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# Institute of Therapies for Emotional Transformation

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## **Karen Daniel's Office Policy & Informed Consent Agreement for Counselling & Psychotherapy Services**

Welcome! The first visit to a new therapist is very important and often there are many questions. The information contained in this "*Office Policy and Informed Consent Agreement Form*" is to outline how I work, to answer some common questions and to help you decide whether you feel we can work together. Please read this information carefully and let me know if you have any other questions or need clarification about anything I have written here.

You will be asked to sign an acknowledgement that you have received, read and understood this document, on the "*Confidential Client Information Form*" that we will go through at our initial consultation. Therefore, please take time to read through this information and feel free to ask me any questions you have regarding this or anything you do not understand. When you sign the "*Acknowledgement of Notification*" it will represent an agreement between us.

### **WHAT IS COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY?**

Expressive Therapies are useful in helping people of all ages with a range of concerns, including relationship problems, unhappiness and depression, anxiety, life stress and discontent, difficulties in living and working with others and past physical and emotional trauma. Therapy may be long term or short term, with a frequency that depends on the stage of therapy and the client's needs. Counselling and psychotherapy practitioners work cooperatively with clients to develop responses to difficult life circumstances. Issues may include depression, self-esteem, anxiety, grief and loss, communication and relationships, work and career, stress, life transitions, spirituality, and difficulties caused by addictions, trauma and abuse.

Counselling usually addresses particular issues or concerns for people. The counsellor will focus with the client on dealing with the feelings and reactions experienced, and will assist the client in developing his or her own resources to find a way of moving forward. Psychotherapy is generally a longer term process that focuses on the self – both conscious and unconscious. Issues of personal meaning, relationship to self, and the impact of past events and trauma are dealt with. The psychotherapist works with the client to gain a deeper level of self-understanding in order to overcome core issues that underlie persistent or recurring problems in the client's life.

Clients are supported to develop non-habitual responses, and new perceptions and abilities, in many areas of life. This involves a freeing of the individual from habitual patterns which have become fixed in the body and mind. Bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts, beliefs and spirituality are all valued and explored as interrelated aspects of how clients organize their experience. Furthermore, the therapist attends to the social and cultural context within which the individual/client lives and the life circumstances that have shaped and are shaping their thinking, feeling and acting.

Through the processes of counselling or psychotherapy clients are assisted to gain insight, to become aware of choices they did not initially recognise, to find more effective ways of relating, and to develop personal resources and resilience.

## **THE PROCESS OF THERAPY**

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the therapist and client, and the particular concerns you bring forward. There are many different methods I may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. The best results occur when appointments are regularly scheduled and attended.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific concerns, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work may include and how we might proceed, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise.

## **BENEFITS AND RISKS OF COUNSELLING/PSYCHOTHERAPY**

Participation in therapy can result in a number of benefits to you, including improved interpersonal relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to speak with me. Working towards these benefits requires effort on your part. Counselling and therapy require your active involvement, honesty and openness in order to change your thoughts, feelings and/or behaviour. You are welcome to give me any feedback on how your therapy is going and ask questions.

During the initial evaluation or course of therapy, remembering unpleasant events, feelings or thoughts may result in your experiencing considerable discomfort, strong feelings, anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc. This will change as we progress in the process of therapy. Attempting to resolve issues that brought you into therapy may result in changes that were not originally intended. Therapy may result in decisions to change behaviours, where and how you work, substance use, schooling, where you live or your relationships. Change can sometimes be quick and easy, but more often it can be gradual and even frustrating. There is no guarantee that therapy will yield positive or intended results.

## **CONTACTING ME AND EMERGENCIES**

If you need to contact me between appointments you can call or email. I am often not immediately available by telephone. While I am usually in my office, I do not answer the phone when I am with a client. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by an answering machine that I monitor frequently. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform me of some times when you will be available.

If it is an emergency and you cannot reach me I have listed some emergency contact numbers at the end of this document.

I am happy to take brief calls but if you need to contact me or speak to me for longer consultation or many times between sessions we may need to consider scheduling more regular appointments.

Please remember that email is not 100% securely confidential so if possible avoid emailing information that you would not want publicly known. To keep the integrity and confidentiality of our therapeutic relationship I will not accept any invitations via social media such as Facebook.

## **TERMINATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

Deciding when to stop our work together is ideally a mutual process. Before we stop, we will discuss how you will know if or when to come back or whether a regularly scheduled

“check-in” might work best for you. Of course, you have the right to terminate your therapy with me at any time! Please express any concerns or reservations about our work together so that we can resolve any possible differences or misunderstandings.

