

Skype Counselling Guidelines

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

You can download Skype from www.skype.com/intl/en-us/get-skype/

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 Skype

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

If anyone else can access your Skype log-in, then it is best to make sure you don't have a 'history' of your text conversations. Click on 'Tools' at the top of the window, then click on 'Options.' Click on 'IM & SMS.' Click on 'IM' if this section is not already open. Select 'no history' under 'keep history for.' This prevents Skype from recording your counselling.

If you want to keep a record, you can copy the text before closing Skype after your counselling, then paste into a Word document. Save that document using password protection (please ask me if you don't know how to do password protect).

If you need more help with this, please ask me.

If we lose contact on Skype

If we can't contact each other, for some reason, or if we lose contact on Skype, 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 Skype 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.