

SOLDIER ON PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Where are your offices located?

We currently offer face-to-face appointments in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane.

Our offices provide private, quiet, and comfortable spaces for face-to-face appointments to maintain confidentiality and reduce distractions.

Do you offer telehealth sessions?

We offer video telehealth sessions nationwide. We do not offer telephone or voice-only sessions unless it is needed when the internet is down or video is not working at the time of appointment.

It is important that telehealth appointments take place in a quiet and confidential space. This means that no one else should be present unless previously agreed with your psychologist, and appointments should **not** be conducted whilst driving a motor vehicle or in a public place. Sometimes sitting in your car offers a private and confidential space, so this is ok, provided you are stationary and alone for the appointment.

How will I be reminded of my appointment time?

You should receive an automated email reminder three days prior to your appointment and an SMS reminder 24 hours before your appointment. Please respond 'Y' to the automated SMS to confirm your intention to attend.

What are your hours of operation?

Our business hours are Monday to Friday between the hours of 8:00am and 5:00pm. Most of our psychologists work between 9:00am and 5:00pm, and our administration team works between 8:30am and 4:30pm. Psychologists do not answer emails or phone calls outside of their working hours. Soldier On does not offer a crisis service. We can provide you with links to support services should you require outside support.

Can I access support after hours?

We understand that sometimes support is required outside of normal business hours. We can provide you with links to support services that provide this should you require it.

You may also contact your psychologist outside of business hours via email, however your psychologist will not be able to read or respond to your email outside of work hours. We provide you with a plan should you require support outside of office hours, which will link you with alternative crisis supports.

Is there a cost for psychology services? Do I need a referral?

Soldier On Psychology Services are delivered **at no cost to the service user**. We do, however, request a referral before sessions with your psychologist begin so that the cost of your sessions is covered by either DVA or Medicare. More information about this can be found on the Client Information sheet. If you have any questions, please contact our practice management team.

All funding from referrals goes back into our charity to support more members of the Defence community.

How do I get a referral?

You can organise a referral to Soldier On through your GP for either Medicare or DVA rebates. Simply book an appointment with your GP or Medicare-registered healthcare professional to obtain a referral. Some GPs may require a long consult to allow time to complete the referral.

Soldier On Psychology Services accepts the following referrals:

1. DVA D0904 Referral

All White or Gold cardholders are entitled to free mental health care. You do not need to prove that your ADF service caused your need for treatment. For us to bulk bill DVA for your support, we will need you to:

- a. book an appointment with your GP;
- b. request a **referral letter** and a **D0904 form** from your treating doctor; and
- c. fax these to +61 8331 1985 or email to psychology@soldieron.org.au.

2. Mental Health Treatment Plan (MHTP) - Medicare

An MHTP entitles you to Medicare rebates for up to 10 individual sessions with a psychologist. Soldier On bulk bills Medicare for these sessions, so that you have **no out-of-pocket costs**. For us to bulk bill your psychology sessions, we will need you to:

- a. book an appointment with your GP;
- b. request a **referral letter** and a **Mental Health Treatment Plan** from your treating doctor; and
- c. fax these to +61 8331 1985 or email to psychology@soldieron.org.au.

Note: after six sessions, you need to see your GP again for a mental health plan review before the final four sessions can be completed.

3. BUPA or ComCare claims

Please discuss this with our Practice Manager.

Once your referral is due to expire, or you have used all your sessions, you will be requested by our practice management team to obtain another referral.

Why do I need an emergency contact?

Before you begin therapy at Soldier On, it is mandatory for you to provide consent for us to contact a medical practitioner, such as your GP or base Medical Officer, and at least one personal contact in the event of an emergency. This is facilitated in writing in our Consent to Contact and Release Information Form. This is important for your safety and the safety of our practitioners.

What happens if my psychologist is on leave?

Your psychologist will let you know in advance if they anticipate being away and will discuss with you the support you would find helpful during this period. This may include collaboratively planning for activities you can maintain during this time and additional support, which may include meeting with another Soldier On psychologist.

If your psychologist unexpectedly goes on leave, you will be contacted by our Intake Coordinator, Jaime, or our Practice Manager, Freddie, to reschedule your appointment and to discuss how you can best be supported.

Who do I contact if I am in a crisis?

Soldier On Psychology Services is **not** a crisis service and is unable to provide urgent response care.

If you or someone you know are at immediate risk, please call one of the below:

- Open Arms **1800 011 046**
- Beyond Blue **1300 224 636**
- Lifeline **13 11 14**
- Mensline Australia **1300 78 99 78**
- Suicide Call Back Service **1300 659 467**
- 13 YARN **13 92 76**
- 1800 RESPECT **1800 737 732**
- Emergency services **000**

YOUR RIGHTS AS A CLIENT

What happens with my personal information you collect?

All client records are stored securely using our client management system, Halaxy. For more information, please visit Halaxy's [Privacy and Security](#) page.

