



Online therapy

What is online therapy?

Online therapy follows the same fundamental principles as face-to-face therapy. It provides a secure alternative if circumstances prevent us from meeting in person or if working online is a more practical option for you. Instead of a weekly appointment in my therapy room, 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 online therapy via Zoom™ video-conferencing software, which is an established, secure platform used by many online therapists. You can find out more about Zoom at www.zoom.us

Possible advantages:

You will be able to receive therapy even though we can't meet. However, not everyone finds this approach practical or helpful, so please think about it carefully and feel free to talk to me about any concerns via 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 and in familiar surroundings (although this may not be the case for you).

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.

Possible disadvantages or difficulties:

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, I pick up information from facial expressions, voice tone, body language, and even the clothes people are wearing, 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, as a central and on-going part of the process.

Occasionally, technical problems can arise, which affect the online link. 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.

You may find it confusing to see us both on the screen at the same time but we can discuss ways to resolve this issue. For example, I can help you to change the settings, so that your screen view is made smaller for the session.

How does it work?

Zoom can be downloaded onto a computer or laptop. You can also use Zoom on a phone or tablet using the Zoom app, which you can download from your app store. This works in the same way, although the screen may differ slightly from that on a computer.

If you want to go ahead with online therapy:

- We will agree on the date and time of your online session in the usual way (usually by email).
- A few minutes before our session starts, I'll send you an email invitation to join the Zoom meeting. This will contain a link, which you should click on. As long as you can see the link has come from my email account at the expected time, this link will be safe.
- You'll be asked to 'Open Zoom meetings'. You may also be prompted about using your audio and video on your device.
- When you've done this, you'll find yourself in the 'waiting room'. I will then invite you into the meeting, which is a confidential and secure space.
- I will send an invitation to a new meeting for each session. This ensures that the space is never available to any other client.
- When you have successfully joined, I will 'lock' the meeting to ensure that no one else can enter the session.

Security:

Although online counselling can never be 100% secure, there are several things you can and should do to reduce any risk. I also follow these guidelines.

- 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 this can affect the connection and either slow it down or cause the screen to freeze.
- 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.

Joining our counselling session using Zoom:

- You don't need to create a Zoom account. I will create a link to the meeting and send it to you by email. This also means that none of your personal details are held by Zoom.
- If you wish to join the session on your desktop or laptop computer, you'll need to have a webcam and microphone. If you don't have these, use your mobile phone or tablet instead.
- It is useful to download Zoom to your computer, mobile phone or tablet in advance of the meeting. Zoom will guide you through the process and it should only take a short time.

To use Zoom on your computer:

Installing Zoom:

- I will send you a link to download Zoom. You can also download Zoom by visiting the webpage <https://zoom.us/download>
- Zoom will prompt you to download the application. Accept the download and follow the on-screen instructions to install. Confirm 'yes' to everything that allows you to see and hear the other participant in the meeting.

Joining the session:

- Once you've installed Zoom, go back to my email and click on the meeting link. The meeting will open in a new browser window.
- You may be asked to enter the password, which will be on the email I have sent to you.

- You may be prompted to select 'audio' and 'video'. Please make sure to select both of these options so I can see and hear you.
- Alternatively, once you are in the meeting, tap the camera icon on the bottom left of the black menu bar to turn your camera on.
- To turn your audio on, tap the microphone icon on the bottom left of the black menu bar.

To use Zoom on your phone or tablet:

Installing Zoom:

- Download the Zoom app from your App store.

Joining the session:

- Open my email and click on the Zoom meeting link. The Zoom app will automatically open into our meeting.
- If your camera is not showing, tap your device and tap the camera icon.
- If your audio is not working, tap your device and tap the microphone icon.

Technical tips:

- Make sure your device is fully charged or have a charging device handy.
- You may wish to use headphones with a microphone attached (your mobile phone headphones are suitable).
- Please note if you choose to use a phone or tablet, it is useful if you can secure it in place rather than holding it, as any movement on screen can be disruptive to the session.