

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 its acceptance before we can begin working together.

Online therapy can be conducted with clients who are over 18 via Skype/Zoom (face to face), instant messaging, telephone calls or via email; and the information below details how to optimise whichever mode you choose.

Online Sessions via Zoom/Skype

You will need access to Zoom facilities on your computer, phone or tablet, which is free to download. Once you have downloaded the software, you will be prompted to sign up or sign in. Please do this in advance of our first session. Most sessions are conducted via Zoom, unless otherwise requested (e.g. Skype is available). As soon as you book your session online, a Zoom invite will be sent to your email address.

When it comes to the time/date of our appointment, click on the link you have received in the email, type the password you have been sent and enter the 'waiting room' until our session begins and you are invited in to the session. Sessions are up to 50-minutes long.

Phone sessions

Upon booking a session online, various details will be requested, including a telephone number. At the confirmed date/time, you will receive a phone call to the number you have provided. Sessions are 50-minutes long.

Instant Chat

Instant chat is usually conducted via Google Hangouts. Various information will be requested on the booking form and your email/name will be used to make contact at the specific booked time. Please ensure that you have access to Google Hangouts prior to your appointment time.

Email Therapy

These sessions are booked online in the same way as the sessions above. On the booking form, you will be asked to provide some information about the reasons for seeking help. You will then be contacted separately requesting a full outline of current concerns. There is a word limit of 800 words per email. You can send your email whenever you are ready to do so and you will receive your response as soon as possible, usually within 48 hours of your email being received (weekend and Bank Holiday dependent). E-mail therapy is continuous in a similar way to the options above (Zoom, telephone and instant chat), whereby we work collaboratively towards an agreed set of goals over a period of sessions.

Email Advice/Guidance

These sessions are booked online in the same way as the sessions above. On the booking form, you will be asked to provide some information about the reasons for seeking help. You will then be contacted separately requesting a full outline of current concerns and further details will be provided.

Payment of Sessions

Payments are made prior to online sessions starting. Payment for sessions need to be made upon booking.

Late, missed sessions and cancellation

Zoom, telephone and instant messaging sessions are organised for an agreed date and time. If you are late attending the session, I 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. There will be no refund provided for this. If you are late attending your session, we will still end at the original time for the session. If you wish to cancel a session you are asked to give a minimum of 24 hours notice by either email or SMS otherwise the full fee will be charged.

Attending sessions

It is requested that that you do not attend therapy sessions under the influence of alcohol or drugs and you are asked to dress appropriately for Zoom/ Skype sessions. Further information is provided in the Guidance for Remote Sessions document.

Session times and Personal Space

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 can be useful.

All live session times are 50 minutes long and are conducted at an agreed time between you and I.

It is also important to be able to give yourself some time and space after each session if at all possible. Therapy uses energy and can bring up a host of emotions so ensuring you have some time to ground yourself after a session is often useful. Try to make sure you do not have to rush off for an appointment or pick up the children straight away. Instead, having a cup of tea or a glass of water and doing something pleasurable for 5 – 10 mins can help.

Reviews and Ending sessions

Part of the therapy process involves regular reviews between yourself and I. 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 so regular reviews help with appropriately planned endings, as this is an important part of the therapy process.

Technical Difficulties

If technical difficulties are experienced, for example computer or internet breakdown or a bad connection, then I will aim to contact you via email or text message so that an alternative session can be made.

Confidentiality, anonymity and breeching

The work we do together is confidential. However, there are particular circumstances in

which psychologists can break confidentiality due to our ethical code of practice. A need for breaking confidentiality focuses on keeping you and others safe from harm. If, through our work together, there is a genuine risk for your safety or the safety of others then I have a duty of care to raise these concerns with appropriate professionals in order to support you further. I would always explore this with you first, unless I was unable to communicate with you, for whatever reason.

Supervision

As part of professional practice and adhering to ethical practice guidelines, psychologists have regular individual supervision. Supervision is a process of reviewing the work conducted with another psychologist. This is to help ensure that we are working safely and to the best interests of clients. Client anonymity is respected, so any identifiable information would be anonymised, however aspects of our work together 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.

Boundaries and Professional Relationships

As a psychologist, I aim to develop a trusting, warm and welcoming working relationship, however, the relationship is a professional one and for ethical reasons, we can therefore not be considered “friends”. To maintain the confidentiality and the boundaries of our work, it is therefore not appropriate for us to engage “socially” on any personal social network. I will therefore not be able to accept any connection requests to my personal social media accounts.

*Note: I have professional accounts that are open access, which may contain useful articles for you to peruse and you are invited to connect to these accounts (e.g. www.facebook.com/drvictoriagalbraith and www.instagram.com/drvictoriagalbraith and www.twitter.com/DrVictoriaG) however they are not forums to publicly discuss our therapeutic work.

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.

Password Protection – All emails from us with attached documents will be password protected. We will send an email with the password protected document first and then we will send the password separately. You may wish to send your document this way too.

Microsoft Word allows you to do this for free and it is a good way of ensuring that information doesn't get in to the wrong hands.

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, emails and notes that are made as part of our work are owned by the psychologist. Please do not post extracts or whole copies of our communication on social forums or to 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 communications are not easily read and offer a high level of security.

Emergency contacts

Online therapy 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. The Samaritans offer a 24-hour helpline for people who are in crisis on 116-123.

Some useful contact numbers below:

Samaritans – 116 123 (24 Hour support line)

National Centre for Domestic Violence – 0207-186-8270

Respect – Men’s Advice Line – 0808-801-0327 (Mon-Fri 9-5 or 8pm)

National Domestic Abuse Helpline – 0808-2000-247

NSPCC – 0808-800-5000

Mind – 0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri, 9-6)

Cruse Bereavement – 0800-808-1677

Action on Elder Abuse – 0808-808-8141 (Mon-Fri 9-5)

Childline – 0800-1111