

Informed Consent

Please take time to read this document carefully. It forms part of the agreement between you and your counsellor and Insight Counselling.

AGREEMENT FOR COUNSELLING SERVICES CONDUCTED BY INSIGHT COUNSELLING

PROCESS OF COUNSELLING/EVALUATION

Participation in counselling can result in a number of benefits to you, including improving relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to seek counselling. It may help you deal with difficult feelings or experiences, or address issues that have been troubling you. Working toward these benefits requires effort, and counselling relies on your active involvement, honesty, and openness in order to help with the concerns that have brought you to it. Your counsellor will ask for your feedback and views on your counselling, its progress, and other aspects of the counselling and will expect you to respond openly and honestly.

Sometimes more than one approach can be helpful in dealing with a certain situation. During evaluation or counselling, remembering or talking about unpleasant events, feelings, or thoughts may result in your experiencing discomfort or difficult feelings such as anger, sadness, worry, fear, etc. or experiencing anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc. Your counsellor may challenge some of your assumptions or perceptions or propose different ways of looking at, thinking about, or handling situations that can cause you to feel upset, angry, depressed, challenged, or disappointed.

During the course of counselling, our counsellors utilize various psychological and motivational approaches according, in part, to the problem that is being treated and their assessment of what will best benefit you. These approaches include but are not limited to person-centred counselling, cognitive-behavioural therapy, psychodynamic, integrative counselling, pluralistic counselling, art/drama therapy, or psycho-educational techniques.

If you would like to know more about the approaches your counsellor uses they will be happy to discuss this with you. If you know you would like a specific model of counselling, please say so on the form where you are asked to briefly describe why you are seeking counselling.

DISCUSSION OF TREATMENT PLAN

During the first session and throughout this process, your counsellor will discuss with you your understanding of the problem and your view of the possible outcomes of treatment. If you have any unanswered questions about any of the procedures used in the course of your counselling, their possible risks, the counsellor's expertise in employing them, or about the treatment plan, please ask and you will be answered fully. You also have the right to ask about other treatments for your condition and their risks and benefits. If you could benefit from any treatment that Insight Counselling does not provide, we will assist you in obtaining those treatments.

DUAL RELATIONSHIPS

A dual relationship is one where your personal life coincides with the professional relationship you have with your counsellor.

Not all dual relationships are a problem and they can't always be avoided. If you happen to meet your counsellor in some other capacity – for example because you live locally or know some of the same people – your counsellor will keep appropriate boundaries and will not let it be known that you are their client. However, sexual involvement between therapist and client is never part of the counselling process as well as other actions or dual relationship situations that might impair your counsellor's objectivity, clinical judgment, or therapeutic effectiveness or that could be exploitative in nature. In addition, they will never acknowledge working therapeutically with anyone without his/her written permission other than in the rare circumstances outlined in our privacy statement. In some instances, even with permission, your counsellor and Insight will preserve the integrity of the working relationship. For this reason, your counsellor will not accept any invitations via social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Pinterest, nor will they respond to blogs written by clients or accept comments on any blog or public website affiliated to Insight counselling or themselves personally from clients.

TERMINATION AND REFERRAL

During the initial intake process and the first couple of sessions, your counsellor will continue to assess if he or she can be of benefit to you. If you have requested online counselling, the assessment will include your suitability to counselling delivered via technology. We do not accept clients who, in our opinion, we cannot help. In such a case, we will give you a number of referrals that you may contact, or may recommend use of our free face-to-face sessions. If at any point during counselling we assess that we are not effective in helping you reach your therapeutic goals, we will discuss this with you. If you request and authorize in writing, we will talk to the psychotherapist of your choice in order to help with the transition. If at any time you want another professional's opinion or wish to consult with another therapist, we will assist you in finding someone qualified, and, if we have your written consent, we will provide her or him with the essential information needed. You have the right to terminate counselling at any time.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

All information disclosed within sessions and the written records pertaining to those sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission, except where disclosure is required by law or if there is significant risk of harm to others or if there are concerns about the safety of a child or vulnerable adult. Additionally, all counsellors are required by the ethical standards set by the profession to discuss their work with a qualified Supervisor. However, you would not be identified in such discussions which are intended to support the counsellor in their work.

Likewise, you are expected to keep our communications confidential and you understand that all records of communication between client and therapist remain the property of Insight Counselling. Verbatim material from counselling sessions remain in the client record and should never normally be revealed publicly unless both client and counsellor agree. Most of the provisions explaining when the law requires disclosure are described to you in the Counselling Contract/Notice of Privacy Practices that are downloadable from the counselling platform.

