



Specific Areas of Contracting in Online Counselling

It's fair to say that the practice of contracting with a client has through the years evolved from a verbal agreement to a more "business"-based agreement contained within a written contract.

The reason for this is that clients expect a professional service. From an ethical perspective, clients should have access to the contract to make an informed decision and to attain 'autonomy'—the ability to make their own decisions free of influence from the therapist.

Face-to-face contracts tend to cover:

- Confidentiality
- Supervision and confidentiality
- Legal exemptions
- Fees and cancellations

Online therapy contracts may also include:

- Emergency contact - a designated person, who can be contacted, should the client need help or fall ill during a session.
- An agreed procedure of action if a client suddenly leaves the online or phone session.
- An agreed secondary form of communication, should the primary technology fail during a session. For example, if you are working with a client via video and the internet goes down, you have contracted that you can make contact by phone.

Working online asks practitioners to develop a new skill set, one of which is adapting what the contract covers.

October 2020