



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 Skype video-conferencing software, which is an established, secure platform used by many online therapists. You can find out more about Skype at <https://www.skype.com/en/>

Possible advantages:

You will be able to receive therapy even though we can't meet in person.

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:

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.

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?

Skype can be downloaded onto a computer or laptop. You can also use Skype on a phone or tablet using the Skype 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 Skype 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 join the meeting. You may also be prompted about using your audio and video on your device.
- 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 therapy session using Skype:

- You don't need to create a Skype account, if this is your preference. 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 Skype.
- 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.
- If you do choose to download, Skype, the website will guide you through the process and it should only take a short time to install.

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.