



Informed Consent for Counselling

The purpose of this document is to help you to understand the process and the associated risks and benefits of counselling, so that you can make an informed choice about whether or not to participate. As a client of Bow Valley Counselling and Mediation, you have the right to the following:

- You have the right to **confidentiality and privacy** with respect to all the information shared within the counselling relationship. No information shall be disclosed without your documented consent **except under the following circumstances**:
 1. When there is a requirement to do so by law or subpoena. The counsellor may advocate limiting the information admissible, but the court makes the final decision.
 2. There is a "duty to warn" if it is determined that there is an intention of imminent harm yourself or to someone else.
 3. There is a legal requirement to report any abuse or neglect of a minor (0-18 years), or the witnessing of abuse by a minor to the appropriate authorities.
 4. There is a legal requirement to submit relevant information to the Workers' Compensation Board for a WCB claim, if requested to do so.
 5. Information may be shared for the purpose of obtaining clinical supervision, without identifying details being revealed. (Clinical supervision is a recommendation of professional licensing bodies and an ethical part of good counselling practice).
- **Written records** of sessions **will be kept** in a confidential client file. Paper records will be kept in a locked file drawer in the office and electronic files will be protected by passwords.
- You have the right to know about your counsellor's qualifications and experience, as well as the counsellor's methods and theory of counselling practice.
Regarding your treatment:
 - You may refuse any intervention, treatment strategy or model suggested by your counsellor.
 - You may, and are encouraged, to ask questions about your treatment at any time.
 - You may ask for a referral to another counsellor at any time and for any reason if you are dissatisfied with the service you are receiving. The discontinuation of counselling may occur at any time and can be initiated by either the client or the counsellor.
 - If you are dissatisfied with the service you receive, we encourage you to address your concerns with your counsellor. You may also make a complaint to the licensing body with which the counsellor is registered, should you be unable to resolve the issue with your counsellor directly.
- **Counselling is** different from simply having a conversation with a friend or family member. Counselling conversations are **designed to meet your specific goals** that are established in therapy.
- There are **both risks and benefits to counselling**. Possible **risks include**: the experience of uncomfortable feelings (such as increased fatigue, sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, or loneliness) or the recall of unpleasant events in your life. You may experience changes in your relationships or beliefs that could have unexpected results. Potential benefits include: improvements to distressing symptoms, better relationships, and better problem solving and coping skills.
- Counselling is only one form of treatment for client problems. Other forms that may work for you include mental health medications, support groups and physical activity.
- Counselling is **for therapeutic purposes**, and is **not for use to provide information, reports, and assessments for court**, especially without the prior agreement of the counsellor. A counselling relationship does not provide all of the information necessary for assessment work. Requests for reports will be billed for a minimum of five hours time at \$200/hr unless other arrangements have been made. Court-ordered requirements to attend court or to provide written recommendations to court will be charged to the client at full hourly rates for both time and preparation.
Regarding minors:
 - When a client is under 18 years of age, custodial parents and legal guardians have the right to therapeutic information. Minors under the age of 16 need parental consent for counselling. Please note that the "client" in such circumstances is the child, and the parents are seen in a consultative relationship only, (unless the parents sign informed consent forms for their own counselling, and request family counselling, for instance. (See separate parental consent form for more details).
- **Regarding Social Media:**
 - Our licensing bodies prevent us from accepting clients as contacts through personal social media. Texting and e-mails can be used for client appointments, but generally will **not** be used **for therapeutic purposes** and conversations.
 - *You are required to cancel or **change appointments with at least 24 hours notice** of your scheduled appointment time, otherwise the regular session fee will be charged . (Exceptions are open to discussion).*

I understand my rights and responsibilities as a client and my counsellor's responsibilities. **I agree to engage in counseling under the conditions outlined in this document.**

Signature: _____ Printed Name: _____ Date: _____