

Privacy of Information and Confidentiality

In counselling, we talk about you and your life. This means your personal, private information. There are privacy laws and professional standards in place, which set-out rules and guidelines governing the collection, use and retention of your personal information. I must practice within these rules and guidelines.

First and foremost, I must keep your personal information private and confidential. I take notes as we talk, and keep these notes securely in a file. In order to share any of your information with anyone, I need your consent. There may never be any need to share your information; but if there is, I will ask for your consent first.

At the same time, the laws and professional standards do include certain limits to privacy and confidentiality. There are four general situations in which I may not be able to keep your information confidential. These are:

- i. If I learn of a minor (someone under the age of 16) at risk of harm, I am obligated to report this to authorities, for the safety of the young person.
- ii. If I learn that a person or persons of any age – including yourself – are at imminent and serious risk of harm, I may need to share information with authorities.
- iii. If a court of law issues a subpoena for information from your file, I am obligated to release it.
- iv. If I learn that another health professional has exploited and/or abused a client, I am obligated to report that professional to their regulatory body.

These circumstances tend to be rare. However, it is only fair to inform you of the laws and limits before counselling even begins.

In your first counselling session, I will provide you with a handout with more detail regarding the collection, use and retention of your information.