

**Tip Sheet**

**The Synapse System™ Adapts to COVID-19 Pandemic**

During the time of COVID-19, SYNAPSE has adapted to digital therapy while continuing to offer their holistic approach to addiction and mental health treatment. Dr. Janet Cox, founder, owner and clinical/program director of SYNPASE, provides her patients the Inner Balance device which uses biofeedback to help the person achieve a state of “coherence” which is defined as the heart and mind both being in sync with each other.  This state of coherence is achieved by using breathing techniques along with positive thoughts producing emotions of compassion, acceptance, love, etc.  It is an adaption of what is used in the clinic, but it allows the patients to still obtain the skill of controlling their HRV (heart rate variability).  Patients receive a hand held device that connects via Bluetooth with an app on their phone.  They practice going thru different levels of difficulty until the master the skill which ultimately helps deal with stress. Patients stress and poor stress management skills is a significant relapse risk factor for them especially early on in their quest for sobriety and recovery process.

 **Who Is taking Care of Front Line Workers Mental Health?**

Front-line mental health workers in hospitals are being hailed as heroes during the COVID-19 pandemic, but behind the hero status lies a real person facing exhaustion and their own mental health issues. According to Dr. Janet Cox “During this increase in demand, my days stretch from 9AM-9PM most days of the week.” Front Line mental health professionals are witnessing an increased demand for their services and new challenges of how to treat patients while also trying to manage their own stress.

**The Mental Health Pandemic Within A Pandemic**

Many experts are citing the fact that we are not only coping with the COVID-19 pandemic but are also facing a global mental health crisis. A federal emergency hotline for people in emotional distress registered a more than[1,000 percent increase](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/paloma/the-health-202/2020/05/04/the-health-202-texts-to-federal-government-mental-health-hotline-up-roughly-1-000-percent/5eaae16c602ff15fb0021568/?itid=ap_paigewinfield%20cunningham&itid=lk_inline_manual_12) in April compared with the same time last year. According to data published by the CDC and The Recovery Village, [there has been a 63% increase in substance abuse with 52% of that being related to stress, 33% related to anxiety/depression and 37% related to boredom.](https://www.ehstoday.com/health/article/21134240/a-pandemic-within-a-pandemic-substance-abuse-rises-amid-covid)

**Drug & Alcohol Abuse Rises To Alarming Levels**

The Synapse SystemTM addresses substance use disorders AND other mental health disorders concurrently by facilitating brain health as well as teaching skills to regulate emotions and engage in critical thought. In the time of COVID-19, the effect of sheltering in place, increased mental health issues and a spike in anxiety has resulted in alarming increases in substance abuse. According to data published by the CDC and The Recovery Village, [alcohol and drug usage increased significantly for 30% of adults age 18-24, and increased a little for 56% for adults ages 25-34.](https://www.ehstoday.com/health/article/21134240/a-pandemic-within-a-pandemic-substance-abuse-rises-amid-covid)

**Digital Therapy Increasing Access to Therapy- But Does it Work?**

During COVID-19, SYNAPSE and a vast majority of treatment centers have shifted to offering virtual solutions such as digital therapy. Digital therapy, also known as telehealth, is when psychologists (mental health, addiction, etc.) meet with their clients through virtual platforms such as Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams and VSee, rather than in person. Doctors and counselors have been offering these services to keep their patients safe during this shelter-in-place mandate. The isolation, fear of the unknown, loss of control and unpredictability are common issues for individuals with addiction problem whether active in their addiction or in relapse.  For example, one patient who has been 12 years sober has recently returned to therapy,” said Dr. Cox. One of the drawbacks of digital therapy is that it makes it more difficult for the psychologist. They are not able to read all body language, detect certain voice inflections, and/or read facial expressions which may be distorted or hidden from the camera. SYNAPSE is also offering over the phone therapy sessions which allows the patient the option and choice of not using video in during their meetings.

**About Janet Cox, Ph.D.**

Dr. Cox, owner of Synapse,  is a clinical psychologist licensed in the state of Georgia with over 25 years of experience in the area of substance use and co-occurring disorders.  Dr. Cox has worked as an independent practitioner; been the Director of Psychological Services for a large professional group serving outpatients and providing oversight of an inpatient, dual diagnosis unit at a local psychiatric hospital; the Chief Psychologist for a national treatment hospital serving both adolescents and adults, and the Clinical Director for long-term residential treatment center.  During her career, Dr. Cox has worked with diverse populations using a variety of clinical specialties and treatment modalities.

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