

Client Information for Counselling by Zoom (Video Conference)

Counselling conducted via Zoom (video conference) is similar to a face-to-face service, with some additional considerations to take into account.

This guide will assist you prepare for and participate in Counselling by Zoom (video conference.)

Practical tips

- You will receive a Zoom invitation with instructions on how to join the meeting. If you do not have Zoom downloaded, you should be able to join via a browser link.
- Zoom works on both computer/laptop, iPad and smart phone. However, the advanced functions may differ between these devices.
- You will need access to wi-fi, or internet and we discourage using mobile data due to the amount of data required for sessions.
- Ensure you have a full battery as Zoom meetings use a significant amount of battery charge.
- Using headphones can block out external distractions and make it easier for you to be heard.
- Have pen and paper ready, and water at hand.
- It is important to allow enough time for the appointment, the standard zoom counselling appointment is usually 50 minutes, though allow an hour for it.

Your Safety.

If any safety concerns arise during an individual or couples counselling session, you can ask to end the session or ask for a separate time (Private session) to work out the next steps. For information about family violence, and for support, visit www.rav.org.au/familyviolence.

If unexpected interruptions occur during the session, please explain this to the counsellor so that they are aware of what is currently happening.

The Zoom Appointment

Couples can take part in sessions together in the same physical space, on the same device, and receive one invitation to the session; or can be sent a separate invitation to different email addresses, and take part on separate devices, in a different space, but still participate in a joint couples counselling session.

Once you “join” the Zoom meeting, you and any other person who is a part of the counselling session, will be placed in a virtual waiting room until the Counsellor is ready to start the session.

Although video conferencing is a form of face to face communication, it is still different from being in the same room. It's important to speak one at a time so that everyone can hear each other as Zoom will only pick up one person's voice at a time. To aid this, it may be helpful for the Counsellor for you to mute your microphone when you are not speaking, in order to minimise background noise. The conversation may need to be slower and more structured than in a face-to-face situation.

It's important to let the Counsellor know if you are feeling distressed, confused or need a break. The Counsellor will also regularly check in with you. Please ask them to clarify or repeat anything you are not sure of.

Please let the Counsellor know if you wish to speak separately with them, if you are participating in couples counselling, but you feel that you need an individual session.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Your private information is kept on our system and not inside Zoom. All personal and clinical content is kept securely on your client file. No information or documents are sent through Zoom.

Maintaining the privacy of the information discussed in counselling sessions is a fundamental part of the process. As such, please note the following, which applies to both individual and couples.

- During your session, you require a private space where you will not be interrupted or overheard.
- Protect your privacy. As other users can view your background put away anything you do not wish others to see e.g. photographs or other personal aspects of your environment
- No other person can be present or within earshot of the video conversation, unless previously discussed with the counsellor and agreed on before the session.
- Please ensure that children are not present and cannot see or overhear the video conference.
- The recording of any part of a session is not permitted.
- The counsellor will check that you are aware of these requirements and ask for your consent to them at the start of the session. They will also check in with you during the session, if concerned that others are present or that the session is being recorded.

Keeping Track

The Counsellor may take notes during the session and you are also welcome to take notes if helpful.

The Counsellor may use the shared screen function to create a “whiteboard” or other joint record of items such as the explanations, goals and any agreed outcomes of the session.

The Counsellor will be using the goals and outcomes you would like to achieve, which is referred to as SCORE, to help RAV evaluate your progress, as our aim is to achieve positive outcomes for our clients in the counselling program.

At the end of the session there will be a discussion about the next steps and the timing of another session, if it is needed.

A confidential Client Satisfaction Survey will also be sent to you via email utilising survey monkey, for you to be able to provide us feedback at the end of the service.