pay a bit more attention to the tone of your voice, as this is the main way for your client to interpret what you're saying and the emotion you're giving back to them.

- Be a little more dynamic than in physical appointments. Nod and use facial expressions and body language more often to show that you have heard and understood your client, and to convey caring, concern, and curiosity.

- Be aware of potential communication barriers online and mitigate these where possible. For example, make sure your client can see your lips and be prepared to speak more loudly, slowly, or clearly than when face-to-face.

Shared goal-setting and decision-making

- Use online Ida tools such as **Why Improve My Hearing?**, **The People I Talk To**, and **Living Well** to open a discussion about your client's needs and goals. Share your screen to fill these out together or to discuss the answers your client sent beforehand. Check that your client can see your shared screen clearly and make sure you can still see the video call window showing your client somewhere on your screen.

- Use verified, online decision aids such as this **British Tinnitus Association Tinnitus Care Decision Aid** and share your screen while discussing the various options. Use Ida's **Goal Sharing for Partners** resource if a communication partner is involved.

- At the end of the appointment, state clearly what decisions have been made to make sure there's a shared understanding. Share your screen to show a summary of next steps and timelines if available and appropriate.

Involvement of family and friends

- Encourage your client to invite family members and friends into their appointments more often, and from a wider network. They can join from the same location as your client or online from somewhere else. Make sure anyone joining has the relevant links and passwords to join the call in advance.

- When appropriate and with your client's permission, invite people you can see or hear into the conversation, and use the opportunity to help them understand how they can best support your client. Ensure you give dedicated talk time to each participant to enable a balanced conversation.

Understanding of individual preferences

- Before the first online appointment with a client, ask what helps them communicate online and do your best to accommodate. This could mean enabling captions on the call or wearing a headset with a microphone to minimize background noise.

- Online appointments offer a window into your client's daily life and environment, therefore also their individual needs and preferences. If appropriate, ask your client to take you on a virtual tour of their home or workplace and show you the things and people that matter to them. This will help you better tailor your treatment recommendations.

- Consider asking clients to complete the online questionnaires **Living Well** and/or **The People I Talk** To prior to the appointment, to start building a picture of their needs and what's important to them.

- At the end of the consult, check in with the patient (and family) to hear how it was for them and what could make it better. Consider developing a simple rating system or short online survey to gather feedback.

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Online counseling tools

Several Ida Institute tools have been developed or adapted for online appointments or to help clients prepare for them. Using these can help ensure your online care is person-centered.

Tools that can be used before OR during the appointment include:

- **Motivation Tools**: Use the online, editable versions of the Line and the Box to open communication with your client and get a better understanding of their thoughts and needs.

- **Why Improve My Hearing?**: Encourage your client to think about how important it is for them to improve their communication by going through this online questionnaire together. Or send them the link beforehand and look through their responses together in the appointment.

- **The People I Talk To**: Use this online question-naire before or during an appointment to learn about your client's most important communication partners.

- **Tinnitus Thermometer**: Use this online tool to learn how your client is experiencing their tinnitus at the time of the appointment – or send the link beforehand and discuss their responses together when you meet.
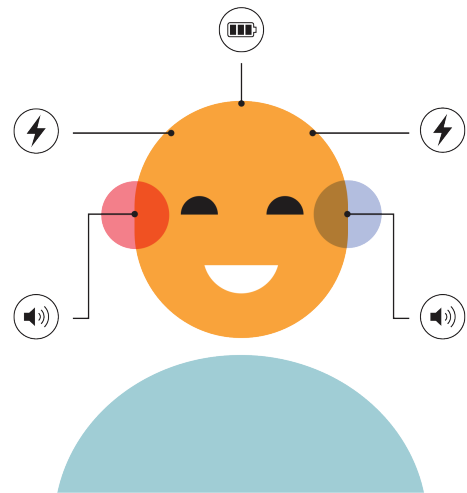
The following tools are designed for use during the online appointment:

- **My Hearing Explained**: The online version of this conversation guide can help you relay hearing test results and make a plan for next steps together with your client.

- **Goal Sharing for Partners**: Encourage your client to include their most important communication partner in an online appointment. Use this online, editable form to help them discuss challenges and create an action plan together.

And why not use Ida's **Reflective Journal** at the end of a day or week to look back at your online appointments? The four simple questions can help you understand what has gone well and help you learn from your experiences.

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