When Disclosure Is Ethically or Legally Required

Some of the circumstances where disclosure is ethically or legally required : where there is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent or elder, abuse or neglect; and where a client presents a danger to self, to others, to property, or is gravely disabled (for more details see also Counselling Contract/Notice of Privacy Practices form).

Disclosure may also be required because of a legal proceeding. If you are involved in a custody dispute, for example, or if you place your mental status at issue in litigation initiated by you, the defendant may have the right to obtain the counselling records and/or testimony by Insight Counselling. In couple and family counselling, or when different family members are seen individually, confidentiality and privilege do not apply between the couple or among family members. Insight will use clinical judgment when revealing such information. We will not release records to any outside party unless we are authorized to do so by all adult family members who were part of the treatment, and in all circumstances, any information released will be kept to a minimum.

Harm to Self or Others

If there is an emergency during the work with your counsellor, or in the future after termination, in which they become concerned about your personal safety, concerned about the possibility of you injuring someone else, or concerned about you receiving proper psychiatric or medical care, they will do whatever they can within the limits of the law, to prevent you from injuring yourself or others and to ensure that you receive the proper care. For this purpose, we may also contact the police, hospital or an emergency contact whose name you have provided. This is, however, very rare and in any circumstances like this, your counsellor will make every reasonable effort to discuss the situation with you first.

Confidentiality of Online Communication

Emails are delivered via our interactive email system Privacemail. The system will then send an alert to the email address you have given us to let you know that a message has been sent to you.

Insight Counselling make every effort to keep all information confidential. Likewise, we ask that you determine who has access to your computer and electronic information from your location. This would include family members, co-workers, supervisors and friends and whether or not confidentiality from your work or personal computer may be compromised due to such programs as a [keylogger](#).

We encourage you to only communicate through a computer that you know is safe i.e. wherein confidentiality can be ensured. Be sure to fully exit all online counselling sessions and emails. If you used **location-based services** on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. We do not place our practice as a check-in location on various sites such as Foursquare and strongly recommend that you do not place comments or alerts to any system relative to your counselling. Insight Counselling will not be liable for the release of confidential information relating to you and arising from your failure to maintain the privacy of your online communication with Insight Counselling, nor will Insight Counselling be liable for the release of any confidential information relating to you arising from the unauthorised actions or omissions of any third party.

It is not a regular part of our service to **search for client information online** through search engines such as Google or social media sites such as Facebook. **Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis.** If we have a reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with your counsellor via our usual means (email) there might be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if we ever

resort to such means, we will fully document it and discuss it with you when we are next in contact with you.

Litigation Limitation:

Due to the nature of the therapeutic process and the fact that it often involves making a full disclosure with regard to many matters which may be of a confidential nature, it is agreed that should there be legal proceedings (such as, but not limited to divorce and custody disputes, injuries, lawsuits, etc.), neither you (client) nor your legal representative, nor anyone else acting on your behalf will call on our counsellors to testify in court or at any other proceeding, nor will a disclosure of the counselling records be requested.

Consultation and Peer Supervision

As noted above, our counsellors consult regularly with other professionals regarding clients; however, the client's name or other identifying information is never disclosed. The client's identity remains completely anonymous, and confidentiality is fully maintained.

Considering all of the above exclusions, if it is still appropriate, upon your request, we will release information to any agency/person you specify unless we conclude that releasing such information might be harmful in any way.

TELEPHONE & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

If an emergency situation arises that requires immediate attention, you should contact the Samaritans, dial 999, or go to the local emergency room.

DISPUTES, COMPLAINTS AND RATINGS

All Insight counsellors adhere to the BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy, and as such are subject to their complaints procedure as outlined at <http://www.bacp.co.uk/crs/complaints.php>

LIMITATIONS REGARDING ONLINE COUNSELLING

You as the client understand that distance counselling is a different experience as compared to in-person sessions, among those being the lack of "personal" face-to-face interactions, the lack of visual and audio cues in the counselling process. Many people find that communicating with their counsellor like this brings real benefits, such as feeling more able to discuss very private matters and not having to travel to the counsellor's office. Many people also say that the act of writing about their concerns is useful in itself sometimes, in ways that talking face-to-face isn't. However, online counselling is not what everyone prefers and, whether you find it suits you or the opposite, you are encouraged to discuss the experience with your counsellor.. Note that online counselling with Insight Counsellors is not a substitute for medication under the care of a psychiatrist or doctor, and that online counselling is not appropriate if you are experiencing a crisis or having suicidal or homicidal thoughts.

By submitting the Questionnaire required for services while signing up for Privacemail you agree to the terms of this informed consent. Your submission of the Questionnaire suffices as an electronic signature.

