



## Counselling Contract

### **Aim of Counselling**

The aim of counselling is to provide you, the client, with a confidential opportunity to explore personal and relational issues in safety. During counselling, we set goals agreed between the client and the therapist. The client agrees to work towards the agreed goals. The role of Happy Minds Counselling is to help you through this process without judgement or telling you what to do. We may on occasions give information, homework, or offer suggestions. If at any time we feel we can no longer help you, we will offer to refer you to someone who can.

A Counsellor cannot fix your problems for you, and with personal or relationship issues the work will ultimately have to be done by you. You are paying us for our expertise and we will be providing you with information and making suggestions. The more you can take what was discussed during your session with us and practice it, apply it, work at it or think about it in between sessions, the more you will get out of coming to see us.

### **Frequency of Sessions and Length of Therapy**

We find that there are benefits to making sessions weekly. Particularly in the early stages of therapy many people find it hard to maintain the "momentum" of change outside of sessions and hence more frequent sessions help keep things on track. However, how often you come is affected by practical matters such as your ability to make time to, cost, travel etc. Sessions run for 50 minutes.

### **Involvement with Other Therapies**

It is important to let us know of any involvement you have with any other health professionals, any other types of therapy, individual or group counselling or personal growth work. It is especially important to inform us about any forms of medication you are taking. This is to ensure we are not working at cross purposes with any other help you are receiving.

### **Differences Between Counsellor and Client**

When a therapist is of a different gender, age, class, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity from you there will probably be aspects of your experience that she or he will not know about or understand. We may want to talk to you about these differences to ensure understanding.

## Payment

Face to face and online clients normally pay via the website at time of booking or cash after the session if arrange prior with your counsellor.

## Missed Appointments and Late Cancellations etc.

We try to be flexible with clients changing appointment times to suit. If you get sick or busy and doubt, you'll make the appointment, please contact us the day before appointment and let us know. If you are late your appointment will still have to finish on time to be fair to the next client. Repeated or two last minute cancellations in a row results in a full session amount being charged.

## Confidentiality, Limits to Confidentiality

In most cases the fact that you are seeing us, and anything you might say to us, is private and we will not tell anyone else about this without your permission. There are exceptions to this privacy:

1. With your permission we will liaise with other health professionals involved in your care to assist you in receiving the best possible care. If you have been referred to us, we will normally ask your permission to liaise with the referrer, usually just to acknowledge the referral. If you have other professionals involved in your ongoing care it is in your interests that we liaise with them in order to coordinate the help you are receiving. This still requires your permission.
2. If there is a situation where you or someone else are at risk of serious harm, which we could prevent by breaking confidentiality, then we will act to prevent that harm. Unless there is an emergency or it would increase the risk of harm, we would still try to discuss this with you first.
3. If your therapy is being paid for by someone else, they will need to know whether or not you are attending. Where it is being paid for by an agency such as ACC, insurance company, your employer, OT etc, there is likely to be an obligation to report to them about the therapy. Your therapist will normally consult you about what is going to be reported.
4. We do **not** release therapy files to clients for use in court proceedings unless ordered. This is not their intended use and they are too open to misinterpretation.
5. All counsellors receive professional supervision from senior colleagues and peers on a regular basis. This is where we discuss aspects of our work that are challenging, successful or just seem to need reflecting on. Regular supervision provides a check on the quality and safety of our work, a means to develop our knowledge and skills, and a place where we can talk about ways that our work is affecting us personally. Though the focus is primarily on us and our work we, of course, have to talk about our clients during supervision. We do our best to avoid saying anything that might identify a client.

## Notes, Files

We keep a record of each session on file while we are working with you. We do keep notes securely after therapy in case you choose to return at any stage.

## Contact Outside of Therapy

Normally if we meet you accidentally in public, we will wait for you to make the first approach, it is OK to ignore us if you want.

## Complaints, Refunds and Cancellations

If you feel that the advice, comment, information and therapy received is not of a sufficient standard or for any other reason you believe has been defective or failed to reach you, you may claim a refund by writing to Happy Minds Counselling, stating clearly reason for the complaint. Happy Minds Counselling liability in this regard shall be limited to the actual cost of the fees paid you to us by the time of the complaint and at its sole discretion. This does not affect your rights under any applicable Consumer Protection Acts or rights. If you have a complaint against one of our therapists, please contact us as above and this will be taken very seriously. We always want to discuss these matters and ask you contact us first. You may choose after to refer such a complaint to any professional organisation to which we have membership.

## Extra Support and Crisis Situations

We are only able to offer limited support outside of session times. We are willing to make extra appointments as our schedules permit. It is OK for you to phone, text, and e mail us if you need to but remember that we may not be able to talk for long, you might get our voicemail, and it may take us a while to get back to you. In a crisis situation you will need to rely on public crisis services such as Lifeline 0800 LIFELINE or your local Community Mental Health team in New Zealand.

I have read and understood the above outline of issues that may affect therapy or online therapy and I am are happy to agree to therapy under the conditions outlined above.

I realize I have had a chance to ask any questions and discuss anything I choose.

I understand that taking part in counselling is my own choice, and that I may withdraw at any time and this will in no way affect my continuing health care.

I know what will be expected of me during the counselling relationship, and understand that if I do not meet these expectations, it may reduce the effectiveness of the therapeutic journey.

Name: .....

Signed..... Date.....

Counsellor: .....