

Counselling Agreement Additions and Amendments during Coronavirus (COVID-19) Crisis

During the period of the crisis, the usual conditions of our initial Counselling Agreement together still apply. This document details a few additional points that I would like you to acknowledge, whilst we are unable to meet face-to-face and are instead meeting only via telephone or video-conferencing platforms.

We will have already discussed together whether it is appropriate and helpful to continue your counselling at this time, and if so, how we might approach the sessions. We will review things on a regular basis to check out how things are working for you and to discuss any necessary changes. My aim is to make these sessions as useful as possible whilst also ensuring that the counselling process remains confidential and effective. It is understandable that anxiety levels may be heightened at this time - this is something that affects everyone in different ways, sometimes unexpectedly.

Please read the following requests carefully. I will be asking you to acknowledge that you have done this.

Confidentiality

1. You should do all that you can to find a private and undisturbed place for our sessions. If you feel confident that you cannot be overheard, you will be able to engage in the session more fully. You may need to be creative about finding confidential space, perhaps even sitting outside in the car, if you have one. (You will also need to ensure that any vulnerable members of your household have adequate care and supervision for this time. If this is not possible, we may need to review the suitability of the service I am able to offer.)
2. We will both agree not to make any kind of recording of sessions conducted by phone or video-link.
3. You are responsible for the security of your devices, employing password-protection, having regularly updated virus-checkers and firewalls installed etc. (Please discuss any concerns with me).
4. I will ensure that my devices are secure at all times as above.

Technology

In the event that we lose our connection due to technological difficulties, I will always attempt to re-establish the connection. If this is not possible, I will contact you by an alternative method (eg email or phone) to either continue the session or reschedule.

Netiquette

Meeting me from your home environment may lead to the process feeling more informal, which may, in turn, affect how you prepare for and experience our meetings. It can help the counselling process if you take the following steps:

1. Turn off other devices (such as phones, TV) during our session to minimise distractions.
2. Set up a space where you can sit comfortably for the duration of the session, preferably with your device supported hands-free and set up so that you remain clearly visible with adequate lighting and without needing to make adjustments as we talk.
3. It is helpful if you refrain from eating or drinking (other than water) during the sessions and commit to the agreed timings and session duration.
4. Please put all other activities aside so that you can focus on the session.

Practical arrangements and contact

Any contact by email or telephone in between sessions will be limited to practical arrangements and information only. Sensitive and personal material should be kept for the session itself. I will not accept from you invitations or any other form of contact via social media.

Fees / Payment/Cancellations

My fees will remain the same, unless we agree to review this. During the Coronavirus Crisis, I will be flexible about late cancellations, especially in the case of illness (either your own or that of someone else in your household).

If I become seriously ill and am unable to contact you, I have a formal arrangement with a counselling colleague who will then be able to access client contact details and who will inform you and discuss alternative arrangements. This colleague will **only** receive your contact details in the case of a serious emergency.

Payment: ***Enter here your payment instructions and, if appropriate bank details or details of payment service being used.***

Engaging in counselling either by phone or video-link will feel different from our usual way of working. It may be the first time you have used this approach and this can seem daunting. However, it has been recognised that sometimes people find it easier to talk to express themselves actually being in the room with their counsellor. Telephone or web-cam conversations can sometimes feel different in both pace and tone.

I suggest we explore together how to begin our sessions carefully and slowly, how to set an agenda and also that we plan a careful and measured ending to each session so that you do not feel abruptly cut off.

After the session ends, it can be important to take a little time to adjust back to the life around you. (There is usually a transition period before and after a face-to-face session as you travel to and from my consulting room.) It might be worth planning a short walk or a little time to yourself for a short period after a session in order to reflect and reconnect gradually with other things.