



General Information, Office Policies and Agreement for Counselling Services

Welcome!

In this document you will find information about my office policies as well as ethical and legal standards I abide by as a Registered Social Worker and professional. I know it is a lot of information to digest, but it is important that you are provided this information so that you can make an informed decision about starting counselling or psychotherapy. I thank you in advance for your patience.

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.

WHEN DISCLOSURE IS REQUIRED BY LAW: Some of the circumstances where disclosure is required or may be required by law are:

- 1) where there is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent, or elder abuse or neglect;
- 2) where a client presents a danger to self or to others; or when a client's family members communicate to me that the client presents a danger to others.
- 3) disclosure may also be required pursuant to a legal proceeding by or against you. If you place your mental status at issue in litigation initiated by you, the defendant may have the right to obtain the psychotherapy records and/or testimony by myself.
- 4) In couple and family therapy, or when different family members are seen individually, even over a period of time, confidentiality and privilege do not apply between the couple or among family members, unless otherwise agreed upon. I will use my clinical judgment when revealing such information. I will not release records to any outside party unless I am authorized to do so by all adult parties who were part of the family therapy, couple therapy or other treatment that involved more than one adult client.

EMERGENCY: If there is an emergency during therapy where I become concerned about your personal safety or the possibility of you injuring someone else, I will do whatever I can within the limits of the law, to prevent you from injuring yourself or others and to ensure that you receive the proper medical care. For this purpose, I may also contact the person whose name you have provided on the biographical sheet.

TELEPHONE & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES: If you need to contact me between sessions, please leave a message at **(905) 442-4011** and your call will be returned as soon as possible. I usually check my messages a few times during the day, unless I am out of town. If you need to talk to someone right away call:

- 1) Durham Mental Health Crisis Services: 905-666-0483 or 1-800-742-1890
- 2) Emergency Medical Services: 911
- 3) Go to your nearest hospital emergency department

Please do not use email or faxes for emergencies. I do not always check my messages daily.

CONSULTATION: I consult regularly with other professionals regarding my clients; however, each client's identity remains completely anonymous and confidentiality is fully maintained.

E-MAILS: It is very important to be aware that computers and email communication can be relatively easily accessed by unauthorized people and hence can compromise the privacy and confidentiality of such communication. Emails, in particular, are vulnerable to unauthorized access due to the fact that Internet servers have unlimited and direct access to all emails that go through them. It is important that you be aware that emails, faxes, and important texts are part of the counselling/therapy record. Additionally, my emails are not encrypted. My computers are equipped with a firewall and a password and I also back up all confidential information from my computer on a regular basis. Please notify me if you decide to avoid or limit in any way the use of any or all communication devices, such as email and cell phone. If you communicate confidential or private information via email, I will assume that you have made an informed decision, will view it as your agreement to take the risk that such communication may be intercepted, and will honour your desire to communicate on such matters via email. Please do not use email for emergencies.

RECORDS AND YOUR RIGHT TO REVIEW THEM: According to the Code of Ethics and Standards of practice of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers all counselling records must be kept for at least 7 years after the end of counselling or therapy. If you have concerns regarding the records, please discuss them with me. As a client, you have the right to review or receive a summary of your records, except in limited legal or emergency circumstances or when I assess that releasing such information might be harmful in any way.

When more than one client is involved in counselling, such as in cases of couple and family therapy, I will release records only with signed authorizations from all the adults (or all those who legally can authorize such a release) involved in the treatment.

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 nor your lawyer(s), nor anyone else acting on your behalf will call on me to testify in court or at any other proceeding, nor will a disclosure of the psychotherapy records be requested unless otherwise agreed upon.

PAYMENTS & INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT:

Clients are requested to pay the standard fee of:
\$120.00 per session (55 minutes) for individuals
\$130.00 per session (55 minutes) for couples and families
at the end of each session unless other arrangements have been made.

I accept cheque and cash or arrangements can be made to pay by credit card, Paypal or e-transfer.

Please notify me if any problems arise during the course of therapy regarding your ability to make timely payments. Clients who carry insurance should remember that professional services are rendered and charged to the client and not to the insurance companies. I will provide you with a copy of your receipt, which you can then submit to your insurance company for reimbursement. Please verify the specifics of your coverage prior to counselling.

I cannot provide custody evaluation recommendation, medication or prescription recommendation or legal advice, as these activities do not fall within my scope of practice.

AFTER THE FIRST SESSION

After the first session or two you and I will discuss whether the counselling or psychotherapy will be of benefit to you. If for whatever reason we decide that it will not meet your needs I will give you a number of referrals whom you can contact. If, at any time, you want another professional's opinion or wish to consult with another therapist, I can assist you with this process. You have the right to terminate therapy at any time.

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE: In smaller cities such as Whitby it is possible that we will bump into each other outside of the counselling office. For your comfort and privacy, I will never acknowledge working with you without your written permission.

SOCIAL NETWORKING AND INTERNET SEARCHES: I do not accept friend requests from current or former clients on social networking sites, such as Facebook. I believe that adding clients as friends on these sites and/or communicating via such sites is likely to compromise their privacy and confidentiality. For this same reason, I request that clients not communicate with me via any interactive or social networking web sites.

CANCELLATION: Since the scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, a minimum of 24 hours notice is required for re-scheduling or canceling an appointment. You may be charged for sessions missed without such notification.

OFFICE LOCATION: My office is located at 206 Gilbert St. West, Whitby (North side of Gilbert street, between Centre and Byron). You can usually find parking on the street directly in front of the building. Metered parking is also available on Byron Street.

The building is a brown brick century home, now converted to office space, with a front porch. For comfort and privacy the building is marked only with the house number (206). When you arrive, allow yourself in and you will find a waiting room on the main floor. Please help yourself to tea and magazines. I will hear you come in and will come down to greet you. If I am with another client there may be a slight delay.

I have read the General Information and Office Policies Form
I understand them and agree to comply with them:

Client's Name (print): _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

Therapist: Lisa Van Hezewijk, MSW,RSW

Signature _____ Date _____