

Online Counseling Consent and Policies

Possible Misunderstandings

I am aware that misunderstandings are possible with telephonic, text-based modalities such as email, since nonverbal cues are relatively lacking. Even with video chat software, misunderstandings may occur, since bandwidth may be limited and images lack detail. My counselor is an observer of human behavior and gathers much information from body language, vocal inflection, eye contact, and other non-verbal cues. I will have patience with the process and clarify information if I think my counselor has not understood me well.

Turnaround Time

Using asynchronous (not in "real time") communication such as email entails a response lag. My counselor will make every effort to respond to email requests within a 12 to 24 hour period. If I am in a state of crisis or emergency, I will contact a crisis line (dial 211 if in the Tampa FL area) or an agency local to me. I may also utilize 1-800-SUICIDE or 1-800-273-TALK (For the Deaf: i-800-799-4TTY).

Privacy

My counselor has a right to her privacy and may wish to restrict the use of any copies or recordings I make of our communications. I must seek and receive the written permission of my counselor before recording any portion of the session and/or posting any portion of said sessions on Internet websites such as Facebook or YouTube.

Potential Benefits

The potential benefits of receiving mental health services online include both the circumstances in which my counselor considers online mental health services appropriate and the possible advantages of providing those services online. For example, the potential benefits of email may include: (1) being able to send and receive messages at any time of day or night; (2) being able to take as long as one wants to compose, and having the opportunity to reflect upon, one's messages; (3) automatically having a record of communications to refer to later; and (4) feeling less inhibited than in person. Video is also convenient; allowing me to potentially be counseled from anywhere once I can gain an Internet signal and operate the necessary hardware.

Safeguards

My counselor has selected an email account with Hushmail and a video account with VSee to allow for the highest possible security and confidentiality of the content of my sessions. My personal information is encrypted and stored on a secure device. I am responsible for creating and using additional safeguards when the computer used to access services may be accessed by others, such as creating passwords to use the computer, keeping their email and video IDs and passwords secret, and maintaining the security of wireless internet access points (where applicable). I will discuss any such concerns I may have with my counselor early in my first session so as to develop strategies to limit risk.

Alternatives

Online counseling may not be appropriate for many types of clients including those who have numerous concerns over the risks of internet counseling, clients with active suicidal/homicidal thoughts, and clients who are experiencing active manic/psychotic symptoms. I will talk with my counselor before scheduling my online session so that I can make sure I am a good fit.

Out of State Counseling

My counselor, Barb LoFrisco, PhD, LMHC, LMFT, has fully disclosed her professional credentials, which are available on her website, along with links to the licensing and credentialing bodies involved. Barb has made it clear that she is licensed for independent practice as both an LMHC and LMFT in the state of Florida. If I reside outside the state of Florida, according to section H.1.b. of the ACA Ethics Code, Barb must also abide by the laws and regulations of my state of residence.

I understand and agree to these policies:

Printed Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

