

# Why Weren't We Always Doing This? Virtual Lactation Support is About More than COVID-19

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## Younger Generations

- Very tech-savvy
- Accepting of many family structures
- Crave instant gratification/satisfaction
- Would rather order a pizza through an app than on the telephone – even if there's a higher fee!

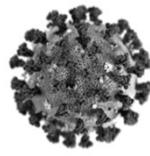


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## History of Lactation Support Virtually

### A brief synopsis

- 2011 – The year of social media in lactation boom
- 2011-2020 – Social media usage increases, virtual support groups and lives have been created
- 2020 – COVID-19 shut-downs and stay at home orders



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## So, it is no surprise that...

- Parents rely on their digital media even to be confident in their parenting!
- These generations prefer to speak through digital platforms
- This is where our clients are!
- AND they are probably more proficient than we are!

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## Let's face it...

Millennials and Gen Z both prefer digital lactation spaces anyway!

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## Digital Parenting

- Many millennial and Gen Z parents document their lives as a parent via social media, sometimes constantly
- Good v. Evil – great tips and info can be shared via social media, but also many gimmicks are more easily shared with new parents
  - Think “drink *this* to make more milk”
  - Marketing reaches more new parents constantly

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Let's dive in deeper to spaces "other than" social media..

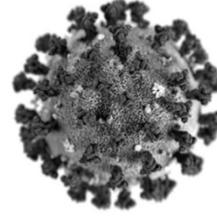
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So... what defines a digital lactation space?

It's much more than Facebook

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Are telehealth visits and virtual support groups ethical, especially with COVID-19?!



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*It's not just social media!*

- A lactation digital space is any place a parent may go for lactation information.
- This includes:
  - Social media
  - Virtual support groups
  - Apps
  - Telelactation

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In Short – Absolutely!

- There can be many similarities to virtual consults v. consults in person – it just takes putting on that thinking cap!
- Apply many different facets of your training to be used in the same manner as we would in person i.e. counseling skills, assessing a breastfeed, and creating a care plan – all while using a video screen.

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**Ask Yourself...**

- What does your internet connection look like?
- What do your surroundings look like?
- What is your noise level at home?
- Do you have a well-lit area to do your consults?
- Is your camera/microphone up to date enough?
- Are you comfortable with your virtual space?

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**But what does IBLCE say?**

- “If telehealth is permitted in an IBCLC’s jurisdiction of practice, telehealth is a potentially viable option. In addition to the laws and regulations of one’s specific jurisdiction, an IBCLC should particularly consider how his/her provision of lactation consulting services via telehealth is in alignment with the key provisions of each of these guiding practice documents inclusive of privacy, confidentiality, security, assessment, demonstration and evaluation of relevant techniques, provision of evidence-based information to clients, as well as appropriate collaboration with, or referral to, other healthcare providers.” – IBLCE Advisory Opinion on Telehealth, April 2020

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**Consult Space**

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**Privacy Concerns**

- With many regulations and shutdowns, birthing and lactating still occurs – and support was in short supply.
- Many supporters flew to online virtual support groups and LCs took up telehealth consults, learning and growing.
- However – you need to be aware of the legal stipulations to make sure private health information is protected.

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# Why Weren't We Always Doing This? Virtual Lactation Support is About More than COVID-19

## HIPAA – what is it?

- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996
- The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a federal law that required the creation of national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge. (CDC)

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## HIPAA Laws

- Are still very relevant during COVID-19
- However – you may use “non-encrypted” technology temporarily such as:
  - Zoom
  - Skype
  - FaceTime or Facebook Messenger



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**BEWARE:** Most virtual platforms are not inherently private!



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## Most Encrypted

- Zoom for Healthcare
- Skype for Business
- Amazon Chime (there is a free version!)
- Google Meet via GSuite (My preferred...because it comes with my website/email addons)



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## NOT HIPAA Compliant

- Facebook Live
- Snapchat
- Video social media apps like TikTok or Twitch
- Instagram Live



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## One Stop Shop

- Some online charting platforms also have video capabilities:
  - Milk Notes
  - IntakeQ
  - Charm
- ALL are HIPAA compliant!

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## Be aware!

- You will learn to explain things differently! Props for visualization helps.
- You will need to be professional and give your undivided attention.
- Most of all – trial and error truly is a part of beginning to do virtual consults.

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## Advantages

- Empowering for the parent
  - “Yes, I can do this myself!”
- Keeps everyone safe and healthy
- Support people are generally more involved
- Increases the amount of clients you can have in one day
  - Telehealth visits are generally less time consuming

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## Ask Yourself...

- Do you want to schedule your online consults all at once or do you want to add time to chart/down time in between visits?
- What is your family life like at home? Will you have privacy?
- Do you want to work at home during “normal” business hours? Or would you like more flexibility for evening hours?

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## Advantages

- Increases your clientele that may have had issues with transportation
- Can save money (however, you may adjust your prices to reflect virtual)
- Your funkiness with tech may be a good thing (makes you more “real”)
- Your ability to be “hands-off” will improve, even in person
- Your communication skills significantly improve!

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## Remember to Take Notes!

