



## Counselling Expectations and Sessions

### What to Expect from Counselling

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy provides some great information on what to expect from counselling. Here is a link to their website and an extract of the information:

[What is counselling? \(bacp.co.uk\)](http://bacp.co.uk)

Therapy provides a safe and confidential space for you to talk to a trained professional about your issues and concerns. Your therapist will help you explore your thoughts, feelings and behaviours so you can develop a better understanding of yourself and of others.

A counsellor will not give you their opinions or advice or prescribe medication. They will help you find your own solutions – whether that's making effective changes in your life or finding ways of coping with your problems.

### What happens in counselling?

Counselling can take different forms depending on your needs and what type of therapy may be suitable.

Most therapy takes place in planned, regular sessions which last for around 50 minutes. How often you see your therapist and how many appointments you have will depend on your individual circumstances, and will be agreed between you and your therapist.

You might see a counsellor on your own, as a couple or family, or in a group with people who have similar issues. You might meet them face to face in their home, offices or clinic, or talk to them online or over the telephone.

During a session, your therapist may take you through specific exercises designed to help with your problem, or you might have more general discussions about how you're feeling. What you talk about will vary depend on what you want help with and the therapist's approach. It could include:

- your relationships
- your childhood
- your feelings, emotions or thoughts
- your behaviour
- past and present life events
- situations you find difficult

Your therapist will be impartial but understanding. They will listen to you without judgment and help you explore your thoughts and emotions. They may offer information, but they won't tell you what you should think or do.

### Initial Consultation

I offer an initial consultation which is an opportunity for us to get to know each other and decide if we'd like to work together. During this session we'll discuss things like:

- Confidentiality between us and any associated limitations (this is covered much more thoroughly in the first counselling session when we contract around a Working Agreement)
- The reasons you've come for counselling and what you'd like to be different in your life
- How you're coping at the moment and what support you have around you



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- A little bit about your history and early years that might be relevant to your counselling work
- Any physical health conditions and any diagnosis by your GP regarding your mental health
- If you are taking any medication and/or using any substances to help you cope
- If you are self-harming or having thoughts of ending your life, or have in the past

This might seem like a lot of information, but it is important and appropriate for me to consider if I am the best person to help you in terms of my experience and level of competency and also to establish if I feel there is a risk of severe harm to you or someone else.

This time together is also a chance for me to share with you how I work and give you the chance to ask any questions.

I will share details of my fees for each session, which are usually weekly for 50 minutes; I like to be able to offer affordable counselling. We can discuss if you'd like sessions at a different frequency and if you'd like the same day/time, or individual bookings.

You may decide in this session that you'd like to come back for counselling, or you might like some time to decide. If I have any concerns about if I am the right person to help you, I may consult with my supervisor and come back to you after the session. In the event that I don't feel like I am the right person to help you, I will always try and signpost you or refer you to another organisation or a different counselling colleague.

## Initial Counselling Session

If we agree to work together, in our initial counselling session, I will capture some personal details, such as your address and the name of your GP. I will also go through my Working Agreement with you in this session as it is important for us to contract around how we are going to work together. Hopefully this will only take us 10-15 minutes.

## Future Sessions and Ending Counselling

At the start of each future session I will remind you about confidentiality and the end time of our session that day and if necessary I might remind us of something from our Working Agreement, if necessary.

What we talk about each time we meet will be led by you; it's your time and space for us to discuss whatever is important to you when you come and in support of your hopes for counselling.

The number of sessions we have together will be led by you. You will know when you're ready to end counselling and when that time comes, we'll work on an ending together.

I hope you have found this information helpful – we can discuss any questions you have in our initial consultation and I look forward to meeting you then.

**Julia Phippard**

**[Hanno Blue Counselling](http://www.hannoblue.com)**

