

Teresa Mortell-Stevens Counselling Services

Client Information & Counselling Guidelines

1. Session Times and Frequency

- 1.1. We'll meet weekly at a time and day we agree upon, with each session lasting 50 minutes - a dedicated time to focus on you.
- 1.2. I recommend starting with a minimum of 6 sessions to allow our work to develop. After this, you can decide if you'd like to continue, and we'll continue for as long as feels right, ending together when you're ready.
- 1.3. Your session time is reserved for you throughout our work together, though we may need to adjust it if unexpected circumstances arise for either of us.
- 1.4. If you arrive late without prior notice, I'll be available for the full session. We'll end on time as scheduled, respecting the agreed duration.
- 1.5. I'd appreciate it if you could let me know as soon as possible if you'll be late or unable to attend a session.

2. Fees

- 2.1. We will agree a weekly fee at the start of our contract. This will be subject to periodic review (usually in April / October).
- 2.2. I will give at least two months' notice of any increase.
- 2.3. Payment can be made in cash or via BACs transfer. Fees must be paid before the start of each session.

3. Contact outside of sessions

- 3.1. My telephone number and email address are for use in the case of sessions cancellations or alterations to our schedule. I will not enter into telephone or email counselling.
- 3.2. I am often unable to respond to phone calls immediately and messages will only be picked up on an irregular basis throughout the day. My working days are Monday-Friday I will not respond to messages outside of these days.
- 3.3. I will reply to all messages as soon as possible. However, in my absence, should you experience an emergency please contact either the emergency services or if you are feeling suicidal, ring The Samaritans: 116 123. If you feel that this may be an issue, please discuss it with me.
- 3.4. I do not initiate or accept Social Networking 'Friends Requests' from clients, as this can compromise the confidential and therapeutic nature of the counselling relationship. Please be aware of the privacy settings on your social network platforms. ([Please see my digital policy](#))
- 3.5. We shall not meet or have contact outside of the counselling sessions. I will not make it known that I know or recognise you should we meet in a public space.

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3.6. Our Counselling relationship will remain strictly professional. The boundaries of our engagement will be clearly and thoroughly discussed during our initial meeting and are to be respected equally by you (the client) and by me (the counsellor).

I check emails during office hours and aim to respond within 24 hours unless I am away, in which case you'll get an automated reply. For emergencies, contact emergency services instead of emailing.

4. Commitment

At times counselling can be very demanding, frustrating and emotional – just plain difficult – and you may feel reluctant to attend. This can be part of the therapeutic process. I would ask you to make a firm commitment to attend regularly and keep absences to a minimum, especially when that feels difficult for you.

4.1 My Commitment to my clients

Clients need to be able to participate freely as they work with practitioners of the counselling professions towards their desired goals. This requires clients to be able to trust their practitioner with their wellbeing and sensitive personal information. Therefore, as members of BACP, we take being trustworthy as a serious ethical commitment. Further details can be found in the [BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions](#).

5. Confidentiality and its limits

- 5.1. The content of our sessions is confidential to you (the client) and to me (the counsellor).
- 5.2. I have regular clinical supervision with a qualified professional where I discuss my work in confidence. This is standard practice and helps me to work with you as well as I can.
- 5.3. As part of my practice, I may use case material to illustrate and inform my writings in journals, supervision and on-going studies. When any material is used details will be changed to protect client identity.
- 5.4. On rare occasions it may be necessary to break confidentiality, but only if I or my supervisor believe you are in danger of seriously harming yourself or someone else.
- 5.5. In the case of a disclosure concerning acts of terrorism under the Terrorism Act confidentiality will be broken and such disclosures will be passed onto the

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relevant authority without delay. I am liable to civil or court procedure if information of this sort is not disclosed.

- 5.6. Any necessary change to our confidentiality agreement will be made with prior consultation with you. This is in line with the BACP Code of Ethics.
- 5.7. It is important that you to tell me about any medication you may be taking and any therapeutic treatments you receive during our therapeutic relationship.
- 5.8. I may make brief notes after each session. These will comply with the BACP Ethical Framework and GDPR 2018 (please read my Privacy Policy) and are solely for assisting my work with you. These notes are shared solely with my clinical supervisor when necessary. They are securely stored, ensuring no identifying information is disclosed.

6. Holidays and Cancellations

- 6.1. I will give you as much notice as possible of any intended breaks. I ask you to give as much notice as possible of any intended breaks.
- 6.2. If I am away or unable to attend you will not have to pay for the scheduled session.
- 6.3. When commencing counselling, a regular weekly commitment will be established between you (the client) and myself (the counsellor). This implies that my availability to others is precluded if you miss a session without giving notice. Accordingly, payment for the missed session is required. Kindly note that there are no exceptions to this policy. Clients are requested to provide 48 hours' notice of non-attendance; in which case no charge will be incurred for the missed session.
- 6.4. If you need to cancel your session within 48 hours, I will try to find an alternative timeslot, or arrange an online session, if possible within the same week.

7. Endings

- 7.1. Typically, you will be aware when the time is appropriate to conclude counselling. We will collaboratively determine the necessary steps to prepare for this transition. At times, counselling may be challenging and distressing, leading to thoughts of ending the sessions. I encourage you to discuss these difficulties with me rather than abruptly ending the process, as doing so might prevent the resolution of important issues.
- 7.2. I will not terminate our contract without notice except in exceptional circumstances, which we will discuss fully.

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Complaints Procedures, Ethics and code of conduct

7.3. I am a registered member of the BACP and work within their ethical framework.

BACP Membership No: 984277, BACP Register No: 408222

A copy of the ethical framework for the Counselling Professions can be found on the BACP's website: [BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions](#)

8.2. If you are dissatisfied with my services, please discuss your concerns with me as a first step. I will respond constructively and professionally to your feedback and stated needs, and advise you to the best of my ability.

8.3. If we are unable to come to a satisfactory conclusion to your complaint, I will advise you to contact the BACP Customer Services.

They will assist with a complaints procedure. See link: <http://www.bacp.co.uk/crs/complaints.php>

8.4. This contract will be subject to periodic review and you will be notified of any updates.