

# FIRST LIGHT COUNSELLING

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*The purpose of this form is to share some important principles, which guide my counselling process so that your decision to proceed in working together can be based on accurate, informed expectations. Please read this carefully and feel free to ask any questions about what you have read or to have further clarification. Informed consent is the client's full and active participation in decisions that affect them and freedom of choice based on the information shared. It is a continuous process throughout the counselling relationship. **The client has the right to refuse and/or withdraw from treatment at any time.***

## **PROFESSIONAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

### **Qualifications:**

I have a Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology from Trinity Western University. I am registered as a Canadian Certified Counsellor (CCC#1580) with the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association. I am also a Registered Clinical Counsellor (RCC#3547) with the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors. I received a BA Major in Psychology and Minor in Spanish from the University of BC. I have received Level 1 Gottman Marital Therapy training and I am a Level 2 Practitioner of Observed Experiential Integration (OEI). Ongoing professional development includes workshops on Counselling Grieving Children and Adolescents, and Transforming Families from Addiction to Healing, Trauma, Attachment issues and Depression.

### **Experience:**

I received my counselling registration in 2009. However, my education included two years of internship training. This training has connected me with clients of diverse backgrounds, cultures and experiences. I have worked in community agencies providing therapy to individuals dealing with issues such as mental health, substance abuse and general personal and relationship concerns. I have also worked as a counsellor in a private treatment centre for addictions located on the West Coast of British Columbia. I have also done extensive group work in addictions.

### **Nature of Counselling:**

I offer a professional, faith-based counselling and educational service to children, adolescents, individuals, couples and families. I do not presume that all clients want or will be receptive to a Christian perspective in counselling and as the client, you have the opportunity to decide whether you wish this to be part of your therapy. However, having a faith-based practice affords anyone the opportunity to bring any and all faiths into the counselling session should they so desire.

I approach counselling from an Integrative perspective using modalities such as Client Centered, Cognitive Behavioural, Existential, Adlerian and Solution-Focused. Techniques can include active listening, homework, psychoeducational discussions, role-playing, empty chair, and art, sand and play therapy. I also use OEI (Observed Experiential Integration) in addictions and trauma.

I believe that clients have the capacity and resilience to resolve their own problems and make their own decisions. However, from time to time all of us need assistance, support and direction and I will work with you to establish goals for your therapy.

## INFORMED CONSENT

### **Counselling Services:**

Counselling is not always easily described. It varies depending on the personalities of the counsellor and the client and the particular problems you bring to each session. Counselling calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for therapy to be successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Counselling 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, counselling has been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy can lead to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, significant reductions in feelings of distress and improved self esteem. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience. Counselling is a personal exploration and may lead to major changes in your life perspectives and decisions. Together we will work to achieve the best possible results for you.

Our first few sessions will likely involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation I will be able to offer some ideas of what our work will include along with a treatment plan if you decide to continue with therapy. It is important for you to 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. If you have any questions about my procedures, we can discuss them whenever they arise. If doubts persist, I will be happy to refer you to another counselling professional.

### **Confidentiality:**

One of the most important rights the person seeking counselling has involves confidentiality. Information revealed by you during the counselling will be kept strictly confidential and will not be revealed to any other person or agency without your written permission, with the following exceptions:

- Counsellors need to consult with other colleagues from time to time in order to gain assistance and insight in providing quality and helpful service. In order to maintain professionalism counsellors may also be supervised by other counsellors. Regardless of the situation, every effort will be made to retain as much confidentiality of the client as possible.
- **According to provincial law, confidentiality has some legal limits as well. There are situations where a counsellor can be required to reveal information obtained during therapy to another person or agency without your permission. These situations involve danger to self, danger to others, and child abuse. In addition, counsellor notes on sessions can be subpoenaed in a court of law.**
- If you authorize or direct me to release information.
- In the event of a medical, psychiatric or psychological emergency (i.e. suicidality, I ask that you allow me to contact a family member or contact person in order to offer more thorough support).

If I see you in public, I will protect your confidentiality by acknowledging you only if you approach me first.

In the case of marriage or family counselling, I will keep confidential (within the limits cited above) anything you disclose to me without your family member's knowledge. However, I encourage open

communication between family members and I reserve the right to share such secrets in joint sessions with the family.

**Fees and Appointments:**

The standard counselling fee is \$100.00 plus HST for a 50-minute session payable at the end of each session. Cash, Debit, cheque, Visa, MasterCard or American Express is accepted. The fee for couple or family counselling is \$110.00 plus HST.

**Counselling Relationship:**

It is helpful to remember that our relationship is professional and not social. Our professional relationship is of utmost importance as we work together towards achieving your goals and bringing resolution and healing to your life.

**Client Rights and Responsibilities:**

By giving one week's notice, you as the client may have access to your clinical records and may obtain a copy of those records. The fee for this service is \$25.00.

In some instances, payment may be made through third party insurance companies. Companies require information regarding your diagnosis, dates, type, length of services and fees. In some cases, the insurance company may require your counsellor to share treatment planning information. Though I will not reveal any information without your written approval, I can't control what information you authorize your insurance company to see or use.

As the client, you are in complete control and may end our counselling relationship at any time, though I do ask that you participate in a termination session. You also have the right to refuse or discuss modifications of any of my counselling techniques or suggestions that you believe might be harmful.

If you are dissatisfied with my services, please let me know. If I am not able to resolve your concerns, you may contact the Canadian Counselling & Psychotherapy Association to file a complaint.

**Late arrivals:**

I understand that if I am late arriving at the counsellor's office and therefore attend only a part of a scheduled appointment that I am nonetheless responsible to pay the counsellor the full fee that would be charged for the total time of that appointment.

**Cancellation:**

Please contact the office if you discover that you will not be able to keep an appointment. I require 24 hours notice of cancellation. Unless your missed appointment is due to illness or an emergency, you will be charged a \$50.00 plus HST fee for the missed appointment without advanced notice.

**Emergency:**

If there is an emergency between sessions, please contact your physician, the local hospital emergency, **911** or the Crisis line at **604-872-3311**.

**Acknowledgment and Consent:**

By your signature below, you are indicating that you read and understood this consent form or that any questions you had about this consent form were answered to your satisfaction, and that you were furnished a copy of this document. You agree to accept the counselling services offered here.

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Client's Signature

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Cheryl Austin-Brooks, MA, CCC, RCC

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Date

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Date