

## Online Counselling Information and Agreement

### About me:



My name is Elva McDonagh, I am professionally trained in Counselling and Psychotherapy. I am accredited with the IACP and work in accordance with their Code of Ethics <https://iacp.ie/iacp-code-of-ethics>. I have worked as a Psychotherapist since 2014. I am committed and engaged in continuing professional development courses to enhance the work I do with clients.

I work in private practice in Galway Ireland. I offer face to face counselling and online counselling to adults as part of my practice. I have worked with a wide range of issues and specialise in Anxiety and Maternal Mental Health. Along with my Professional Training I have also been on my own journey and with this combination I hope to support you on your journey.

I will work with you in a sensitive, respectful and understanding way. I offer a safe non-judgemental and confidential space in which you can explore your options. This is an exploration into what feels right for you, therefore I do not offer advice. If you do not have the answers we will collaboratively look at what may be right for you.

I will work with you to develop your awareness about what may be preventing you from living your life to its full potential. This is an active exploration of experience and the aims of therapy are different for everyone. Therefore, the approach that I will offer is individual to you.

## **What is Online Counselling?**

Online counselling provides an opportunity to explore a personal difficulty in a confidential and supportive environment. This may include expressing feelings that are painful, and which many of us experience at certain times in our lives. When this happens, it can be difficult to stay positive and cope with everyday life. Online counselling gives you the opportunity to access counselling support at a time and in a place which is convenient to you. Online counselling can provide support for a broad range of personal difficulties, but there are occasions where it would not be considered suitable, for example where a client is at risk. If this applies for you either when applying for support, or during ongoing sessions I will offer information of alternative sources of support, which you can make contact with and request support from.

## **What sort of issues can I contact you about?**

Online counselling may be able to help with a very wide range of issues including, anxiety, stress, depression, loneliness, relationship problems, bereavement, self-esteem, sexual orientation, discrimination, and many more.

Not all types of issues can be resolved through online counselling and I will advise you if face to face counselling, or some other form of support might be more suitable for you. Where I consider that online counselling would not be the most suitable means of support I will make every effort to assist you in a referral to a suitable alternative source of support.

I am not able to provide online counselling to any person who is under the age of 18. If this applies to you I can help with information on referral to other agencies providing face to face counselling services or online work which is specifically directed to a younger age group.

What does the service offer?

## Video Counselling

This is Counselling via video link. Video counselling is a face to face interaction and is similar to meeting your therapist in person. Video Counselling sessions are 50 minutes duration and cost €70. All sessions are payable 24 hours prior to your session time.

### Instructions for Video Counselling

1. Contact me via telephone on 087 7778954 or via email [elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com](mailto:elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com) I will send you the information you need to begin the process of working together.
2. Download Zoom this is the secure network we will be working on <https://www.zoom.us/signup> It is important that you feel comfortable with using your computer or phone.
3. Create a Zoom account.
4. When we arrange an appointment you will receive an email with the link to our session.

## Telephone Counselling

This is Counselling via telephone. These sessions are 50 minutes duration and cost €70.

### Instructions for Telephone Counselling

Contact me via telephone on 087 7778954 or via email [elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com](mailto:elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com). I will send you the information you need to begin the process of working together.

## Email Counselling

This is Counselling via a secure email platform. It involves email correspondence between therapist and client. You will write an email to your therapist and the therapist spends 50 minutes replying to your email at a specified time each week. Email Counselling is charged per email sent at a cost of €60.

### Instructions for Email Counselling

1. Contact me via telephone on 087 7778954 or via email [elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com](mailto:elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com). I will send you the information you need to begin the process of working together.
2. Set up a Protonmail account and send me an email to [stateofmindpsychotherapy.com](mailto:stateofmindpsychotherapy.com). <https://protonmail.com/signup>

## Instant Messaging

This is Counselling via instant messaging. We will arrange an appointment time and message for one hour at a cost of €60.

