



## **Introduction to Online Counselling**

Online counselling is a way for you to engage in counselling using technology - I use videoconferencing through VSee – a secure platform with end-to-end encryption so that you can feel confident our conversations are confidential.

### ***Benefits and challenges***

Some things you may enjoy about online counselling are:

- You can create a comfortable and private space in your own home from which to attend therapy
- You may find it easy to talk, focus and express yourself
- You may enjoy wearing comfortable clothes, bringing a cup of tea and avoiding a commute after a therapy session
- We may be able to be more flexible about scheduling
- Research shows that online counselling is as effective as in-person therapy.

Some of the challenges we may face could be to do with internet connection. I will share some instructions below to help get you set up.

Another challenge could be that we do not see the whole of each other. I will explain how we can set up our devices for eye contact, but our cameras generally limit the view to the top half of our bodies. We will have to use more verbal explanations as a result.

For some it may be quite a demanding experience, especially for those with lots of exposure to computer screens in everyday life. We may spend some time building resources and developing a self-care plan to support you.

### ***What is VSee and how does this work in session?***

I will send you an invite for VSee - the videoconferencing platform I use. It is free to use and easy to sign up. As mentioned above, VSee uses end-to-end encryption, so is a very secure telehealth platform preferred by clinicians (no middleman listening in).

If you do not see the invite in your inbox also check your spam folder. You can download the app/program on your phone or PC/laptop/phone. You will need to sign up before you can use it.

At the time of our session I will give you a call so make sure you are ready, logged on and sitting comfortably in a place that is private and where you will not be disturbed.

In terms of set-up, the following works well: If you are using a laptop set it up on a low table (e.g., 45cm high coffee table) and sit back about 1.2m on the couch. For a desk height set-up it's the same distance back from the laptop/PC: 1.2 m.

In the rare event we experience a glitch (e.g., if the internet drops out) I will give you a call on your mobile phone.



### ***Creating your therapy space***

I encourage you to treat the online session as you would an in-person session and implement as many of the same boundaries as possible.

Find a comfortable space with privacy. This could be a comfortable armchair or couch, your office desk, garden, parked car or the living room floor. I suggest sitting on something where your back is supported and encourage you to get up and move if you start to feel uncomfortable.

You may wish to put a note on the door of the room requesting that other people not disturb you except in an emergency.

For individual sessions I encourage you to use wired headphones or earphones. This keeps the content of our sessions private, improves sound quality and also minimises distractions.

Please close other applications and browser windows on your device, and put your phone on silent just as we do in person.

You are welcome to bring water or a cup of tea or coffee with you to the session. Please avoid alcohol and drugs prior to and during the session.

Your pet is welcome to join you; however, it is important to be aware that this could be distracting for either or both of us.

Give yourself time after the session to process the session before re-joining your family, working or making other calls. Some people prefer 15 minutes of quiet time or going for a walk.