

## COUPLES COUNSELLING AGREEMENT

### **Counselling approach**

I believe that my clients have the desire and the capacity to grow towards fulfilling their true potential, and that they are the experts on their own lives. Therefore, I will work with you to help you understand yourself more fully and to find your own inner resources. I will be active and direct when working together to help you break patterns and develop greater understanding of your partner. With greater self-awareness and trust in yourself, I hope that you will be able to make constructive changes, leading to a more satisfying and meaningful life. I value feedback as a way to continue refining my practice. I will actively gather feedback from you about your thoughts on the process, counselling, progress, and me as a counsellor as we work together, as well as towards the end of our work together through an evaluation survey.

### **Confidentiality**

I am Registered Counsellor (#17474) and work under the ethical framework of the Australian Counselling Association and abide by Australian law. Everything you share with me in the course of our work together will be treated as highly confidential. However, in couples counselling I will not keep secrets between partners, and there are a few circumstances in which I may be required to break confidentiality:

- If I consider you to be at risk of seriously harming yourself or someone else
- If your counselling records have been subpoenaed by a court of law
- If another party or agency has requested your information, and you have agreed and provided your written consent to this.

I value your privacy and will not share your private contact details with anyone. In using an online videoconferencing platform, I am mindful of my environment, and have it set up in a manner that we cannot be overheard. I ask that you give it the same consideration in your space – you might want to make use of headphones (more tips included on my website to set up your space privately and comfortably so that you are not interrupted).

*Confidentiality and Supervision.* As part of my professional practice, I undertake regular clinical supervision. When elements of our sessions are taken to supervision, no identifying information is used. My supervisor also follows the same procedures for confidentiality as I have outlined.

### **Sessions and service provision**

Together we will negotiate the number of sessions that are appropriate for you as a couple, and review progress and the counselling process. Couples counselling commences with an assessment phase. After the first couple's session you complete the Gottman Questionnaires individually (US\$39 per couple through Gottman Institute), and then (typically) one individual session each. Individual sessions (apart from during the assessment phase) are by exception and by arrangement - both partners generally need to be happy for this to occur as it can unbalance our couple's work. Normally we will meet on a weekly or fortnightly basis at a regular time so that we can make good progress and capitalise on momentum. In addition to standard 50-minute sessions, I also offer longer sessions (100 minutes) - together we can decide when longer sessions might be needed. Sessions can be self-booked through the Halaxy platform (link on my website). Halaxy has bank-grade security to keep your data and privacy secure.

Service provision is limited to clients in Australia. For face-to-face sessions, please note there is no facility to leave children unattended at the clinic. Online consultations are conducted through secure videoconferencing using the Zoom platform. Please click on the link <https://zoom.us/j/4289638440> at the time of your appointment, and I will let you in from the waiting room. In the rare event of a glitch (e.g., internet connection dropping out) I will call you on your mobile phone while attempting to reconnect video.

### **Payments and cancellations/rescheduling**

Current fees are listed on the website ([relationshipssquared.com/bookings-fees](http://relationshipssquared.com/bookings-fees)). All fees include GST and are subject to periodic increases. All payments are private pay only. I do not have a provider number (for

insurance purposes). The [Medicare-rebate](#) and Mental Health Care Plans also do not apply to couples counselling. Payment will automatically be deducted through Halaxy from your nominated credit/debit card at the beginning of each session. I have a \$30 late payment fee policy. If you have not paid within 48 hours after your appointment either because you did not make a bank transfer, do not have funds on your card or you have not provided card details, a \$30 late payment fee is added to your invoice. You can self-manage cancelling your appointment in Halaxy (see unique link your appointment email) with a minimum of 48 hours' notice. You will also receive a SMS and email session reminder 3 days prior to your appointment. Late cancellation fees are payable as follows: 0-48 hours' notice (or no show) – full session fee payable. In the unlikely event of me cancelling our appointment, an alternative appointment will be offered as soon as possible.

### **Records of sessions**

I will take notes during or after each session to help me keep track of our progress together. These notes will be stored in a private and secure encrypted electronic location and may be viewed by you if you so wish (both partners' consent will need to be obtained as this is couples counselling – even if only one of you want access to the records or individual sessions were included - and preparation of records attract additional fees at the standard sessional per hour rate). Assessment and counselling records are not to be used for legal or evaluative purposes, nor do I participate in legal proceedings as this is beyond my scope of practice and training. Your counselling records will be kept by me for a period of seven years from the date of your last contact with me. I will not record any of our sessions and will seek your consent if I need to record part of the session. I ask that you also agree to not record any part of our sessions. Even though I use high quality web servers, firewalls, and platforms that are encrypted and secure (e.g., Halaxy), and go to considerable lengths to protect your confidentiality and privacy, the use of technology through third parties always does bear a slight risk, and I cannot absolutely guarantee nor be held responsible for an electronic compromise (e.g., 'hack') of information.

### **Email/telephone contact**

Email or telephone contact will be strictly limited to practical arrangements only. I will not enter into telephone or email counselling unless explicitly arranged. If you are faced with an emergency in between sessions, please contact the appropriate emergency service. In a life-threatening situation, call 000 without delay.

### **Ending counselling**

This agreement covers the length of our couple's counselling work together. Normally, the end of counselling would be by mutual prior agreement. However, you have the right to end counselling at any time. I would appreciate you letting me know if you decide not to return to counselling, giving at least 48 hours' notice. If at any time I feel that our counselling is no longer appropriate for you, I will discuss this with you and may suggest discontinuation or a referral to a more appropriate service.