

Potential benefits

The potential benefits of receiving counselling online include things such as being able to send and receive messages at any time of day or night; being able to take as long as you wish to write a message and having the opportunity to reflect upon the messages whenever you wish as you would automatically have a record of communications to come back to later.

Feeling less self-conscious than in person and the convenience of being able to ‘talk’ at a time and in a place that is most convenient for you. Others include easy scheduling, time management and no need to incur transportation cost.

Potential risks

Some of the risks of online counseling may include lack of password protection or leaving information on a public access computer, such as in a library or Internet café. If you are using a public location to contact your counsellor, you should also consider the visibility of your screen to people around you and position yourself to avoid peeping by those around you. The lack of visual and auditory cues during such session may also be challenging for some engagements.

Security

We use selected a secure, encrypted platform provider **Doxy.me** to allow for the highest possible security and confidentiality of the content of your sessions. Your personal information captured with **Hushmail** email/forms are fully encrypted. You should also keep your information as safe as possible for example by creating strong passwords which you keep secret. If you have any concerns about the privacy and security of our counselling sessions, please don’t hesitate to ask.

Doxy.me and Hushmail are HIPAA, GDPR, PHIPA/PIPEDA, & HITECH compliant: meeting worldwide security requirements. **In Singapore, your data is managed according to the Privacy and Data Protection Act (PDPA).**

Confidentiality of the client

Maintaining client confidentiality is extremely important to me and I will take great care and consideration to prevent any unnecessary disclosure. Information about you will not be released without your permission with only some rare exceptions - essentially if I believe that there is a risk of serious harm either to you or another person. Even if this is the case, I will always try to fully involve you where possible, if this is the case. Other exceptions where I may have to pass on information about you include:

- If it is required to do so by law,
- when referring you to another healthcare professional for help,
- when discussing our work with our therapeutic supervisor (this is standard practice).

Records

As with face-to-face work, I keep minimal records of online counseling services, these can include my reference notes or sometimes copies of transcripts of chat sessions (you are also able to keep copies of these sessions). These records are kept confidential and will be maintained as required by the ethical standards of the Singapore Association of Counselling.

The online counselling process

It is important to be aware that misunderstandings are possible without the usual visual cues involved in face-to-face counselling. Even with video chat, misunderstandings may occur as images may lack detail. If you have never engaged in online counselling before, have a little patience with the process and tell me as soon as possible if you think that I have not understood you well. Please be patient if I ask periodically for clarification as well.

Turnaround time.

Instant Messenger and Video sessions can be arranged at your convenience at short notice (normally 24 to 48-hours) Monday to Saturdays. This is subject to availability. You can also check and book appointment via online schedule at www.awesg.com. I will also respond to counselling emails within a 24 to 48-hours period (Mon-Sat).

Where there is no schedule available online, please write in with your request. If there are extended no-consultation period for whichever reason, current clients will be notified in advance and notices may be posted on our website/social media page.

Crisis or Emergency

Please note that this online counselling service is not for emergency or urgent help. If you are ever in a state of crisis or emergency, please contact a crisis line such as Samaritans of Singapore SOS (1800 221 4444) or go to your local Accident and Emergency Department.

Disconnection of Services

If there is ever a disruption of services on the internet during any of our sessions, please call the number which is provided to you, or I will attempt to call you if I have a contact number for you, using the contact details that you agree and provided in the form.

Once you have read this information, if you have any questions please email me. To proceed with online counselling, you will be sent an intake service form to complete.

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