

Counselling Contract

It is often a big step to enter individual or family counselling. Congratulations! In order to get the most out of this experience it will be helpful to read and think about the following information.

If you have any questions or concerns, please raise them with your counsellor at the beginning of your next session. When you are sure that you are clear on the terms of the contract, please sign and date so that your counsellor can give you a copy.

1. THE TERMS OF THE CONTRACT

The terms of the treatment contract are important. They help you to know what to expect. They include the fees you pay, the time of your appointments; the frequency of sessions and what you and your counsellor expect from each other.

2. CONFIDENTIALITY/PRIVACY

In the event that a counsellor at Sonas Counselling deems a person at risk of harming themselves or others, the counsellor has a duty of care to act upon that information. Regulations and Acts that support the disclosure of information that may have been given in confidence include, but are not limited to, *The Children, Youth and Families Act (2005)*, *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988* and *Mental Health Act (1983)*.

Instances where we would be required to disclose information are as follows:

- *it is evident that a crime and/or abuse against a child is being or will be committed;*
- *it is evident that harm to self or another is being or will be committed,*
- *it is revealed that a criminal act under the Commonwealth or State law has been or is intended to be committed;*
- *records are requested by subpoena, Court Order, Search Order;*
- *information is requested per condition of original service entry (for example: fee for service); or*
- *Information is required to attain referral to another service.*

In all instances you will be advised of the request for information before such information is released.

As part of providing a service to you, we need to collect personal information which may include your name, contact details such as address, phone numbers, date of birth, marital status, number of children you have, as well as details of issues which you have been discussing with your counsellor.

Clients' files are held in a secure location. The counsellor will be consulting with their supervisor and information about your counselling sessions may be discussed from time to time. These communications are confidential and the purpose of the supervisions is to enhance the quality of care you receive.

This information is gathered in order to document what happens during sessions, and enables the counsellor to provide a relevant and informed service.

Privacy in Australian law is 'the right of natural persons to protect their personal life from invasion and to control the flow of their personal information.' Privacy is not an absolute right and it differs in different contexts and is balanced against other competing rights and duties. At Sonas Counselling the following Laws may apply to the handling of your personal information and disclosure: *Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)*; *Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)*; *The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*. **SonaS Counselling does not share or sell any individual or group information to other parties. All information is kept in accordance with law. Personal details are not used for the purposes of marketing unless specifically requested or authorized.**

3. CANCELLATIONS

We understand that on occasion's illness and incidents interfere with our intended schedules and appointments. However, for optimal treatment outcomes it is important to try to adhere to the recommended schedule for counselling appointments. Intermittent and frequently cancelled and rescheduled appointments are not conducive to developing a therapeutic relationship or desired progress.

24 hours' notice is required for cancellation and rescheduling.

A \$50 fee applies for all appointments cancelled/rescheduled under the 24 hours' notice unless unavoidable.

If you are running late for an appointment please try to phone ahead to let us know. Consultation will commence on your arrival and **finish at the original scheduled time** to ensure other clients are not inconvenienced. Full standard fee applies.

Charging a late cancellation fee enables Sonas Counselling to maintain a professional practice.

4. CONTINUITY

Continuity of sessions is important. Let's say you have agreed to weekly sessions. It would be disruptive to suddenly change this; if however you find that you want to make a change to the arrangements; you need to discuss this with your counsellor.

5. MAKING THE MOST OF EACH SESSION

Clients who get the most out of counselling are usually the ones who use their session time to increase awareness; learn new skills; and be actively involved in getting what they want from the sessions. They are also the ones who are willing to try out new behaviours in between sessions and take time to reflect on the work. Sometimes it is helpful to write or draw after a session and bring this to your next session.

If, at any time, you are left with concerns or discomfort from a session it is very important that you tell your counsellor about this either when it is happening or at the next session.

6. TERMINATION

When you feel ready to finish your counselling it is important to bring this up with your counsellor so that together you can plan for ending your work in a satisfactory way. This may take several sessions to accomplish.

7. OUT OF SESSION CONTACT

Sometimes clients want extra contact with their counsellor. It is inadvisable to mix a social and a therapeutic relationship. Sometimes you may accidentally meet your counsellor outside of the sessions – it is important to tell her how you want to handle this situation if it arises.

Client/s Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Counsellor Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____