

# What to Expect From Your First Counselling Session

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A simple guide to help you feel more prepared and a little less nervous about starting counselling.

## It's Normal to Feel Nervous

Many people worry that they won't know what to say, that their problems aren't "serious enough," or that they might become emotional. These concerns are completely normal and understandable.

Please don't let them put you off. There is no threshold you need to meet to come to counselling, and you don't need to have everything neatly worked out before you arrive. Whether you're feeling overwhelmed, stuck, confused, or simply know that something isn't quite right, you're welcome exactly as you are.

## Before Your First Session

- We'll arrange a free 20-minute consultation to see whether we feel like a good fit
- You'll receive details about session times, fees and how to attend for either your online or in-person session
- There's no need to prepare anything unless you'd like to
- You're welcome to make notes if that feels helpful

## What Happens in the First Session?

- We'll ease in first with a few practical details, including confidentiality, so you know what to expect and can decide what feels comfortable to share
- We'll chat about what has brought you to counselling - You can share as much or as little as you'd like to
- We may explore what you hope to get from therapy - but it's totally ok if you're not sure yet
- You're welcome to ask any questions you have

## Common Worries

### What if I don't know what to say?

That's completely okay. Many people worry that they'll sit down and their mind will go blank. You don't need to have everything worked out before you come to counselling. Part of my role is to help guide the conversation and support you in finding a starting point.

### What if I cry?

It's very common to become emotional in therapy, especially when talking about things you've been carrying on your own for a long time. Tears are always welcome, and there is no need to apologise for them.

### What if I feel like I'm offloading too much?

This is something I hear often from clients who worry that they're taking up too much space or bringing too much to therapy. Please know that you don't need to protect me from your thoughts or feelings. Supporting you with whatever comes up for you is an important part of my role, and I have the training and support in place to do that safely.

### What if I feel awkward?

Starting counselling can feel a little strange at first. You're talking to someone you've only just met about personal parts of your life, and perhaps thoughts and feelings you've never said out loud before.

You're always in control of what you share, and it's completely okay to say if you'd like to slow down, change the subject, or that you're feeling awkward.

Most people have at least one topic they'd rather avoid altogether — whether that's sex, money, relationships, or thoughts they feel ashamed of. If you don't yet have the words, that's okay too. When you're ready, I'll help you find them, and we'll work through the awkwardness together.

### What if I'm neurodivergent?

If you're autistic, have ADHD, or think you may be neurodivergent, you're welcome to let me know about any communication, sensory, or processing needs. We can work together to make therapy feel as comfortable and accessible as possible for you.

## How You Might Feel Afterwards

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It's completely normal to have a whole mix of thoughts and emotions after your first counselling session. There's no "right" way to feel.

### Vulnerable

You may experience what's sometimes called a vulnerability hangover — that uncomfortable "Did I really just say all of that out loud? What must she think of me?" feeling.

If this happens, please know that whatever you shared will be met with compassion and respect. I also know firsthand how much courage it can take to say some things out loud.

### Relieved

You might feel relieved that the first session is over, or to have finally shared some of what's been weighing on you.

### Frustrated

You may wish you'd said more, or feel disappointed that we didn't get as far as you'd hoped. The first session is a little different because we also need to cover some practical information and paperwork. Future sessions tend to feel less structured, with more time to focus entirely on what you'd like to bring.

You might also feel frustrated if you felt misunderstood. If that happens, I'd always encourage you to tell me so we can work it through together.

### Drained

Therapy can be emotionally demanding. You may have talked about difficult experiences, felt a lot of emotion, or simply been carrying extra nerves beforehand.

### Upset or overwhelmed

Sometimes talking about things you've been holding in for a long time can stir up strong emotions. This can feel uncomfortable, but we can work on ways to cope with this between sessions.

### Motivated

You may leave feeling hopeful, with a clearer understanding of what's going on or a few ideas you'd like to try between sessions.

### Confused

You might not know what you think yet — about me, about therapy, or about whether you're ready to continue.

That's completely normal. It can take time to know how you feel. If you have questions or concerns, you're always welcome to bring them to our next session or send me an email.