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## **ONLINE COUNSELLING GUIDELINES & CONSENT**

Thank you for your interest in engaging with online counselling. The following information regarding online counselling will allow you to decide whether you wish to consent to using this medium. Please feel free to ask any questions if you need clarification.

### **Benefits and Limitations**

Online counselling is a convenient and effective alternative to traditional face-to-face counselling. Whilst there may be a lack of personal face-to-face interaction, most clients adapt very easily and comfortably to the online space.

We will be using *Google Meets* as a platform to engage in online counselling. This platform is secure and offers us an opportunity to do counselling from the safety of your own home.

When booking an appointment, you will receive a *link* to the meeting. When you click on the link, it will take you to our virtual "meeting room". Please note that I will only be in the meeting room at the time of our consultation. Once we are both in the virtual meeting room, *please turn on your camera and audio*.

### **What do I Need?**

You will require a device that can connect to the internet (ie. laptop, mobile phone, or tablet), with a reliable highspeed internet connection (minimum 4Mbps for video). Please be aware that online counselling may utilise significant amounts of data, especially if video (300-800MB/hour) is used.

We would like to keep disruptions to a minimum during the session, so please also ensure that you are connected, have sufficient data, that your device is plugged into a power source or is fully charged and can endure the full length of the session.

### **Some Things to Consider:**

As much as possible, it is important to emulate an appropriate counselling space. When choosing a suitable place to have our session ensure the following:

#### **1. Privacy**

You might be living in a house that is shared with other people. During our online session, please ensure that you are in a space that is private, so you feel safe to share openly. I will equally ensure that privacy is maintained on my side.

Some measures which you can take to ensure privacy include:

- a) Making sure that you are in a space where family members/others can't walk in and interrupt. Perhaps this means locking the door to the room you are using, or informing everyone that they are

not to disturb you for an hour. Putting a notice on the door is also a good option. Some clients choose to have their session in a car/garden/bathroom to ensure they get the privacy they need.

- b) Making use of earphones will assist in achieving an element of privacy. Whilst your voice may still be audible to others, the content of what I say will not be audible. Many earphones that come with a mobile phone have in-line microphones which are ideal as you don't need to speak loudly.
- c) You can ask your family members to play background music, so your conversation is further muffled.

## **2. Access to Supportive Material**

In trying to keep a degree of familiarity as with normal face-to-face sessions, I recommend having the following items on hand during our online sessions:

- A box of tissues/toilet paper
- A glass of water
- If you usually like to hold onto a scatter cushion during face-to-face sessions, try to have one available for the online sessions too.

### **Practical Notes:**

What should be visible? It will be helpful for me to be able to see your face as well as your upper body. If possible, try to sit at a suitable distance away from your device.

I also appreciate that you will be sharing a view of your personal home space with me, and I will hold no judgement on the items/things that will be reflected in the background of your screen. Please don't worry about cleaning up or ensuring that the background is suitable. It is however recommended that you avoid sitting on your bed during the session.

### **What do I do if I can't connect to the meeting?**

Please call or message me on 0637486079 and I will try to assist you.

### **What do we do if we lose connection during the session?**

If the session cuts out during our session, I will try to re-connect with you via the same link. I may also send you a message via WhatsApp for further instructions so please check your phone. If due to technological difficulties we are unable to reconnect, the session will be rescheduled for a later date. Should the latter occur, you will only be charged a pro-rata amount of the fee.

### **Crisis Management**

It can be difficult to deal with emergency crisis situations when using online counselling as we are in separate locations. I will therefore ask you to provide the contact details of a local family member and/or friend and a local medical practitioner who can be contacted in the case of an emergency. If you are in crisis and we are disconnected while we are engaging in online counselling, then you should immediately phone me (cell: 0627486079). If we are unable to connect, please call the emergency contact person identified below, or go to your nearest hospital.

## Confidentiality

Any information provided to me will remain confidential and will not be shared with a third party unless you give me specific permission to do so. However, please be aware that if there is a significant risk of you seriously harming yourself or another person, I will be obliged to act to prevent harm and break confidentiality. If you are feeling suicidal or depressed, then I will have to decline engaging in online counselling with you and recommend that you rather seek in-person sessions with a psychologist and/or psychiatrist in your area to ensure that you can get the best and most appropriate help possible.

Online counselling utilises the Internet for the transmission of personal information and therefore there are increased risks to confidentiality, and it cannot be guaranteed. To protect your confidentiality, I will require that we use services that provide encryption to communicate. Please consider password protecting the devices you use and installing antivirus software to prevent access by third parties.

Please ensure that you use a private environment when engaging in online counselling so that disruptions can be minimised.

## CONSENT

1. I have read the above and understand the risks associated with engaging in online counselling. I agree to participate in online counselling and comply with the policies outlined above.
2. I agree that in the case of an emergency where there is a threat of harm that the following persons can/will be contacted:

Emergency Contact Person's Name & Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Client: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Number of Emergency Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Medical Practitioner: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number of Medical Practitioner: \_\_\_\_\_

Client Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*(NOTE: To fill out this pdf form, click on "Tools" on the menu bar, and then "Fill & Sign")*