

Live Messenger Counselling Guidelines

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You can download Messenger from www.windowlive.co.uk/messenger

Timing

Counselling is likely to work most effectively if we communicate every week, except where we have arranged not to meet (eg holidays, other commitments). So, we will organise a regular time for each week. Each session will last 50 minutes.

Some tips on using Live Messenger

Sometimes Messenger closes if we go silent for a while, yet we may want a silence occasionally, to think things through. So if there is a silence, I'll type a full stop every so often to make sure we stay in contact (or you can type a full stop).

If you want to say something lengthy, it's helpful if you send me part of what you are saying while you still saying it. Then I can read as you go along. Every so often type three dots (. . .) and press Send. The three dots alert me that you haven't finished yet. Similarly, I'll type three dots if I'm continuing to speak.

If you like using emoticons, it's fine to use them. If you don't like them, just don't add them. Your choice!

Staying Safe

Live Messenger isn't completely secure – it's possible to hack in and read what people are typing. So I'd like us to use a secure add-on called Simplite. At the end of this document there are instructions on downloading Simplite. If possible, can you try to do this before we meet on Messenger. If you have problems, don't worry, we can manage without while I help you work out what to do.

If we lose contact on Messenger

If we can't contact each other, for some reason, or if we lose contact on Messenger, I'll send you an email. You can do the same with me. So, if we are out of touch, check your email.

Also, if my computer has broken (unlikely, but it could happen), I'll contact you by phone just to say why I'm not online, then we'll reschedule. I'll probably send a text to your mobile. Let me know if you do not want me to do this.

If you can't find me on Messenger at our arranged time, and have no email, text or phone call from me, you can contact reception on ssrecept@brookes.ac.uk or by telephone on Oxford 48 4650. Let them know you expected a session, but can't get hold of me.

If your computer breaks down, please phone Counselling Reception just to say you can't meet me as arranged. Tel number is 01865 484650.

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 online 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 . 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 program 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.

How I secure my records

I will keep a record of our counselling 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.

SIMPLITE

Simplite automatically encrypts Windows Live Messenger, preventing anyone intercepting messages.

To set it up:

1. Go to the web-page http://www.secway.fr/us/products/simplite_msn/home.php and follow the download instructions. If in doubt, just click the default options. Follow the instructions right through, accepting invites to run Simplite and to create your keys. The 'keys' are the encrypting devices.
2. When you've done that, a little red man will appear at the bottom of your screen. This is the Simplite icon.

Right click to Open Simplite to see it running, and also to log in and log out.

3. If Simplite is closed, right click on it and Open it. Click on File, Configure, and then the IM client tab. Make sure the box next to Windows Live Messenger has a tick in it. If not, click on the box, so that a tick appears. Click on Okay.

Using Simplite

4. When you use Messenger for the first time with someone who also has Simplite, you will be asked if you want to accept their key. Accept it if you are sure who you are talking to.
5. If you want to see if your conversation is encrypted, Open Simplite and you will see what is happening in the box that appears.

Uninstalling a program

Just in case you ever need to do this, here's what to do. You shouldn't need this at all right now, but if you ever wanted to uninstall Simplite or other programs here's what you do. Also, if you are having real problems with a download, sometimes it is easiest to uninstall a program and then download it again!

1. Click on the Start icon at the left hand bottom of your computer. Open the 'Control Panel' (you might see this as an option immediately – if not, click on the option 'Computer' and then 'Control Panel' from a list).
2. From the list of 'Control Panel,' click on 'Uninstall a program' (or equivalent). If you can't immediately find this as an option, look under Programs.
3. Follow the instructions on your computer to uninstall the program.
4. Note that if you are asked if you want to install a *part* of a program which is used by another program, say 'No.'