To understand our privacy practices in more detail and your rights in relation to accessing and correcting your personal information, please review our [Privacy Policy](#), which can be accessed on our website. You can also request a copy from your psychologist.

As part of providing our services to you, we need to collect and record relevant personal information. This information is part of the process of assessment and treatment. It may also be necessary for:

- disclosure to other health professionals involved in your care, such as your nominated general psychologist or psychiatrist.
- accounting and administrative purposes for Medicare and DVA.
- quality assurance within Soldier On.

What about confidentiality?

Our psychologists are bound by a Code of Practice established by the Australian Government and the Australian Psychological Society. Your psychologist will talk to you about confidentiality at your first session, and it is a good idea to raise any concerns you have about this at that time.

Every effort is made to ensure your privacy and that your personal information is only viewed by your psychologist. However, there are some professional limits to confidentiality, including:

- failure to disclose information could put your or another person's safety at risk;
- if it is subpoenaed by a court or otherwise required by law; and
- when prior written approval has been given by you to disclose information to another professional agency or person (e.g., a GP, lawyer, or family member).

What happens if I feel like my psychologist is unprofessional?

You have the right to be treated with respect by Soldier On psychologists who are professional and competent. If you have a concern or complaint regarding your psychologist's conduct, you can raise this confidentially with our practice manager, Freddie, via email at freddie.cooke@soldieron.org.au or on 02 6188 6122.

You can commence and discontinue therapy at any time and for any reason. If you are unhappy with anything that happens during therapy, you are welcome to raise this with your Soldier On psychologist. If you believe that your psychologist has behaved unethically, you have the right to lodge a complaint with your psychologist's professional body (e.g., the Australian Health Psychologist Reporting Agency (AHPRA)).

What should I do if I cannot attend my appointment?

To maintain an efficient delivery of services to all our clients, it is helpful to give your psychologist **at least 24 hours' notice** if you need to reschedule your appointment. You can do this by responding 'N' to the automated SMS reminder sent to you 24 hours prior to your scheduled appointment. You can also contact the practice management team directly via email at psychology@soldieron.org.au or on 02 6188 6122.

When providing 24 hours' notice is not possible, contact your psychologist by responding to the automated SMS or contact the practice manager. If you do not attend your appointment and your psychologist has not been notified of a cancellation, they will attempt to contact you as an extension of our duty of care at Solider On.

What happens if I repeatedly miss my therapy sessions?

If you repeatedly cancel or do not show for appointments for a period of time (usually three consecutive sessions), your psychologist will explore with you whether you still wish to engage in services. If they are unable to contact you to have this discussion, they will request the practice management team follow up, with a suggested timeline for your response. If we are unable to contact you throughout this process, we will assume you no longer require support, and you will receive a discharge email from us. We will also contact your GP in writing to inform them.

Does a psychologist have to report if I am using illegal drugs?

No, a practitioner is not required to report your personal use of illicit substances. Considerations of mandatory reporting may come into discussion if you report that you are driving a vehicle while substance affected, and if you have children in your care. This will be discussed with you, and your practitioner will have a preference for assisting you to keep yourself and others safe. This may form part of your goals for therapy.

Psychologists are mandatory reporters of crime under the consideration of risk of harm to self, others, and the general public, and risk to you by others. Personal use of illicit substances does not breach this threshold, however the distribution of such substances may at times reach a more significant level of consideration for mandatory reporting. If your practitioner is concerned about your physical wellbeing due to consumption of substances (e.g., overdose), they may contact a medical professional for you and disclose substances consumed in order for effective emergency medical treatment to be administered.

WHAT TO EXPECT

What does the therapy process look like?

Step 1. Intake and Assessment Phase

When you first come to Soldier On Psychology Services, you will be asked to answer some questions about yourself and your relationship with others. We call this the assessment phase of therapy. This can be a difficult process, but it helps us start to get to know you. Jaime or Freddie in our intake team will be your first contacts. They will give you some information about our services and how to access them. In addition to completing some online forms, they will ask you further questions to deepen our understanding of how we can best support you. Jaime and Freddie will be important points of contact throughout your time with us.

After we have gotten to know each other a little, it may become clear that your needs are best served by another team, agency, or support group. If this is the case, we will provide you with the details and information to make that journey.

Step 2. Waitlist

If we think your needs are best served with us, you will be asked to get a referral from your GP (if you haven't already) and allocated a psychologist. You may have to wait some time before your sessions start, depending on the psychologist's availability. Whilst waiting, you may decide that your needs are better served elsewhere. If this is the case, we ask that you please let Freddie or Jamie know so that your place can be provided to someone else.

Step 3. Allocation to your psychologist

When you meet your psychologist, you will still be in the assessment phase of therapy. Your psychologist will be interested in getting to know you better and understanding the difficulties you want to address. This is also a time for you to get to know your psychologist and their approach to therapy. Towards the end of the assessment phase, your psychologist will share their findings with you. They will ask that you collaborate with them to determine whether their idea of what is going on for you is like yours, and together you will determine what difficulties you want to work on.