### Instructions for Video Counselling

1. Contact me via telephone on 087 7778954 or via email [elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com](mailto:elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com). I will send you the information you need to begin the process of working together.
2. Download vSee this is the secure network we will be working on <https://my.vsee.com/download> . It is important that you feel comfortable with using your computer or phone.
3. Create a vSee account.
4. When we arrange an appointment you will receive my account name and you can add me to your contacts.

## Payment for your sessions

Session fees for the type of counselling you are engaging in are outlined above. The initial appointment will include some further assessment questions to help my understanding of how I can help you find a way forward with what has brought you to counselling.

The Payment is due a minimum of 72 hours prior to the appointment time, using Paypal. Here is the link to make payment <https://www.paypal.me/elvaglynn>.

If you have made payment for a session but are unable to meet at the appointed time I will retain the fee for the session unless we have experienced a technological breakdown which prevents us meeting online or exchanging emails. In the event of this occurring we would discuss how to re-arrange the scheduled appointment. Where a block of six appointments are purchased at a reduced rate, and you are unable to make your scheduled session this counts as one of your sessions. By using the paypal facility on my websites you are covered by Paypal's privacy policy: <https://www.paypal.com/ie/webapps/mpp/ua/privacy-full>

## About the way I work

I will provide, to the best of my ability, online counselling sessions that endeavour to create a supportive, non-judgmental environment, in which you will be given time and space to understand and gain insight into what is troubling you. This process can foster growth and lead to positive change in your life. I will not offer advice. There may be occasions where I ask questions about what you have stated on your application form or during a therapy session. This is to help seek a clearer view of your difficulty or to clarify a misunderstanding in our communication. You are free to ignore my questions and responses, or alternatively spend time between email exchanges reflecting on them.

'Online' counselling is different to face-to-face work as misunderstandings may occur due to a lack of facial expressions and tone of voice. It is therefore important for us both to feel comfortable to ask for clarification if we are unsure of something we say or refer to within our exchanges and leads to a misunderstanding or rupture in the counselling relationship occurring.

## Confidentiality and Security

The content of your emails or online appointments will not be communicated with a third party except for the purposes of supervision of my work. In this instance, your identity will not be revealed, and the presenting issues are discussed in a general context, to help ensure I am working ethically and safely with clients. I recommend that online clients use an encrypted email server for sending and receiving email exchanges when engaging with counselling, this helps to ensure that our communication will not be intercepted by a third party. A free and secure email provider is [www.protonmail.com](http://www.protonmail.com)

If you choose email counselling we would exchange emails using this service, or agree to use password protected document exchanges via your usual email provider. I will provide further details of the arrangements after you have completed and returned the agreement document.

In respect of online counselling via email, SMS, and webcam the Gardai and other international government authorities can ask for access to an individual's email account or synchronous messaging account where there is suspicion of illegal or terrorist activities. On this basis I am not able to guarantee confidentiality in circumstances which lead to access being granted.

At the end of our counselling agreement copies of our exchanges will be stored securely offline for a period of 7 years and then destroyed by shredding after this time.

State of Mind has a policy for data processing and storage if you would like this document I can send it to you. The procedures in this document have been compiled in relation to GDPR (General Data Privacy Regulations) from May 26<sup>th</sup> 2018 onwards. Please take time to read through the guidelines on my website for ensuring privacy and security of your online communication with me.

I am legally bound to make disclosure to the Gardai if a client reveals that they are intending to cause serious risk of harm to others. In addition, if at any point during the counselling you were in need of emergency support, I may ask for your consent to contact your GP, under the current ethical guidelines for online counselling. I may also have to recommend alternative avenues of support other than online counselling.

### **Guidelines for Emergency Contact**

Online counselling **cannot** provide an emergency service for clients.

In the event of an emergency arising whilst you are engaged in online work or if you were experiencing suicidal thoughts, I would discuss with you the appropriate support that you could access during this period.

If you found yourself in a major crisis and were considering serious self-harm it would be vital to get immediate help. This could include contacting your GP, or your nearest accident and emergency service (A & E).

