



# setting up a safe space at home to talk with your counsellor

With COVID-19 changing the way we live, some headspace centres are adjusting their service delivery to include online and phone counselling (telehealth).

To help you access our headspace counsellor, here are some practical tips so you can set up a safe space to talk.



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## What is a safe space for you?

It's a space where you feel comfortable. It's important to think about what will help you feel safe to be open and honest when speaking to your counsellor.

We recommend a private and confidential space where you can sit comfortably without distractions – but we know this isn't always easy. The most important thing is that you feel like you're in the right space to be having a chat.

## Some things to consider

- Do I feel safe speaking to my counsellor in my home?
- Is there somewhere else on my property (i.e. backyard) where I can be alone?
- Should I go for a walk to get space from family members and is it private where I won't be overheard by others walking by?

## Questions you might want to ask the counsellor

- What is the confidentiality? Is it different in telephone or video counselling?
- How is the information from the call or video stored?
- Are there any other people able to hear my conversation? What is the set up at the counsellors place (to ensure my confidentiality?)
- Who else knows about my conversation with a counsellor?
- What if I don't feel safe? What will happen?

## What if my family are at home?

If you're comfortable, let your family know you are on a call and ask for some space. If this feels too much, please let your counsellor know so that they can support you to figure out how best to manage this.

## What if someone comes in when I am speaking to the counsellor?

Have a chat with the counsellor early if you have any concerns about someone being around when you don't want them to be. Discuss strategies with the counsellor if you need to get off the phone or if you need to finish the call up quickly. They might be worried if they don't know what's going on so you might have a key word or phrase to let them know.

## What equipment do I need for my appointment?

You'll need a laptop, tablet or mobile and internet connection for online video appointments. Your centre will let you know if you need a specific app, and can work with you to overcome any barriers like data, credit or internet access. If you prefer chatting over the phone, then just a mobile or landline is required. It's a good idea to test your equipment prior to your appointment to prevent any delays.

## Some other handy hints

- If possible, close a door between you and others, and keep away from busy areas of the household.
- Find a spot that's comfortable and where you can sit and relax. Try and avoid having these sessions on your bed, as that space should be for sleeping only.
- These conversations can bring up lots of emotions – have access to the things you may need like water to drink and tissues.
- Check the lighting in your space and avoid sitting in the dark. Ideally, natural light is best, but you might want to consider a nice lamp or other light source to keep the space bright.
- Be aware of what your camera is showing. You might not be comfortable with what is visible in a video call. (Maybe have a practice with a friend to see).
- Remove distractions as best you can. Although you might want to keep your iPad/computer handy as your counsellor may ask you to check out some online resources during your session.

### Questions:

If you have any concerns about setting up a safe space at home, please contact your local headspace centre who will be able to help.