



COUNSELLING AGREEMENT Information and procedures

COUNSELLOR-CLIENT SERVICE AGREEMENT

Welcome to Relationship Connect. This document contains important disclosure information about this practice, the professional services offered by the counsellor with whom you are working, and the business policies. It was created in accordance with the Australian Counselling Association Code of Ethics and Practice.

As you seek support and counselling service at Relationship Connect, it is important that you read and understand this information. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between you and your counsellor. You can approach your counsellor any time to discuss any questions you have regarding the information included in this document.

COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES

Counselling is a professional relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. Your counsellor abides by the professional responsibilities based on their professional training, and as outlined in the Code of Ethics and Practice of the professional association or society under which they hold their registration as counsellor. These documents are usually available online, and you can inquire about them with your counsellor any time.

As a client in counselling, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. There are also legal limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. Your counsellor has corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

Please note that Relationship Connect is not an emergency or crisis service. As such, we do not offer counselling support outside of your scheduled sessions. If you require immediate support, please contact an appropriate service, such as those below:

- Emergency 000
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467
- After Hours Suicide Support Service 1800 859 585
- Acute Mental Health Care 1300 64 22 55
- National sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line 1800 737 732
- DV Connect Men's Line 1800 600 636 or Men's Line Australia 1300 78 99 78
- Adis 24/7 Alcohol and Drug Support 1800 177 833

Additionally, please note that as a counselling service, our counsellors are not able to prescribe medications. However, they can orient you to appropriate service or support you with a referral.



Please note that if you require comprehensive mental health assessment or psychometric test, followed by a report, this can be performed only by fully registered clinical and/or neuropsychologists, and cannot be performed by your counsellor. Please discuss with your GP or treating clinician the best referral pathways.

We are not authorized to provide medical certificate, or character reference for employment or court appearance purposes. We do not provide custody evaluations or evaluations of legal competence to stand trial, nor can offer to testify for you at the court due to professional confidentiality. If you anticipate becoming involved in a court case, please read the section on 'Confidentiality' below, and discuss this with your counsellor.

We provide counselling service only to adult individuals, i.e., people aged 18 and above, including couples.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND and THERAPEUTIC ORIENTATION

The counsellors at Relationship Connect have different professional backgrounds, therapeutic orientation and expertise that inform their practice, including the use of different techniques. These are stated in the counsellor's profile on our website, accessible through: <https://relationshipconnect.org/>, and it is recommended that you check your counsellor's profile prior to booking and choose with regards to your own needs and expectations. If you are unsure, please contact Relationship Connect prior to booking to explore your options. You can also ask your therapist about their professional background and therapeutic orientation any time.

Furthermore, you may notice that each counsellor has their own counselling style. The therapeutic relationship is an important ingredient in the counselling process, contributing to the perceived level of satisfaction with and benefit of counselling. It is therefore important, that both you and your counsellor are the right 'fit'. You have the right to choose a counsellor, with whom you feel comfortable, and who offers adequate expertise to target your presenting concerns. You have the right to end counselling at any time and without explanation. Alternatively, you can also bring up your concerns with your counsellor and work through them as a part of the counselling process.

Sometimes, the counsellor might identify that you would better benefit from a different approach than what they can currently offer within their professional training. In such case, they will work with you on options for better support.

PROPOSED COURSE OF TREATMENT

At Relationship Connect, we appreciate the individuality of each person and the unique situation they might find themselves in. The proposed course of sessions may therefore differ for each person. Depending on your needs, your counsellor will invite you to discuss the number of sessions in an interval that suits you. However, the first 1-4 sessions will usually focus on exploration on your presenting concerns, i.e., the things that brought you in counselling and their past trajectory with the aim of identifying attainable goals and therapy process. This time can also be used to evaluate whether there is a mutual 'fit' between you and your counsellor. Generally, it takes about 6-12 sessions of brief therapy or counselling to observe change. However, long-lasting change is usually achieved through long-term work.



As we strive to support you in achieving lasting change, we cannot promise or guarantee any 'quick fix', and sometimes therapy gains are more subtle than expected. Counselling requires a very active effort on your part. Remember, counselling is a journey of exploration of yourself and the ways you tend to think, feel, or behave, and activating potential for change. While the counselling process in-session might offer reflections, insights, or new strategies to approach some aspects of our life, oftentimes the change happens through your personal effort outside of sessions. Discussing your goals and progress, including the difficulties you encounter and difficult feelings you observe through the process, is part of the counselling process.

APPOINTMENTS AND PAYMENTS

Appointments occur as per your scheduled time, which you can manage through your online booking profile. The payment and cancellation policy/rescheduling is outlined on the Relationship Connect website accessible through: <https://relationshipconnect.org/>

You are responsible for coming to your session on time. If you are late, your sessions will still end according to the allocated time slot.

If you require a referral to access alternative support options, this will be sorted in-session, and according to the 'Confidentiality' section below.

Attendance report can be issued for a fee. Please send your request to info@relationshipconnect.org

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INSURANCE COMPANIES

Our services are not covered by Medicare. This means that you do not need a referral to book a session at Relationship Connect. However, if you have a Mental Health Care Plan, please discuss the best referral options with your GP or referring clinician.

