



Synchronous & Asynchronous Communication

'Ethics and Professional Issues in Couple and Family Therapy' (Hecker 2012) refers to two forms of communication used in online therapy. These are:

Synchronous Communication: This type of communication is described by Suler (2000) as a client and a therapist sitting down at their computers and interacting with each other at that moment. Online modalities that fit this type of communication are text-only chat, avatar chat, Internet telephoning, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), and audio or video conferencing.

Asynchronous Communication: The opposite of synchronous communication. The biggest difference is the time delay. Online modalities that fit this type of communication are text-only (like email, newsgroups or bulletin boards) or delayed viewing of multimedia recordings (Suler, 2000).

In most counselling interactions, we may find ourselves using both forms of communication.

Synchronous communication is communication that happens in "real-time". It can take the form of:

- Face-to-face therapy
- Phone therapy
- Video therapy (e.g., via a tool like [Zoom](#))

Asynchronous communication is any communication that includes a delay between when the party imparting the information sends the message, and when the party receiving the message interprets it.

Examples of this are:

- Email therapy
- Text therapy via mobile devices
- Therapy via text messaging
- Therapy using messaging boards

The central aspect of synchronous communication is that it always involves a human-to-human interaction.

Reference

Hecker, L., 2012. *Ethics and Professional Issues in Couple and Family Therapy*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.