

## **Informed Consent for Technology-Assisted Counseling**

Signing this form is your agreement for psychotherapy services conducted by Heidi Mack

The purpose of this Informed Consent for Technology Assisted Counselling is to inform you, the client, about the process of online counselling services, the counsellor and the potential risks and benefits of these services. The purpose is to also help safeguard you, the client, and give you information regarding alternatives to online services. This consent is an addendum to the face- to-face informed consent you, the client, are required to sign.

Please read the entire document.

Please print the document, place a check mark stating you have read the document, sign, and then return to Heidi Mack via email or text, photo is also acceptable.

The Technology-Assisted Counseling Process

Privacy and Confidentiality:

Maintaining client confidentiality is extremely important. The counsellor will take extraordinary care and consideration to prevent unnecessary disclosure. Information about the client will only be released with his or her permission with the following exceptions:

- 1) If counsellor believes that someone is seriously considering or likely to attempt suicide;
- 2) 2) if counsellor believes that someone intends to assault another person;
- 3) If counsellor believes someone is engaging or intends to engage in behaviour which will expose another person to a potentially life-threatening communicable disease;
- 4) if counsellor suspects abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a minor or incapacitated adult;
- 5) if counsellor believes someone's mental condition leaves the person gravely disabled.

Although the internet provides the appearance of anonymity and privacy in counseling, privacy is more of an issue online than in person. The client is responsible for understanding the potential risks of confidentiality being breached through unencrypted email, lack of password protection or leaving information on a public access computer in a library or internet café.

Other potential risks of breaching confidentiality could include messages failing to be received if they are sent to the wrong address or if they are just not noticed by the counsellor.

Confidentiality could be breached in transit by hackers or internet service providers or at either end by others with access to the client's account or computer. Clients accessing the internet from public locations such as a library, computer lab, or café should consider the visibility of their screen to people around them. Position yourself to avoid others seeing your screen. Using cell phones can be risky in that signals are scrambled but rarely encrypted.

The counsellor has a right to his or her privacy and may restrict the use of any copies or recordings the client makes of their communications. Clients must seek the permission of the counsellor before recording any portion of the session and/or posting any portion of said sessions on internet websites such as Facebook or YouTube, Zoom etc.

The client is responsible for securing their own computer hardware, internet access points, chat software, email and passwords that are encrypted, secure, and HIPPA compliant when possible. If encryption is not made available to client, client should be aware that they are risking unauthorized monitoring of transmissions and/or records of Internet counseling sessions.

2 You agree to work with me online using Facetime, Zoom, or another encrypted email/chat service determined to be suitable by Heidi Mack.

Additionally,

- Text messaging via mobile phone is acceptable for appointments and housekeeping issues only.
- I do not store your name in my phone.
- If you call me, please be aware that unless we are both on land line phones, the conversation is not confidential.
- Any computer files referencing our communication are maintained using secure and encrypted measures.
- I will not respond to personal and clinical concerns via regular email.
- If you wish to use email as a way to "journal" information between sessions, you understand that I may not have the opportunity to review your journal emails until our next scheduled session.
- You understand that emails between sessions that contain confidential information will be sent via encryption or password.

I make every effort to keep all information confidential. Likewise, if we are working online together, I ask that you determine who has access to your computer and electronic information from your location. This would include family members, co-workers, supervisors and friends and whether or not confidentiality from your work or personal computer may be compromised due to such programs as a keylogger.

I encourage you to only communicate through a computer that you know is safe i.e. wherein confidentiality can be ensured. Be sure to fully exit all online counseling sessions and emails. If you used location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services.

It is not a regular part of my practice to search for client information online through search engines such as Google or social media sites such as Facebook. Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis. If I have a reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with me via our usual means (coming to appointments, phone, or email) there might be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if I ever resort to such means, I will fully document it and discuss it with you when we next meet.

#### Lack of Non-Verbal Cues and Asynchronous Communication

The client should be aware that misunderstandings are possible with telephone, text- based modalities such as email, and real-time internet chat, since non-verbal cues are relatively lacking. Even with video chat software, misunderstandings may occur since bandwidth is always limited and images lack detail. Counsellors are observers of human behaviour and gather much information from body language, vocal inflection, eye contact and other non-verbal cues. If you have never engaged in online counseling before, have patience with the process and clarify information if you think your counsellor has not understood you well. Be patient if your counsellor asks periodically for clarification as well.

I understand the liabilities and potential confidentiality breach when using the internet for therapy.

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your name

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your signature

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date