As part of my duty of care, I may make a follow-up call two or three months after termination of our therapy to check on your well-being.

### **FEES, CANCELLATIONS AND LATENESS**

Standard 1.5hr appointment is \$160 (\$5 discount for cash payment at time of appt)

Extended 2hr appt \$190 (\$5 discount for cash payment at time of appt)

Short 1hr appt \$135 (\$5 discount for cash payment at time of appt)

Payment can be made by cash, direct deposit, credit card or EFTPOS

Please let me know as soon as you know that you will not be able to keep your scheduled appointment. Since scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, a minimum of 24 hours notice is required for rescheduling or cancelling your appointment.

**I have a \$100 cancellation fee when less than 24 hours notice is given and this includes requests to reschedule appointments. Full consultation fee will apply for last minute cancellations/rescheduling, or failing to attend appointment.**

I am happy to reschedule appointments as long as you provide more than 24 hours notice.

I do realize that sometimes life and emergencies prevail and I will always try to be reasonable and considerate of this re my cancellation fee and rescheduling. I will waive the fee in emergencies. Likewise if I am unable to keep appointments due to illness or emergencies on my part I will do my best to give plenty of notice and to reschedule as soon as possible. In the unlikely event that I have to cancel without notice and you are on your way or have just arrived, you will not be charged for the rescheduled appointment.

Payment is usually made at the end of each appointment unless other arrangements have been made. When I have a fee increase I will give you plenty of notice and will discuss any difficulties this will place on you and your continuing therapeutic process.

If you are running late for your appointment, please phone or TXT me as soon as you can, to let me know you will be late. If you are late for your session, we will still end at our scheduled time, so I have time to prepare for my next appointments and be on time for them.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

As a client of mine (or any counsellor/therapist) you have privileged communication. This means that: your relationship with me as a client, all information disclosed in our sessions, and any session notes, are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission, except where law requires disclosure.

#### **When Disclosure Is Required By Law:**

All personal information gathered during your work with me will remain confidential except when:

1. It is subpoenaed by a court, or
2. Failure to disclose the information would place you and/or another person at risk, or
3. Your prior approval has been obtained in writing to discuss this information with another person.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if I have to reveal some information about a client's treatment. For example, if I believe that a child, elderly person or disabled person, is being abused, I must file a report with the appropriate state agency.

If I believe that a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim,

contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for my client. If a client threatens to harm himself/herself, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for them or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

These situations have rarely occurred in my practice. If a similar situation occurs, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

### **Case Consultation for my Supervision**

I have regular supervision in order to provide you with the best possible service. Names or other identifying information are never mentioned; client identity remains anonymous and your confidentiality will be fully maintained.

### **Emergencies**

If there is an emergency during our work together or after termination, in which 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 another. For this purpose I may contact the person whose name you have provided on the "Client Information Form".

### **Release of Information**

If you ask me to, and give written consent, I may release limited information to any person/agency you specify, unless I feel that releasing information might be harmful to you. If this was the case I will explain the reasons for denying your request.

## **DUAL RELATIONSHIPS**

A dual or multiple relationship exists for a counsellor/psychotherapist with a client when there is an additional relationship with a client apart from the therapeutic relationship. Not all dual relationships are unethical or avoidable however dual relationships between therapist and client can compromise the therapy and for this reason will be considered from the perspective of potential harm to client or the therapeutic relationship. Sexual involvement will never be part of the therapy process.

## **COMPLAINTS**

If you have a concern or complaint about our work together, please talk with me about it. I will take your feedback and or criticism seriously and respond with care and respect. If you believe that I've been unwilling to listen and respond with care and respect, or that I have behaved unethically, you can contact:

Australian Counselling Association PO Box 88, Grange QLD 4051

Ph: 07 3356 4255 or 1300 784 333 [www.theaca.net.au](http://www.theaca.net.au)

## **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP**

I am a clinical member of, and registered supervisor with, the Australian Counselling Association. My membership number is #4689.

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS**

**Lifeline – 13 11 14** Available 24hrs/7 days a week

**Suicide Call Back Service - 1300 659 467** Available 24hrs/7 days a week

**Mensline – 1300 789 978** Available 24hrs/7 days a week

**Dial 000** for emergency services 24hrs/7 days a week

You can also go to your local **Accident & Emergency Hospital** if you are concerned for your mental, emotional or physical safety.



*I hope this answers some of your questions. Please let me know if you have concerns or questions about any of these policies and procedures or this agreement for working together in counselling/psychotherapy.*