

Appendix:

Sample response to contact:

Thanks for getting in touch with me. I'm away from my computer at the moment but will do my best to respond to you during normal school hours. If, however, you are feeling really low and need help immediately, please use the following crisis numbers and links to access urgent assistance:

- *The Lowdown: Free text 5626 www.facebook.com/TheLowdownNZ and www.thelowdown.co.nz*
- *Youthline: Free Phone: 0800 376 633 and Free text 234; Email: talk@youthline.co.nz and www.youthline.co.nz*
- *Common Ground: www.commonground.org.nz*
- *Tautoko Suicide Crisis Helpline: Free Phone: 0508 828 865*
- *SPARX: Free Phone: 0508 4 SPARX and www.sparx.org.nz*
- *Need to Talk? Free text: 1737*
- *What's Up? 0800 942 8787*

Sample protocols for written contact include:

- a. At the start of written conversations with students, review the following limits to confidentiality and associated informed consent issues.
- b. Ascertain as best as possible that the young person you are contacting is in fact the client and not someone else who is using the client's device or computer.
- c. Be extremely careful that emails are addressed correctly, that email trails are checked before forwarding, and that 'reply all' is used appropriately.
- d. Outline with the student the potential risks to confidentiality when contacting through technology e.g.
 - Limitations associated with the security of the technology (check out and recommend the use of passwords).
 - Authorised access by someone other than the client, e.g. if the client is sharing a computer or device with other family members.
 - Unauthorised access to the client's computer and messages, e.g. if the client's computer or device is hacked or stolen.
 - Recommend to the client that they message or reply to you when they are in a private space.
- e. If not already contracted, establish as early as possible during the interaction whether this conversation is counselling, support or a checking-in contact.
- f. Establish realistic expectations of what can be achieved through counselling given the limitations of this technology. Be aware of boundary issues which can erode in this less formal context.
- g. Be extremely cautious about the use of brief messaging systems that risk conveying only limited information, lack context and may avoid or misrepresent emotions. These systems can also lend themselves to dramatic communication that can mislead. Wherever possible, move on to more reliable methods of communication, unless doing quick supportive contact or check-ins.

Checklist to review when discussing the appropriateness of phone, online platforms and video counselling with students:

- a. Through discussions with the student, assess the appropriateness of informing parent/caregivers that counselling is being scheduled via phone, FB messenger-video or another platform. It is likely that during a counselling appointment, a parent/caregiver will want to know whom the student is talking to or video-messaging and it is better to have their support prior to the conversation, rather than having to explain during it. Assurance



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can be given to the student that while their caregiver may be aware that counselling is taking place, the contents of the counselling session will be kept confidential. Where it is decided that it is not appropriate to inform parents/caregivers of phone or video counselling appointments, the counsellor should record details of why that decision was reached.

- b. Be prepared to have the difficult conversation with the student about social isolation and staying in one's bubble.
- c. Point out to the student the potential risks to confidentiality in phone and video platform use.
- d. Encourage students to create an environment where they can focus on the work of counselling and not be distracted by other people or media alerts. Ask the client to let you know if someone else enters their space and be ready to enquire about this, if you sense a change.
- e. Make sure you can guarantee privacy for the duration of the conversation at your end too.
- f. Indicate how long you have set aside for the conversation, if possible, and check with students that they think they have the battery power and data to complete the conversation.
- g. Inform students of the limits to confidentiality and that because of the peculiar circumstances of the current situation, you may need to respond to lower levels of self-harm or suicidal ideation than usual in deciding to involve others, in order to keep them safe.
- h. Let students know that phone and/or Facebook messenger-video counselling sessions should not be recorded by either the Counsellor or the student. Counsellors will keep their notes as per usual which will remain confidential.
- i. Inform students of the possibility of technological failure and that in the event of that happening, you will contact them via email or phone to discuss options.
- j. Advise students that communicating via phone and/or video platforms is different to speaking face to face and that audio and visual cues may need to be checked out.
- k. Establish realistic expectations of what can be achieved through counselling given the limitations of this technology and be aware of boundary issues which can erode in this less formal context. Beware in particular of straying into unfocused 'chat'.
- l. Ease of connection may lead to overdependence on the Counsellor. This potential should be monitored and mitigated through the use of clear contracting, including the frequency, duration and scheduling of contacts.
- m. Conclude the session by ensuring students have emergency contact numbers, if you think they might be needed.



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