You could also call the Samaritans 116 or 123 (24-hour freephone helpline); text: 087 260 9090 (standard rates apply); email: [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie) ( email emergency support). All personal information disclosed will be kept confidential and not used for any purposes other than a counselling record.

This agreement shall be construed and governed in all respects in accordance with Irish law and any dispute or differences in relation to this agreement shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Irish Courts.

It is not permissible to publicise the content of our exchanges or share them with a third party using social media or other aspects of personal and public forums.

**If you have any questions regarding the content of the agreement, or would like further information, please contact me at: [elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com](mailto:elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com) or +35387 7778954**

## Client Information and Assessment Form

Please answer the questions listed below and sign electronically prior to returning the agreement document if you would like to proceed with online counselling. Please send the agreement as an attachment via email to [elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com](mailto:elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com).

*The information you provide helps to form the initial assessment of online counselling being suitable as support for you and the personal issues you would like to explore in counselling.*

*The details requested below, in respect of your GP, and home address are taken in order to ask your permission to secure additional support for you. The question about serious self-harm also addresses safety, as I do need to gather this information to help assess if online counselling is suitable as support for the issues you would like to bring to your sessions.*

### Personal Information

Full name:

Address:

Date of Birth:

Phone Number:

GP

Name:

Address:

Contact Number:

Next of Kin:

Name :

Address:

Are you seeking online counselling via Email, IM (instant messaging), or webcam?

### Questions

1. Please provide brief details below regarding the issues you would like to explore in counselling?
  2. Have you received counselling, psychological, or crisis intervention support in the past, or are receiving such support currently? If so please provide brief details of the nature and outcome of the support received and also what you found helpful/unhelpful from the support?
  3. If you are currently taking medication for a mental health issue, please include details and dosage below:
  4. Do you have the support of a friend or family members if you needed to talk to someone about a personal matter which is troubling you if you became distressed during the process of counselling?
  5. Please let me know if you have any current thoughts about ending your life and whether you have at any time in the past had such thoughts or have acted upon them and, if so please, outline what support you sought at the time to overcome the suicidal thoughts?
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**GAD-7 (Please put an X on the right of your rating for each question)**

Over the last 2 weeks how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems? 0= not at all 1= several days 2=more than half the days 3= nearly every day

- |    |  |   |   |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge            | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. | Not being able to stop or control worrying     | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. | Worrying too much about different things       | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. | Trouble relaxing                               | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. | Being so restless that it is hard to sit still | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. | Becoming easily annoyed or irritable           | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. | Feeling afraid, something awful might happen   | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

GAD-7 total score =

**PHQ-9 (Please put an X on the right of your rating for each question)**

Over the last 2 weeks period how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems? 0= not at all 1= several days 2=more than half the days 3=nearly every day

- |    |  |   |   |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Little interest or pleasure in doing things  | 0 | 1 |   |   |
| 2  | 3  |   |   |   |   |
| 2. | Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless   |   |   | 0 |   |
| 1  | 2  | 3 |   |   |   |
| 3. | Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much  |   |   | 0 | 1 |
| 2  | 3  |   |   |   |   |
| 4. | Feeling tired or having little energy  |   |   | 0 | 1 |
| 2  | 3  |   |   |   |   |
| 5. | Poor appetite or overeating  |   |   | 0 | 1 |
| 2  | 3  |   |   |   |   |
| 6. | Feeling bad about yourself – or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down  |   |   |   |   |
| 0  | 1  | 2 | 3 |   |   |
| 7. | Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television  |   |   |   |   |
| 0  | 1  | 2 | 3 |   |   |
| 8. | Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed? Or the opposite – being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual |   |   |   |   |
| 0  | 1  | 2 | 3 |   |   |
| 9. | Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way  |   |   |   |   |
| 0  | 1  | 2 | 3 |   |   |

Total:

Please 'sign electronically' here with your name if you agree to working to the points within this agreement.....

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Type name above if you agree

**If you have any questions regarding the content of the agreement, or would like further information, please contact me at: [elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com](mailto:elvamcdonagh@protonmail.com) or +35387 7778954**