

## **E-mail Counselling Guidelines**

Judi Brosnan is a counsellor at Oxford Brookes University, Counselling Service.

### **Mailing messages**

#### ***Guidance on how much to write***

Counselling is likely to work most effectively if you mail me every week. You can mail once a week, or more often, writing as much as you like. You can write in the email body or use an attachment.

If a week has passed since I last heard from you, I will check that you still want to continue. If I do not hear from you within a further week, I'll assume that you no longer want counselling at this time – however, I hope that we will make a joint decision about ending when the time is right.

#### ***When I will reply***

I will read and reply to your mails on Fridays. For me to reply, your mail should reach me by 8.30am each Friday. I will let you know if I am unable to reply on my normal days.

#### ***Confirmation***

I would be grateful if you could send a simple reply saying “received” when you get my first message, so I know it’s working. Then send me a further mail when you are ready to.

#### ***Computer problems***

If you have any technical difficulties with sending emails, telephone the Counselling Service Reception on Oxford 48 4650. Ask the receptionist to leave me a message.

It would be helpful if you send me your telephone number, so that I can let you know if I experience any technical failures.

### **What to do if you don't hear from me**

If you don't get a response from me when I have said I will reply, the most likely problem is a technical failure.

If you haven't got your expected response, let us know. You can try emailing me again, or you can contact reception on [ssrecept@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:ssrecept@brookes.ac.uk) or by telephone on Oxford 48 4650.

## **About you**

I will find it helpful to hear about your background, so I can understand you in the context of your life and experience. For example, you can tell me about:

- your parents and family
- school experiences
- current living circumstances.

Let me know of anything else you feel is relevant.

Please tell me about any medication you are taking, and about any other therapy you are currently receiving or have received in the past.

## **About how I work**

I aim to help you move forward through reflecting on yourself and your situation. I will not routinely give advice, though I may suggest a different way of seeing something.

You are very welcome to comment on how you feel about my replies – what you found helpful, or anything you disagree with!

I hope that email counselling will be helpful for you, but it isn't for everyone. If things are not progressing well, either of us can say so. If necessary, we can discuss if another type of help is better for you.

## **Confidentiality**

### ***Who I talk to***

There are a few limits on confidentiality, as described below. Otherwise, everything you tell me is completely confidential. I would not discuss you with your tutors, GP, family, or friends, unless you have given me permission, and we both think it would be helpful.

I may discuss you with a supervisor - most counsellors have regular supervision. I also discuss my work with the small team of counsellors at Oxford Brookes University. My supervisor and other counsellors keep everything confidential.

### ***Limitations to confidentiality***

In most circumstances I will not break confidentiality. The circumstances where I might consider breaking confidentiality are:

- i. If you are at risk of severely hurting yourself or someone else;
- ii. If the law requires it (there are very few circumstances, please ask if you want to know more).

## **Complaints**

I will be doing my best to help you. If you have difficulties with how we are working, please let me know, so that together we can determine what you need.

I work to the Ethical Framework of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). If you want to, you can view this at their web site: [http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical\\_framework](http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework) . If you believe I have not followed the Framework, you may make a complaint. You can address the complaint to the Head of Counselling, Student Services, Oxford Brookes University. Alternatively you can contact BACP directly. All complaints will be taken seriously.

## **Security**

### ***Your computer***

It is always wise to have an anti-virus programme installed on your computer. You can ask me if you need further advice on this.

Neither I, nor Oxford Brookes University (Counselling Service), can be held responsible for any damage to your computer.

### ***Keeping your messages secure***

I suggest you make sure no-one else can read your mails, even if you don't normally stop others having access. Sometimes people say things in counselling they have rarely or never talked about before. You can keep your messages secure by using passwords. I can help you with this if you are unsure how – just ask me.

### ***How I secure my records***

I will keep your messages on my computer and on paper print-outs. My computer is password protected. Paper copies are kept in a locked cabinet. Only I have access to your records.

### ***How long I keep records for***

I keep records for up to one year after counselling ends. Then I delete records from my computer and shred print-outs. I keep a paper summary for four years. If you wish me to destroy records earlier than this, I can do so.