



## Online counselling using Zoom™ video-conferencing software

Online counselling can be a useful & practical alternative to traditional face-to-face counselling. Therapists have been using various forms of online counselling for years and many clients find it valuable.

### What is online counselling?

Online counselling follows the same fundamental principles as face-to-face counselling. It provides a secure alternative to meeting in person, either through circumstance or choice. Instead of a weekly appointment in my consulting room in Shoreditch, we hold the session from our own separate locations using a webcam and audio link.

The confidentiality and security of your therapy remains central to all parts of the process. I offer clients the option to have online counselling via Zoom™ video-conferencing software. This is an established, secure platform used by many online therapists. You can find out more about Zoom at [zoom.us](https://zoom.us).

### Possible advantages

- You will be able to continue to have counselling and my support even though we can't meet. However, not everyone finds this approach practical or helpful so please think about it carefully and talk it through with me by phone or email before you decide to proceed.
- You may find the process of communicating from your own protected safe space very helpful in itself. Some clients say they actually find it easier to talk about some things when they're not in the same room as their therapist.
- I may be able to offer you more flexibility online, for example if you have to change location for any reason, you'll still be able to continue with your sessions, as long as you have access to your device. Also as there is no travel time needed, there is some flexibility to adjust session times when needed.



## Possible disadvantages

- It may feel strange to work without the same 'cues' that arise when we're in the same room together and you may find it harder to communicate exactly what you're feeling. In direct face-to-face communication we pick up information from facial expressions, voice tone, body language, which may be less obvious when working online.
- You may find yourself exploring things that you wouldn't feel able to say when we're together in person. This might lead to unexpectedly heightened emotional responses both during the session and afterwards. It's important to be aware of this and I'll explore this with you regularly with you as an ongoing part of the process.
- Occasionally technological problems can arise which affect our session. We'll discuss alternative means of contact and have an agreed course of action in case this happens.
- You'll be responsible for ensuring privacy at your end. You'll need to be able to shut the door on any noise, ensure that no one interrupts us and turn off telephones and other forms of contact.

## How does it work?

You can use Zoom™ from a computer or laptop as long as you have a microphone and webcam. Most devices come with them both installed nowadays.

If you don't have these, use your mobile phone or tablet instead. You simply need to download the Zoom™ from your app store. This works in the same way although the screen may differ slightly from that on a computer.

Follow the instructions below if you are using a laptop or computer:

- You select the date & time from my [online booking page](#) for online sessions.
- Once you've booked & paid securely via PayPal you'll receive a link to our first session in an email which is your safe zoom meeting link.
- The first time you open the link, Zoom will guide you through the process. You do not need a Zoom account but it will ask your permission to upload the software to your computer and then take you to the meeting. This only takes a short time.

- You'll be asked to 'Open Zoom meetings'. You may also be prompted about using your computer audio and video. To turn your camera on, tap the camera icon on the bottom left and to turn your audio on, tap the microphone icon on the bottom left.
- You'll then find yourself in the meeting room, where I'll be waiting for you.
- You'll receive an invitation to confirm & pay for your weekly session each week & be sent a new link each time. This ensures we meet in a confidential & secure space.

## Security

It's important that we both take confidentiality very seriously. You need to take personal responsibility for your own computer security and ensure that confidentiality is protected. Let me know straight away if you have any concerns that the security and confidentiality of our sessions is or has been compromised. Although online counselling can never be 100% secure, there are several things you can and should do to reduce any risk:

- Always use a password to access your computer and change your password frequently.
- Keep the security software (virus protection, firewall) on your computer up to date.
- Check regularly for software updates for your video and audio communication software.
- Plan your session for a time when you know you can have privacy, making sure others in the house know not to disturb or interrupt you.
- Find a safe and undisturbed space where you can set up your device and sit comfortably for the whole session.
- Close all other open browsers and programmes on your computer as these can affect the connection and either slow it down or cause the screen to freeze.
- Ensure you turn off all notifications on your phone & laptop to avoid disruptions.
- Ensure your device is fully charged or charging.
- Using headphones with a mic attached helps ensure privacy.