How long is therapy?

The duration of therapy depends on your personal needs. At Soldier On, we can offer longer term therapy where needed. This allows you time to develop a deeper connection with your psychologist (which, research tells us, improves therapy outcomes) to complete in-depth exploration of what is going on for you and create and notice change. We are therefore unable to give a specific timeframe for the therapy we offer.

The rate and pace of change will vary depending on your previous life experiences, your commitment to therapy, and your level of trust in your psychologist. It's important to discuss with your psychologist on a regular basis how you feel you are progressing and how you feel about therapy.

How much time will I need to commit to therapy?

Starting therapy might feel overwhelming at times and like a big commitment. At Soldier On, we tend to see you on a weekly basis. To get the best results, therapy generally consists of weekly 50-minute sessions. This can be discussed together at the start of therapy. At particularly difficult times, some people might benefit from two sessions per week. When you feel like things are improving, you may benefit from less frequent sessions.

What should I expect from therapy?

For people who have not experienced therapy before, it can feel difficult to imagine what will happen during sessions. Your psychologist will help you to focus on situations you would like help with. You will start to explore yourself, your thoughts, feelings, wishes, and fantasies and how they emerge in your relationship with yourself and others. Sometimes links or patterns in your life will be discovered, and sometimes strategies and/or solutions will emerge as situations are thought about in new ways.

Some sessions may include psychological education about the impact of the military, relationships, emotions, trauma reactions, depression, and personality traits that may be impacting you. This process is respectful and curious and is thought to develop internal awareness and perspective taking. This can help you piece together confusing or frustrating aspects of your life and provide you with new resources and skills.

In addition to focusing on your relationship with yourself and others, psychologists at Soldier On use a variety of other therapeutic approaches that are backed up by substantial research. Therapeutic approaches at Soldier On are also informed by an understanding of the military experience and that of Defence life.

What happens if I feel like therapy is not working for me?

If you feel as though therapy is not working for you, we recommend that you discuss it with your psychologist. Your psychologist can explore with you how you are feeling and help you to understand what might not be working. Your psychologist may recommend an alternative form of therapy or support. Your psychologist may also suggest that you transition to another psychologist. This will be explored with you prior to any action.

What happens if I start to feel suicidal or take risks that I normally wouldn't?

Feeling suicidal or noticing risk-taking behaviour is difficult. It is important that you feel comfortable within your relationship with your psychologist to talk about it if you start to notice these things occurring. Your psychologist will try to support you through this difficult time. They will help you to feel less alone and to notice any patterns to when you feel suicidal.

There might be times when the onset of these feelings is sudden, and you may feel in crisis. Soldier On psychology service business hours are 8:00am to 5:00pm, and we do not offer a crisis service. Outside of our business hours, you can email your psychologist, but they will only be able to respond during their working hours. For that reason, you may not be able to reach your

psychologist when you feel in crisis. We can provide you with a list of support services to use during these crisis points.

What if I don't feel connected to my psychologist or feel like my psychologist is not the right fit for me?

Finding the "right fit" with a psychologist is important and can take time. As a general rule of thumb, psychologists suggest trialing three sessions. This can help you decide if you think you will be able to build a connection over time. This is an important discussion to have with your psychologist and one that is very helpful in therapy. It is also something that your psychologist is likely to raise as part of the assessment phase. Your psychologist is trained in this concept and will not be offended, upset or angry if you are feeling this way.

For some people, due to experiences in their past, relationships can feel difficult, and it can be hard to trust others. This may impact on how you feel about your psychologist. It is also likely you might feel this way with another psychologist. Starting to understand more about how you feel in different relationships should help you to determine whether the feelings you are experiencing are because the psychologist isn't the right fit or because the relationship itself feels difficult. It is important that you feel able to explore this with your psychologist.

If you decide it isn't the right fit, your psychologist will support you to find a different psychologist within the service.

Will my psychologist teach me skills?

Therapy involves many different processes, and at times this might include working together to develop certain skills, for example, skills to help you regulate your emotions during distressing times. Different psychologists can work in different ways, and some may use more skills-based work. However, the model that our team uses is longer-term work and allows you to explore your experiences in greater depth, with a particular focus on understanding how you feel in your relationship with yourself and others.

What happens if I start to feel that I am undeserving of therapy or that someone else would benefit more than me?

We would encourage you to discuss this with your psychologist. Our intake team assesses your eligibility for services at Soldier On and your psychologist reviews the need for therapy with you. However, many people report that they feel underserving of appointment times and become concerned whether they are taking the place of a fellow client who may need support. This can be a very considerate thought, while also being a barrier to the treatment from which you may benefit. This can become a very helpful avenue for exploration and is often linked to values of service and mateship.

Can Soldier On Psychology Services provide me with a written report?

No. Soldier On Psychology Services is unable to provide written reports on request.