

Your First Counselling Session

If this is your first time at a counselling session, or at a session with me, you might want to know something about what happens before you come. When you book your session on-line, you supply your name, address, phone number and date of birth, which gets records started. You also download and sign a confidentiality agreement, and email it to me prior to your session. According to your choice, your session will be held by *Phone, Skype* or *Zoom*. Details of how we make contact will have been emailed to you, along with a counselling information sheet. I contact you at the agreed time.

Beginning Your First Counselling Session

At the start of your initial session, I clarify your understanding of the confidentiality agreement. Everything that we discuss is confidential and private, except areas mandated by law, such as ongoing child abuse, intended self-harm or harm to others, and court subpoenas. Booking, payment and cancellation policies are also clarified. This information would have been supplied to you prior to the session, but as a duty of care, I make sure that you agree with the conditions of counselling.

I will also ask you a few brief background questions, so that I have context within which to best help you. With the 'housekeeping' out of the way, we can then proceed with the session.

Talking at Your First Counselling Session

The first step is for you to tell me why you have come. This usually means explaining a problem you are having and why it has brought you to counselling at this particular time. You can do this in your own way, in your own time. You may just want to unload and share your feelings. Or you may want to work through some difficulties in a practical way.

You may want help to manage feelings, such as grief, anxiety or depression. You may want strategies, ideas, help making decisions or any one of a number of things. For most clients, it is a combination of several things. I will ask further background questions as needed. We look at your strengths and supports, your vulnerabilities and any other information relevant to your situation.

Sometimes this takes up the whole session. In this case, further work will begin at the next session. But if there is sufficient time, we discuss what you would like to achieve from counselling. What is the goal or outcome you are looking for? Depending on what that is, I may ask where you are now on a scale of 1-10, as opposed to where you want to be. We can then do a check in periodically to ensure that we stay on track and that your sessions achieve the outcome that you want.

After Your First Counselling Session

Between your first and second session, I formulate a counselling plan based on what you have told me. This entails considering which therapeutic approach seems the most appropriate to your needs. At your next session, we discuss the plan, modify it if required, and reach an agreed approach to move forward. Further work usually includes a combination of therapy, psychoeducation and homework. You might learn new skills, try new approaches, or think about things in a different way.

Counselling can be a rewarding experience and give you a new lease on life. If you would like to book a counselling session, check out *Counselling Booking Information* and the *Counselling On-line Booking Calendar*. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you.