- It sometimes can be difficult to chart on the computer if you are using it for your consult.
- Print out your forms and take notes.
- If desired, use a smart notebook to upload your notes into the client's chart
  - i.e. Moleskin, Rocketbook, etc.



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## Preparing for a consult

- Virtual visits go much more smoothly, when you are prepared for the consult ahead of time
- Initial paperwork should be shared through an encrypted source (Gsuite e-mails are great for this!)
  - Note: most websites are not inherently HIPAA compliant, so be careful about forms on your website
- Get a thorough history and why the consult is needed...get as much information as you can without giving your client paperwork burnout!

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# Why Weren't We Always Doing This? Virtual Lactation Support is About More than COVID-19

## Video Conferencing/Telehealth Tips for Parents

- Suggest the parent have a “helper” to move around the camera during the consult
- Suggest the parent have good lighting
- Suggest the parent have a stable internet connection
- Work around these three tips – not everything is accessible to everyone!
  - Aka work with what you’ve got!

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## No access to a scale?

- And baby’s weight is of concern
- #1 - make sure the baby is FED! Feed more often and supplement if needed.
- #2 – Recommend the parent purchase a cheap scale to “keep track” of weight, but will not be accurate enough for weighted feeds and ALWAYS refer!!

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## What about.....

- Baby’s weight?
- Breast pumps?
- Tools/tricks you could only do in person?!



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## Cheap Scales

- Beurer BY80 - \$37
- AccuMed Baby Scale - \$49
- Smart Weigh Comfort Baby Scale - \$36
- MomMed Baby Scale - \$52
- KUBEI Baby Scale - \$50
- EatSmart Digital Baby Scale - \$37
- Health o Meter Grow With Me Baby Scale - \$56
- Nutrifit Baby Scale - \$40

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## Weight

- Be creative! In your initial intake form, ask most recent weight. If possible, ask them to get a weight prior to the visit
- If possible, provide a good scale to them for weighted feeds
- If not possible, and weight is a true issue, you may have to do a follow up in home visit.



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## What may actually happen...



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## Breast Pumps

- Find a good referral system, possibly with a local DME or major DME – whomever works with their insurance best.
- If you have your own pumps that you rent out or bill insurances – schedule a time that they can safely pick them up or you can safely drop them off.



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## Tools and Freebies

- Ask yourself – how much of these were REALLY needed when doing in-person consults?
- Is there a way to get tools to the client before or after the consult?
- Do they need a follow-up visit for additional help, in person?

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## Remember...

- Use verbal cues like you would in person i.e. don't yell, ask them to adjust volume if necessary
- Involve the support people in the room, engage with big brother or sister like you would in person
- Listen....no REALLY listen! You have less senses to use during the consult, so being very intuitive is important

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## Make sure to assess baby!

- Have parent safely lay baby on a solid surface
- Direct parent on where to move the camera
- Instruct the parent on how to perform an assessment
- Have the parent describe to you how things feel or look to them

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## Online Support Groups

- Online support groups don't have to follow HIPAA as closely as a virtual consult, HOWEVER, you should get written consent about the support group.
- A disclaimer before the support group is ALWAYS a good idea! Setting rules before the group is also helpful.
  - i.e. This support group is open to the public, the information you share within the support group is not encrypted and will be provided with many people within the group. Please refrain from taking pictures or recording.

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# Why Weren't We Always Doing This? Virtual Lactation Support is About More than COVID-19

## Popular Online Support Groups for Lactation

- Facebook Live
- Zoom
- WebEx
- Cisco
- GoToMeeting
- Google Meet
- Facebook Group Live



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## Most of all...

- Practice patience and grace!
- This is new for many parents and they may become irritable more quickly with technology – especially if they are already having a rough time with breastfeeding!
- You will notice parents also practice patience and grace with you
  - An internet outage isn't the end of the world! Just get back on when you can and thank them for their patience

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## Online Support Group Tips

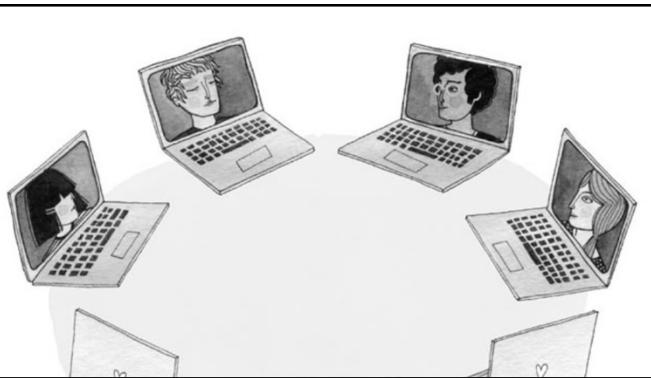
- You still get to put many faces to names
- You may get more reach than you did with in person support
- Many still prefer in person support, but are glad there is something in place
- New topics and themes help to keep the atmosphere fun
- Q&A sessions or topics without much structure work the best
- Play with the time of day for the group – different people are available at different times!



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**Now that you  
are prepared  
– go kick  
some virtual  
consults!!**

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