



Online video counselling can be a convenient and effective way to access professional counselling. While it's not exactly the same as sitting in a room together, you might be surprised by how easy it is to talk and open up when you're sitting in your own home or suitable private environment.

There are a few extra things that need to be considered before commencing online counselling, and it may not be for everyone. Please read this information page and ask any questions about online counselling prior to, or during, your initial appointment.

How does online counselling work?

- In online counselling we conduct our session using a video and audio connection on a computer or tablet.
- I currently use *Sessions* for videoconferencing because it is designed especially for counselling and is easy to use and encrypted for security.
- Once we have made an appointment time, I will send you a confirmation email with a *Sessions* link. At the time of your appointment, you just need to click on the link to open the session and I will meet you online.

Is online video counselling as effective as a face to face counselling consultation?

- Counselling and psychological treatment using online video technology has been found to be as effective as face to face counselling for a variety of mental health presentations, including anxiety and depression.
- I have undertaken additional training in the delivery and ethics of Online Counselling and am comfortable working in this format.

Advantages of online counselling

- Online counselling is easy to access and opens up your options for which counsellor you see.
- It improves accessibility for people who live in regional or remote areas, or who are unwilling or unable to leave the house.



- You can engage in counselling in the comfort of your own home, or in a location where you are private.
- You may find you are able to speak more freely about sensitive or uncomfortable issues.

When Online counselling may not be suitable

- WomenHood Counselling is not a crisis service. Appointments for online counselling need to be made at least 48 hours in advance. If you are at risk of harm or experiencing a crisis, please contact Lifeline on 131114 or emergency services on 000.
- Online Counselling is not intended for people with severe or enduring mental health conditions, or for those who are actively suicidal. Contacting your GP regarding a mental health plan and referral to a local clinician who can see you face to face may be the most beneficial approach.
- Online Counselling at WomenHood is for people living in Australia. If you live in another country, there are a growing number of counsellors for women without children. Try a search via the professional counselling and psychology societies in your country.

Privacy and security online

- I will keep the content of our Online Counselling private and confidential, and I will conduct our session from my private office [please read limits of confidentiality* below].

- You will need to ensure that you are in a private room or space when you are engaged in online counselling with me. You should be alone where we cannot be overheard; public places where you can be overheard are not suitable.
- As the counsellor, I will do my best to ensure that the online session is secure. I use password protected wifi and *Sessions* for videoconferencing which is encrypted for security.
- You should also use a wifi connection that is password protected, ie not a public unsecured wifi.
- Clients need to be aware that there are limitations to the security of the online environment, which may be beyond our control. If the video conference or my files were to be hacked or breached, I will discuss this with you as soon as I am aware.
- Recording of the online counselling session is not permitted, unless it is agreed by both parties for a specific therapeutic reason.

What equipment do I need?

- You will need a fully charged laptop, computer or tablet that has a camera or web cam.
- Your device will need to be connected to the internet using password protected wifi. You will need a strong internet connection that will enable video. If your internet is known to drop out, this will make it difficult for us to connect online. Using your smart phone as a Hot Spot internet connection to your computer or tablet may give you a stable connection.
- Use ear buds or headphones for your audio so it creates a clear and private audio experience.

Appointments and payment

- Appointments need to be made at least 48 hours in advance, and I will also send a reminder text message the day before your appointment.
- You will be invoiced at the end of your Online Counselling session where you can pay on the day by debit/credit card using a secure payment system.
- Rescheduling or cancellations need to be made 24 hours in advance so the appointment can be offered to someone else.

* Confidentiality and limits of confidentiality

- The issues discussed in online counselling, including your name and personal information will be kept confidential and your information will not be shared without your consent.
- If there is a serious or imminent risk of harm to yourself or others, I cannot keep that confidential. This would include abuse of a child, making serious threats to harm other people, or intention to harm yourself. If I am aware of such situations, I am ethically bound to enact my duty of care. If you are at risk of harm, I would discuss safety options with you in the first instance.

Top tips for using for Online Counselling

Maintain privacy: Make sure you have a suitable private space. Think about who else can potentially overhear the conversation. Who else will be in the room? Who is in the room next door?

Minimise distractions: Remove potential distractions from the room (eg. mobile phone switched off, turn off music/television, no interruptions from others)

Access to technology: Make sure you have the right technology and a reliable internet connection. Test your web cam and audio ahead of time.

Good visibility: Position the camera so the counsellor can see you clearly on the screen. Be in a well-lit space, allowing a clear image and good eye contact.

Presentation: Think about how you present yourself. Consider how you'd get yourself up and dressed for a face to face appointment and use that as a guide.

