

Michelle Higgins Counselling

Young Person Information Sheet

It is not easy to talk to a stranger about the things that are upsetting, difficult or troubling. At first meeting with a counsellor may feel a bit odd and uncomfortable. That's okay and normal because you and your counsellor will need to get to know each other.

Often, once a young person gets to know their counsellor it can feel great to come along and get so many things off their chest. Sometimes, people get to feel really close to their counsellor; like they are a friend but one who is not in their whole life. This can feel good to have someone who is in the background of your life, but who you know really 'gets' you and is rooting for you.

If you agree to give counselling a go with me and I will do my best to work with you in a way that feels comfortable and okay for you. I hope I can help you to move through this difficult time so that you can feel happier and content.

It is my intention to really listen to you and to get to know you, so that you might begin to trust me enough to begin to let me in to what is going on for you. There is no rush and no pressure to open up too soon, we can take our time. Some young people don't always want to talk. We can listen to music or do some other activities together that may not involve talking. Sometimes it is great just to be quiet for a while and take a rest from thinking.

At this time, I am offering counselling online via video link (with the camera on or off), via instant messaging or by telephone. I will offer face to face sessions again in my therapy room at my home in the future.

Common Questions:

Q: Will you tell my parents/carer what I talk about in the session?

A: No. Young people have rights to confidentiality with a counsellor. If your parent/carer asks about the sessions, I will encourage them to ask you how things are going. The only time I would need to tell your parent/carer about things you have shared with me, is if you or someone else is at serious risk of harm, or if you tell me about a serious crime that has been committed.

Q: If my parent/carer/teacher/GP says I have to come do I have to?

A: No. It is important that coming to counselling is your choice. If you don't want to have counselling that is okay. There may be other ways to find your way through the difficult things that are going on right now.

Q: If I agree to give it a go for a while and change my mind – what happens then?

A: Even though we may have arranged to see each other for a number of sessions, you/your parent or carer can cancel that arrangement. It is important you or your parent/carer lets me know.

Q: If I have an appointment arranged and I don't want to come, is that okay?

A: If you don't turn up for an appointment and you/your parent did not give me 24 hours' notice, a full session cost will need to be paid. Missing sessions makes our work together difficult. We can lose the momentum of where we were up to and that can stop things moving forward. Sometimes people don't feel like coming but once they push themselves to come, they are glad they did, and they feel better for doing so.

Q: Where do face to face sessions take place?

A: I work from home, so you come to my home for your face to face counselling session. Usually, there will be no-one else in the house. Occasionally, my partner may be in the top part of the house engaged in work using headphones, so nothing could be overheard from the therapy room. You would not see my partner. I have a cat who will not be seen, unless you would like to meet him.

Q: Does my parent/carer stay in the house while I am having a counselling session?

A: The first session will always involve a parent/carer. We will make an agreement together; me, you and your parent/carer. This will involve talking through how we will work together and what we can all expect of each other. This will be a good chance for you and your parent/carer to ask questions. Following this, sessions will usually be one to one with just you and me. On occasions, it may be helpful to have a joint with your parent/carer, but this would usually only happen if you wanted it to.

Your parent/carer will leave the property during the session time, unless you don't want them to leave. In these situations, they can wait in the lounge.

Q: How does video call, telephone or instant messaging work?

A: If we arrange to do our sessions by video, telephone or instant messaging it is important you know that I have a confidential office in the top part of my house that I use for online and telephone working. This space is only used by me and whilst I am in session, the door is closed, and no other family members are around in the top part of the house. When I am working through video call, I use headphones to hear people speaking. Currently, I use the Platform Zoom for video calls and instant messaging. Whilst Zoom claims to meet industry standards around platform protection of client confidentiality, there are always privacy and confidentiality risks to any online and phone communication.

To minimise these risks, I uphold my personal responsibility to ensure my computer and other devices are adequately protected. I password protect my devices. I use anti-virus software. I update anti-virus protection regularly.

If you prefer to use Instant Messaging, we can do this via a zoom meeting. Sometimes people use a mixture of video chat and instant messaging. Once we finish our zoom session, the messages are gone. They do not get stored anywhere.

In order to connect with you via Zoom for an instant messaging session or video call, I will email you the link that you can open. If our internet connection drops, I will try to engage with you again via the platform. If we are struggling to get connected, I shall try to make contact with you, either by phone or text message (whichever you prefer). Then we can decide together how to continue or what to do next. Sometimes it may be a parent/carer who enables us to get connected for our sessions.

It is important you have a suitable and confidential space to do your session with me via Zoom or telephone. If your family are in the home while your session is taking place, try to ensure you cannot be overheard.