March 21, 2021

Hello!

Wow - it has been a year since many therapists have started providing services via telehealth. I am still working 100% remotely. How about you? In-person using the VSA, telehealth using the VSA, or hybrid?

As I'm sure you know, we started the Virtual Sandtray in 2011 and launched in 2015, well before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, when it became clear that additional features were needed to use the VSA remotely, we spent hours – day and night – programming the feature for use and added it to the program at no extra cost.

Over the months we have added new components to existing features along with the brand new ones (i.e. remote, group, etc.). Some people live in areas where internet is often unreliable. This sparked a recognition of the disruption that can happen when a person's internet (therapist or client) connection is disrupted – whether that be a disruption in Zoom or anything else. Here in our area, with so many working from home, so… so… much Netflix, online schooling, etc., the bandwidth is getting used at a mind-boggling rate. I imagine it is similar in other places. This can cause a break in that therapeutic connection during tray creation as well. Many younger people are used to such disruptions during their game play, but we would really like to minimize this during VSA use.

We have had a few features in place for this or some time. Before this update I am writing to you about, there were 3 levels of internet interruption management:

1) A tiny interruption is handled without the users even knowing. There is an internal reconnect process that happens with a small-level disruption in the connection.

2) A medium interruption can often be reconnected using the "reconnect to server" option in both the therapist and client settings folder menu.

3) Until now a larger interruption has resulted in the therapist saving the tray and restarting to provide a new room ID and password.

4) Now we have added a 4th option! Read below

Our newest update will launch momentarily. This will provide a mechanism for the therapist or client to **rejoin** a room that was disrupted by internet connection issues. You certainly do not have to use this, but we wanted to make it available in case! It might seem like a simple task, but hundreds of hours of

programming have gone into the creation of this feature. It isn't just about reconnecting the rooms, it is about privacy and protection. Everything has to be done with thoughtful care so the therapeutic process and connection is honored and maintained. This is always a primary goal for the VSA. This new update provides these expected protections.

You'll notice a **new 4 digit code** on the remote therapist page. *This is for the therapist only*! It is your secret key to reconnection in the event of a large internet disruption. You may never need to use it, but if you do need it, you'll be happy you have it. We are providing this update at no additional cost to you.

IMPORTANT:

1) Both your client and you (therapist) will need to update your VSA programs through the app store. The changes are not "backward compatible" meaning that they have features in them that the old versions will not be able to read so everyone needs to update. There is now a message that will tell you if you need to update.
2) In order to reconnect to a room someone has to remain in the room. If everyone leaves then the room will close.
3) Along with the additional reconnect features, we have changed some things with the transmission rates. What this means for you is that the digging, painting, etc. will seem faster. It didn't seem slow before but now it will be faster ☺
4) There are some new models: kayak, camping items, bridges, and mazes to name a few.
5) We are hard at work with some new developments and will keep you updated!

As you probably saw in our last letter to you all, we have been recognized as a partner of the Lowenfeld Trust. The Lowenfeld Trust has been created by descendants of Dr. Lowenfeld. This is amazing for us and all who use the VSA!

Be sure to check out www.lowenfeld.org if you haven't already. They really want people to become involved and see Dr. Lowenfeld's work and reach expand exponentially! What a great way to support this important work

Each of you is part of this and we are very thankful.

As always, feel free to reach out to us at any time. We are happy to help!

Jessica and Chris

VSA Remote Reconnect Update

There is now a secret key for the therapist to regain control of the session.

It is recommended that the therapist write the data down as a precaution when creating the room initially. This is the only time this new 4 digit code will be provided.

Starting a session

1. Therapist logs in as an Administrator
2. Therapist clicks on 'Administrate', give it a moment to verify the remote login (happens automatically, just give it a moment as usual).
3. Therapist clicks on 'Remote Activities'
4. Therapist chooses 'Remote Therapist'
    a. Write down the following or take a photo with your phone or a screenshot.
        i. Room Password
        ii. Room ID
        iii. Secret Rejoin Key (This is private info kept to therapist and **used only** in case the therapist has to rejoin the room. **Do not give it to the client!** It lets the program know who is the therapist and who is the client.)
    b. Set all other right hand options for your session (client username, time limit, etc.)
5. Therapist creates the room
6. Therapist shares only these values with client:
    a. Room Password
    b. Room ID
7. Client creates a nickname and then clicks "join session"
8. Therapist clicks on "start session"
9. Use the VSA

Notes about the rejoin feature:

1. Will need to wait one minute to rejoin. This gives the program a chance to do the quick reconnect if it can.
2. It is not possible to rejoin after 5 minutes have elapsed.
3. If you try to rejoin the room too soon, a "Room Full" message will appear. Wait 30 sec and try again.

VSA Rejoin Instructions

For a client to rejoin a session

1. The therapist stays in the session
2. Client restarts the app
3. Client chooses to "Reconnect"
4. Therapist tells the client the following and has them enter the following
   a. Room ID
   b. Room Password
   c. **Do NOT** give the client the secret key code
5. Client changes the nickname
6. Client taps 'Verify If Room Exists'
7. Client tries to rejoin session
   a. If too quick, i.e. less than 1 minute from disconnect, the client will get a "Room Full" message
8. Messages will be sent to client and therapist that a rejoin has started
9. The tray is saved by on therapist iPad and sent to the client
10. Messages will be send to client and therapist that rejoin has ended
11. Control of tray is given to therapist
12. The therapist can assign control of the tray per usual

Therapist to rejoin a session

1. The client stays in the session
2. Therapist restarts the app
3. Therapist logs in as admin
4. Therapist goes to 'Administrate'
5. Therapist goes to 'Remote Activities'
6. Therapist chooses 'Reconnect'
7. The values from the last session get cached. If not, the therapist enters the following
   a. Room ID
   b. Room Password
   c. Secret Key (This is only for the therapist. Do NOT give it to the client. It tells the program who is the therapist and who is the client.)
8. Therapist taps on "Verify If Room Exists' button
9. Therapist then taps on the 'Join Room' button
   a. If less than 1 minute, will give 'Room Full' message
10. Messages will be sent to client(s) and therapist to say the process is starting
11. In the group feature, whoever has been in the room the longest (1st to join) will retain the tray and it will be sent to the rejoining member(s)
12. Messages will be sent to all that the process is complete
13. Control of tray is given to therapist
14. The therapist can assign control of the tray per usual

These instructions are to be used in the event of a significant internet disruption while in the

Virtual Sandtray remote activities feature