

Guidelines for online consultations

These notes are designed to help you make the most of psychological treatment that is conducted online.

The most important factor to keep in mind is that we should do our best to recreate a psychological consultation space and process, as if you were in the practice or office of your psychologist.

1. Prepare well.

If this is an initial consultation, think about the issues that you want to raise and make some notes, so you feel that you do not forget the most important things. Feel free to email or call in advance to learn what to expect.

If it is an ongoing therapy appointment, then have your 'homework' ready. This work might be your forms for monitoring or recording and whatever skills or exercises or experiments you have been practicing between sessions. Keep them at hand for discussion. Ideally, you will email through the notes to your psychologist, so you can both refer to them.

2. Prepare and protect the environment for the call.

The room that you take the call in should be private and confidential. It is crucial that you are confident that nobody can overhear the conversation and you can express yourself exactly as you want. You need to be seated in a comfortable position so that you can concentrate and work hard for about 50 minutes (the standard length of a treatment consultation).

3. Keep it professional

Imagine you are with your psychologist: how would you sit? What would you wear? How would you talk? Avoid lying in bed or being outside. It may be possible to do a consultation in your car if that is the only place where you feel that you can get the privacy you want but it may not be ideal.

4. Decide with your psychologist who is going to take notes and how.

Usually, **both** the client and psychologist take notes. The notes are a summary of what was discussed, what needs to be remembered and then there may be a clear and short list of skills or techniques to practice between consultations. We recommend using email interactions before and after each consultation to (a) send through monitoring and exercises completed before the appointment, (b) establishing a proposed agenda for the session, then (c) sharing notes and tasks generated in the consultation.

5. Talk about the process

Feel free to talk about what it is like to do the therapy work online. It may feel hard to have a warm connection or to feel that your psychologist can really 'get' your feelings. Psychologists want to know when a consultation can be improved and we want to know how good the connection is with our clients – so speak up.