Depending on their professional background and therapeutic training, your counsellor may or may not be registered with private insurance companies. This would normally be mentioned in their online profile. Please contact Relationship Connect if you would like to discuss your options.

Please note that due to different laws and regulations of counselling services, we cannot provide counselling to citizens or permanent residents of the USA or Canada, or people who are currently located in the USA or Canada seeking online counselling.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

Our counsellors are required to keep appropriate records of the counselling service they provide. These records are maintained in a secure location in the office, and they include the information you provide in your intake form, administered screening assessments, records that we have received from other providers and copies of records we send to other providers (e.g., referrals), and case notes. Case notes might differ based on your counsellor's style and training, and usually include but are not limited to notes of your attendance (e.g., date, time, and mode of delivery), reasons for seeking counselling, goals and progress notes, the topics discussed. Because these are professional records taken in a specific circumstance of a particular counselling session, and serving to your counsellor, they may be



misinterpreted when read by anyone else but the authoring counsellor themselves. For these reasons, we do not release the counselling notes to our clients or any third party unless required by law. If you would like to discuss the information in your case notes, we recommend booking a session with your counsellor, who can discuss these notes with you in-session. You are welcome to take your own notes during the sessions if you would like to.

Please note, that attending sessions at Relationship Connect will not appear on your medical record.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The rules about confidentiality are described in the Code of Ethics and Practice of the professional association where your counsellor is registered.

In brief, all information that you disclose to your counsellor in-sessions are kept confidential. However, there are important exceptions to this confidentiality as outlined below:

- Your counsellors have a legal duty of care. That means, that if you tell your counsellor of a plan to cause serious harm or death to yourself or anyone else, and the counsellor believes that you have the intent and ability to carry out this plan in the very near future, they must act to protect you or others from the intended harm. Such action may include but is not limited to them notifying appropriate third parties to ensure your and other persons' safety.
- If you disclose or if you are doing things that could cause serious harm to you or someone else, even if you do not intend to harm yourself or another person, in such cases, the counsellor will need to use their professional judgment to decide whether they need to act to protect yourself or another person from harm.
- If you tell your counsellor that you are being abused physically, sexually or emotionally, they will work with you, using their professional judgment to decide the next appropriate action for you, usually by providing information or assisting with contacting appropriate services, through which you could act to protect yourself or another person from harm.
If you tell your counsellor of any child suffering any form of abuse or neglect, including child sexual abuse, they will need to do a mandatory report. Your counsellor will need to do this mandatory report, if they form a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse, and may not have a parent or guardian able and willing to protect them. In such cases, your counsellor will need to contact the local Police or Child Safety Regional Intake Service. In Queensland, every adult person has a legal duty of reporting child sexual abuse (contact your local Police service or Child Safety Service Centre for advice). For more information on mandatory reporting, visit: <https://www.cyjma.qld.gov.au/protecting-children/reporting-child-abuse>
- If you are involved in a court case, it may be requested by law that we provide information about your counselling or therapy (subpoena). In such cases, we are required to provide all information specified in the subpoena, usually through the copy of notes, intake forms, assessments, or other materials listed in the subpoena.
- You waive your privilege to confidentiality if you bring charges against Relationship Connect or your counsellor.
- Your counsellor might discuss some of the topics and issues that were brought up in therapy with professional supervisor. Such conversations usually serve to their professional



development and ultimately to your benefit as a client. Supervisions are confidential and your identifiable information will not be disclosed to the supervisor.

- In couples counselling, specific rules to confidentiality apply, if you attend individual sessions within couples counselling. Your counsellor will inform you of the specific exceptions when you work with them as a couple and attend sessions individually for the purpose of couples counselling. An amendment to this Information and Procedures form might be necessary if you decide to see your counsellor both for individual and couples counselling, or if you have ceased couples counselling and would like to continue individually or vice versa. Depending on your counsellor's training, they may not be able to offer individual therapy after they had worked with you in couples counselling. In such cases, they will discuss alternative support pathways with you.

Your counsellor will discuss these points with you during your first session. Please remember that you can open the conversation about this matter with your counsellor at any point during your work together.

OTHER RIGHTS

If you are unhappy with what is happening in counselling, you can always raise this with your counsellor first as a part of the therapy process. Alternatively, you can contact Relationship Connect. Such comments will be taken seriously and handled with care and respect.

You may also request to be seen by another counsellor at Relationship Connect or elsewhere and are free to end counselling at any time. You have the right to considerate, safe and respectful care, without discrimination as to race, ethnicity, colour, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, or source of payment. You have the right to ask questions about any aspects of therapy and about your counsellor's specific training and experience. You have the right to expect that your counsellor will not have social or sexual relationships with clients or with former clients. You have the right to choose your counsellor, counselling approach, and treatment modality that best suits your needs, and to confidentiality (with some notable exceptions listed above).

CONSENT TO COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES

Your signature below indicates that you have read this Counselling Agreement, you understand and agree with the information provided in this Agreement.

Both you and your counsellor keep a copy.

Print name:

Date:

Signature: