

Working in contexts where we are not in the same room: Telephone and Video-conferencing

Working online or over the phone can be a really supportive and effective way of working together in therapy. However, it is different from being in the same room with someone, and it is not always appropriate for everyone. This will depend on many things such as your personal circumstances, sense of safety and what you wish to gain from working in therapy. As a result, it is important that we take time to assess its suitability and whether I am the best placed to support you in this way. If it doesn't feel appropriate, we may discuss what other options are available.

For Online therapy

- Setting up the Zoom for our therapy work

I offer online sessions over Zoom. I have chosen it as it is an encrypted platform which states that it is GDPR compliant.

Once I have received your email with the completed Counselling agreement form, I will send an invitation Zoom link email. The email contains a meeting link which can be used to begin our session. If using your browser on your computer or phone, you simply need to click onto the link at the time of our session. The link will also contain the meeting reference and password information, should you wish to call through the Zoom app.

This link can be re-used for each of our sessions. To ensure privacy, I will lock the meeting once we have started it. Should you need a new link before a session, that's fine. Just let me know.

- Arranging a session

We will ideally try to set up a weekly, regular slot for therapy. However, I'm aware that this may not always be manageable in the current situation. If either of us needs to arrange or rearrange a session, this can be done via email or text, as far in advance as possible.

-What I will ensure during a session

I will make sure, as with all my face to face work, that I am working in a quiet, uninterrupted space where our conversation will not be overheard. I will make every effort to ensure that my device and app are fully functioning. I may choose to wear headphones in order to hear you clearly and therefore fully focus on our work.

- What will be important for you to ensure before and during your session

It will be important that you are somewhere where you can be free from interruptions throughout our time together. Think about where you may be able to speak from without feeling overheard by anyone. This is important to help you to feel free to use the session as effectively as possible. If we are interrupted, we may be able to quickly resolve this during a session. However, it is possible that we might have to end the session ahead of time. Please also make sure that your device(s) are set so that they will not disturb you and your focus during our session. For example, it's worth seeing whether it is possible to disable other notifications during this time period and whether you are able

to place your device on a stable surface. Also, it's worth checking that your device is charged and that the connection/ app are working as well as possible.

It's also important that you allow yourself time to settle yourself in preparation for our session, so that you're able to make the most of it. This is particularly the case if you are often using your screen for other things during the day. Consider whether you need to get yourself a drink, tissues, warm clothing – whatever will help you to stay feeling comfortable, supported and focused. I will be making similar preparations before we meet.

- Starting a session

I will be ready for our session 5 minutes before we are due to begin and will wait for your call via Vsee (or the Zoom link). I expect that during our first session we will need to take time to check that everything is working well and that it feels comfortable. If there are technical issues making video contact, you may wish to call me on my mobile.

- If I don't hear from you at the start of a session:

After 5 minutes I will make contact with you either via email or text. I will do this again after another 5 minutes or so and will try to phone you as well. If I don't hear from you, I will assume that you are unable to continue with that session at that point.

- Cancellations

Please be aware that my cancellation policy remains the same (48 hours' notice). If you realise that you need to rearrange the session, just let me know as soon as you are able and we may be able to find an alternative time for that week.

- What we will do if we get cut off or if the video is not working properly

If this happens, it might be best wait a few seconds. I will then wait for you to make contact, if you are able to. This could be by restarting the video call, phoning my mobile, or by text or email. If I don't hear from you, I will text you. If we decide to complete the rest of the session on the telephone, I may give you my landline number instead. If we agree that it is necessary for me to phone you back, this will come up on your phone as 'unknown' or 'withheld' number.

- How it might be different from having therapy in the same room together

Because we are unable to be with each other in the same room, we may need to take time to get used to how this feels, particularly as therapy is a different way of talking compared to other types of online conversations that we have in our lives. Pauses and silences, for example, may feel a little different as well as things like eye contact and body language, as what we can see or show on the screen is different to sitting in the same room as someone. Being online may also affect what is or isn't shared, and what is assumed or imagined. It will be important that we both check out what's going on throughout a session and let each other know. If anything feels uncomfortable, I would like you to let me know this. We can then work together to look at what might be happening and how we can work with it. It is always important to avoid ending our call early without giving us a chance to talk through why you might want to do this.

- Payment

Payment will be via online BACS transfer. This is ideally paid before the session, but definitely by the end of that day.

For telephone therapy:

- I will probably be using an alternative landline number for telephone therapy. I will confirm this with you before we start our sessions, but do feel free to check with me in advance if you do not have confirmation from me.

- Arranging a session

We will ideally try to set up a weekly, regular slot for therapy. If either of us needs to arrange or rearrange a session, this can be done via email or text, as far in advance as possible.

- What I will ensure during a session

I will make sure that, like with any face to face work, I am working in a quiet, uninterrupted space where our conversation will not be overheard.

- What will be important for you to ensure before and during your session

It will be important that you are somewhere where you can be free from interruptions throughout our time together. Think about where you may be able to speak from without feeling overheard by anyone. This is important to help you to feel free to use the session as effectively as possible. If we are interrupted, we may be able to quickly resolve this during a session. However, it is possible that we might have to end the session ahead of time. Please also make sure that your device(s) are sufficiently charged and set so that they will not disturb you and your focus during our session.

It's also important that you allow yourself time to settle yourself in preparation for our session, so that you're able to make the most of it. This is particularly the case if you are often using your phone for other things during the day. Consider whether you need to get yourself a drink, tissues, warm clothing – whatever will help you to stay feeling comfortable, supported and focused. I will be making similar preparations before we meet.

- Starting a session

I will be available for our session 5 minutes before our appointment is due to start. I will wait for you to phone me. If there are any technical issues that take place, we can be in touch via email or text.

- If I don't hear from you at the start of a session

After 5 minutes I will make contact with you either via email or text. I will do this again after another 5 minutes or so and will try to phone you as well. If I don't hear from you, I will assume that you are unable to continue with that session.

- Cancellations

Please be aware that my cancellation policy remains the same (48 hours' notice). If you realise that you need to rearrange the session, just let me know as soon as you are able and we may be able to find an alternative time for that week.

- What we will do if we get cut off

If this happens, it might be best wait a few seconds. I will then wait for you to make contact, if you are able to. This could be by re-phoning or by text or email. If I don't hear from you, I will text you. If we agree that it is necessary for me to phone you back, this will come up on your phone as 'unknown' or 'withheld' number.

- How it might be different from having therapy in the same room together

Because we are unable to see each other, we may need to take time to get used to how this feels, particularly as therapy is a different way of talking compared to other types of phone conversations that we have in our lives. Pauses and silences, for example, may feel a little different. Being on the phone may also affect what is or isn't shared and what is assumed or imagined. It will be important that we both check out what's going on throughout a session and let each other know. If anything feels uncomfortable, I would like you to let me know this. We can then work together to look at what might be happening and how we can work with it. It is always important to avoid ending our call early without giving us a chance to talk through why you might want to do this.

- Payment

Payment will be via online BACS transfer. This is ideally paid before the session, but definitely by the end of that day.

If there is anything that isn't clear, or that you think it would be good to talk through beforehand, just let me know.

Many thanks, Jo

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