

What is telehealth counselling?

This means accessing your counsellor through phone or video options, which can be set up easily and securely through your landline, smartphone, tablet or laptop devices.

Why is APMHA promoting telehealth counselling now?

As COVID-19 (Coronavirus) cases increase across Australia, we are preparing our current and future clients to access counselling through secure, non-face to face options. This will ensure that your counselling is not disrupted and remains available for you during this time.

An increasing number of people are needing to or choosing to self-isolate after coming into contact with others who have or are suspected of having COVID-19. We want to make sure you can access counselling while we support Australia's strategies to reduce the impact of the virus.

Providing telehealth options for counselling will help this happen and keep you safe.

Is telehealth counselling as effective as face-to-face counselling?

Research has shown that telehealth counselling has similar clinical outcomes to face-to-face counselling, with people reporting a strong therapeutic relationship with their telehealth counsellor¹. In fact, people reported that they preferred telehealth counselling because it:

- reduced the cost and time associated with travelling to counselling;
- increased confidentiality; and
- could be accessed in the comfort and privacy of your home or chosen space.

Is telehealth counselling private and secure?

We may use a normal telephone for counselling, or your counsellor may use systems like WhatsApp (Android, Windows and iOS) and FaceTime (iOS) as the preferred online and easily accessible platforms. These platforms have end-to-end encryption which means that only the sender and receiver hold the code to unlock the content, ensuring your conversation is secure.

How will this work?

Your counsellor will discuss options with you and assist you in downloading or accessing the right platform / program for your phone or computer and will guide you through installation process.

At the appointment time, you will need to be in a quiet, private environment with no disruption from loud noises. If you are accessing counselling via the internet, you will need a good internet connection plus a webcam and microphone on your device. Your counsellor can help you check that you have all the requirements. If you don't have the right equipment, you can work with counsellor over the telephone.

Bear in mind that sometimes online technology might fail, which could be unsettling if it happens at a sensitive time in the session. In your first session, your counsellor and you will plan what to do in the event of a technical glitch. Telehealth counselling is not always suitable if you are at risk of suicide or experiencing an acute crisis. Please talk to your GP if this relates to you.

¹ Backhaus, Autumn & Agha, Zia & Maglione, Melissa & Repp, Andrea & Ross, Bridgett & Zuest, Danielle & Rice-Thorp, Natalie & Lohr, James & Thorp, Steven. (2012). Videoconferencing Psychotherapy: A Systematic Review. Psychological services. 9. 111-31. 10.1037/a0027924.