

Therapy at your FINGERTIPS

More of us are turning to technology to manage our mental health, but is an online option really as effective?

During the pandemic, people looking for online mental-health tools soared. Searches for apps to ease depression rose by 156%, while searches for mindfulness apps saw a 2,483% increase*.

Although this was largely down to lockdown preventing in-person therapy, we now have other reasons to go digital for our health needs. Online therapy and self-help apps can be a cheaper way to manage stress and low mood – a must for many as we navigate the cost-of-living crisis.

They can also be quicker – an immediate resource at our fingertips in comparison to long NHS waiting

Did you know?
Many employers and health insurance companies now cover online therapy.

lists for mental-health services. Being supported from the comfort of home is arguably more relaxing and easier to fit into our time-poor lives than travelling to therapy sessions. Plus, we lead increasingly tech-driven lives – we shop online, watch films on laptops and order food from delivery apps. Why not access therapy this way, too?

OPTING FOR ONLINE

'Lockdown accelerated interest in online therapy,' says Natalie Bailey, chair of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). 'It was a real eye-opener for many clients – and therapists – that worked really well for them. I think this forced shift has led to a long-term change out of choice. Many now offer in-person and online therapy, while others have moved to working entirely online.'

Adenekan Oyefeso, lead psychologist at Livi, agrees. 'Lockdown cemented online therapy as an option,' he says. 'The ability to receive therapy from home has made it more accessible than ever. In addition, online therapy can be flexible and fit around busy schedules. It offers anonymity, which some people prefer, it can provide a larger pool of therapists to choose from – helpful for people who live in rural areas or have specific therapeutic needs – and is typically less expensive than in-person therapy. For these reasons, online therapy is likely to continue to grow in popularity.'

THE CONS

So, we know online therapy works – and there are many positives to commend it – but there are drawbacks. 'Some people may find it difficult to engage when communicating online or feel uncomfortable discussing personal issues, making therapy less effective,' says Adenekan. 'Plus, there's a limit to the range of assessments that can be carried out online, and it's not >>

