

Counselling Agreement for Online Therapy

Please read the information below as this sets out the boundaries to our online therapy work together. This is an informed consent form and you are asked to read and agree it's acceptance before we can begin therapy work together.

Counselling sessions

Skype – sessions can be via video (face to face), instant messaging (chat) or telephone calls over the internet (VoIP). You will need access to skype facilities on your computer which is free to download and set up a user name. Skype conversations are encrypted. We will send you our skype contact details that we use for counselling. You will need to ready to connect at the agreed time for sessions. We will contact you at the start of each session. Sessions are 50 minutes long. If we have agreed to more than one session then a time for the next meeting will be made at the end of the conducted session.

Phone – we use VoIP which enable the calls to be free to both parties. We can call you on your landline. Whats App is also possible to use and is free.

Email – email sessions work so that you can either send a full outline of current concerns or you can write your thoughts over a short period of time and then send them to your therapist to read and reply to in detail. Some clients prefer to work this way as they find it easier to write their thoughts down and can keep therapists responses to re read and use as a prompt. There is a word limit of 800 words per email. You would send your email by an agreed date and the therapist will make their response within an agreed time – usually 48 hours. We use a secure encrypted web-based email service. This means they are encrypted on route so only we can see them when we sign in to our accounts.

Payment of Sessions

Direct payments for sessions are made a week in advance before the session is due to take place. Payment for sessions need to be made at least 48 hours before your booked session or it will be considered cancelled. Payments can be made weekly but must be paid 48 hours in advance at the latest. For ease of admin Monday sessions need to be paid by 7pm UK time on the Thursday of the week before, for all other sessions payment must reach us by the Friday 5pm UK time. Your therapist will send you ways to pay via BACS or paypal please.

Late or Missed sessions and Cancellation

Session are organised for an agreed date and time. If you are late attending the session we will stay online for 15 minutes to allow for any eventualities. If you do not make contact within this time then the session will be considered missed and will be cancelled. You will be charged for this. If you are late attending your session, we will still end on the original time for the session.

If you wish to cancel a session you are asked to give a minimum of 48 hours notice by either email or SMS. If you miss your agreed session and have not given sufficient notice then your payment will be kept.

Our contact details are as follows:-

Niki via email at nikijwelch@aol.com or via text / voice message on 07846 580324

Dom via email at aske27@aol.com or via text / voice message on 0791 5377129

We check our emails and phones daily and will respond to you as quickly as possible.

Attending sessions

We work with all clients in a professional manner. We ask that you do not attend therapy sessions under the influence of alcohol or drugs and ask you to dress appropriately for skype (face to face) sessions.

Session times and Personal Space

Preparing for sessions

Your session times are important and this is your “space”. Being prepared is an important part of therapy. Ensuring that you are comfortable, having a safe and private space to work from is important and having a pen and paper for you to make notes etc a glass of water if you become thirsty and some tissues can be useful.

All session times are 50 minutes long (individual therapy) or 1 hour 20 minutes (couple therapy) and are conducted at an agreed time between you and your therapist.

After Sessions

It is also important to be able to give yourself a bit of time and space after each session. Therapy uses energy and can bring up a host of emotions. Ensuring you have some time after a session is healthy self care. Try to make sure you do not have to rush off for an appointment or pick up the children straight away, having a cup of tea or a glass of water and doing something pleasurable for 5 – 10 mins can help. Your therapist will talk with you about this during initial assessment.

Emotional Responses

It can be quite normal to experience a range of emotions whilst engaged in therapy, both during and in between sessions. This can include feelings of sadness, anger or elation for example. It can be usual to feel tired after sessions, particularly at the start of therapy and sometimes sleep can be disrupted or dreaming may become more intense. Keeping a note of any significant thoughts, feelings or dreams can be helpful as can keeping a journal. These can be shared with your therapist and can be a valuable tool within your therapy process.

Reviews and Ending sessions

Part of the therapy process involves regular reviews between yourself and your therapist. This is to ensure that work is progressing and that you are still getting what you need from the sessions. All therapy comes to an end at some point. Regular reviews help with appropriately planned endings as this is an important part of the therapy journey. We ask that as part of our quality assurance process you are willing to complete a short evaluation as part of your therapy to help us continue to improve the service.

Technical Difficulties

If technical difficulties are experienced, for example computer or internet breakdown we will undertake to contact each other via text (SMS) message so that an alternative session can be made.

Confidentiality, anonymity and breaching

The work we do together is confidential. However, there are particular circumstances in which as therapists we can break confidentiality and this comes under the code of ethical guidelines for counsellors and psychotherapists as set by the BACP. A need for breaking confidentiality focuses on keeping you as the client and others safe from harm. If through our work together, there is a genuine risk for your safety or the safety of others then we have a duty of care to raise that concern with appropriate professionals to support you further. We will always explore this with you first.

Supervision

As part of our professional practice and adhering to the BACP guidelines we have regular individual supervision. Supervision is a process of reviewing the work we do with another psychotherapist. This is to help ensure that we are working safely and to the best interests of clients. Client anonymity is kept, so you will not be identified. Only aspects of work we do may be discussed.

Discussing your Therapy

Our work together is confidential. We ensure that all information is kept safe and protected. We ask that you do the same. It would not be appropriate to post/share onto social networks/forums any written correspondence between us from our work together.

Dual Relationship

As therapists we aim to develop a trusting and friendly working relationship, however, as a therapist we are not a “friend”. To maintain the confidentiality and the boundaries of our work it is not appropriate to be engaged “socially” on any social network, social or professional forums.

Computer Privacy, Safety and Data Protection

When working online it is important to maintain security through reasonable measures to ensure confidentiality and safe working procedures.

Firewall and Antivirus – these can be installed to protect your software and hardware from third parties or viruses. McAfee and Norton antivirus protection are available.

Encryption – using encryption allows information that you send or receive to be kept confidential. Safe-mail.net or Hushmail and Zip 7 are encrypted webmail services that offer a high form of security for emails, file exchanges and chat conversations. Normal contact, for appointments etc can be via ordinary email or SMS. We use Zip 7 encryption which is free and easy to set up and use. We can help you to set this up.

Password Protection - Many of us have our own personal computer, ensuring you have a password gives you extra security so that others do not gain access to your documents and information you have stored. If you have access to a shared computer then it is important you have your own personal password that other people do not have access to. Saving information to your own password protected key/ dongle gives you added security.

Own personal security – please ensure that you have a private and safe space in which to have your sessions and that you will not be disturbed whilst in session.

Data Protection – When we have completed our work, all material such as email exchanges etc are removed from the computer and safely stored on a password protected memory stick. Any electronic records of our work will be deleted at the end of our contracted work.

All transcripts, counselling emails and notes that are made as part of our work are owned by the therapist. Please do not post extracts or whole copies of our communication on social forums or third parties.

General note – although security measures are put in place and regularly reviewed, Governments have programs which can snoop on internet traffic. This means that emails and live sessions can be intercepted, although this is unlikely. Encrypted communication is not easily read and offers a high level of security.

Emergency contacts

Online counselling is not suitable if you are experiencing an enduring mental health illness or are experiencing acute distress. If you feel you are in crisis or are in danger of harming yourself then it is imperative that you contact the emergency services for help or go to your nearest A&E department.

Please see the [Emergency Contacts](#) resource list for crisis support.