Sarah Smith Counselling
Tel: 07516 355214
Web: www.sarahsmithcounselling.co.uk
Email: sarahsmithcounsellor@gmail.com

Please read this before you come to our first session. We will both sign to say that we understand how we will work together. If you have any questions please feel free to get in touch via email or phone (details above).

It outlines what you can expect from me as your counsellor and what I need from you in order to make your therapy as effective as possible. The therapy process aims to help you understand and explore your problems. In addition to offering opportunities for positive change, it can raise difficulties as well. Therapy can take place face to face, via telephone or on Zoom as per your preference.

Terms and Conditions of Therapy

Confidentiality

The discussions between us remain confidential but there are occasions where some information needs to be shared with others. Information is only shared with those that need to know and is kept to a minimum. I need to involve others when:

- Discussing my counselling work with my clinical supervisor. I am a qualified and registered member of the BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) and adhere to the BACP Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions. This requires all therapists to receive clinical supervision. The purpose of supervision is to support the therapist and client's work together.
- If you disclose information that leads me to believe that you, or someone else, is at risk of being harmed, then I will need to talk to you about ways of reducing the risk. It may be necessary to contact another professional, for example, your GP or Social Services. Wherever possible this would be discussed with you first. I would do my best to keep you informed about any action I might take.

Record Keeping and Notes

Your personal details and a record of the information collected at your initial appointment are kept on a computer system. The computer system is fully protected and encrypted, and only I have access to any sensitive data. In line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) you can withdraw your consent for me to hold personal data at any time. If you do withdraw your permission for me to hold personal information about you, this will affect my ability to work with you.

I make brief clinical notes following each session. These notes include the main points arising from your therapy session. Your notes are kept in a way that protects your identity as much as possible. If you would like to see your notes please ask, you have a legal right to see

them. Session notes are retained by myself for 5 years. We are required by law to make records available in rare circumstances if they are subpoenaed by a court in the case of legal action.

Any paper records are kept securely in a locked cabinet and do not contain anything that would identify you. I am registered with the Information Commissioner's Office under the Data Protection Act (Reg. Ref. ZB826019) and comply with their recommendations for storing data. Further, I have a policy that sets out how information is recorded and stored. You can have a copy of this policy if you would like it.

I am required by my professional body to hold a clinical will. This provides instructions for a professional executor to carry out in the event that I die or am permanently incapacitated. If this were to happen during our therapy or within seven years of its ending, the executor would be responsible for arranging the confidential storage of your therapy notes until seven years has elapsed since our last session. At this point the notes will be destroyed. The executor will be another counsellor and will abide by the same standards of confidentiality as I do.

Respect and safety

Therapy sessions are conducted with respect. I will not tolerate any abusive or threatening behaviour and will treat you with the same respect. Sessions cannot take place if you arrive under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed medication.

Due to working hours I cannot offer crisis or emergency support, and clients should make use of local NHS mental health, emergency or voluntary services for such provision. If you are experiencing significant, life threatening difficulties please contact NHS 111, 999 or the Samaritans 116 123. Clients agree to take responsibility for their own safety and wellbeing. All clients must be registered with a UK based GP practice unless otherwise discussed and agreed.

Counselling Sessions – Face to Face

Therapy usually takes place once a week / fortnight at an agreed time, each session lasting 50 minutes. If you arrive late, I will still be available but the time we spend together will be shorter because the session will end at the normal time. The number of sessions will be discussed and agreed between us at the beginning of counselling and on an on-going basis.

Counselling Sessions - Telephone

Counselling takes place once a week / fortnight at an agreed time, with each session lasting 50 minutes. I ask that you are in a safe private room where you cannot be overheard and away from distractions ready for your counselling session. I will do the same. If you do not answer the phone at your allocated time, I will try to call you again 10 minutes later. However, if this occurs, your session will be shorter because the session will end at the

normal time. The number of sessions will be discussed and agreed between us at the beginning of counselling and on an on-going basis.

Counselling Sessions - Zoom

Counselling usually takes place once a week / fortnight at an agreed time, each session lasting 50 minutes. You will need access to Zoom on your device; it is free to download. Zoom conversations are encrypted. You will receive an invitation prior to your counselling sessions. We ask that you are in a safe private room where you cannot be overheard and away from distractions ready for your counselling session at the agreed time. I will do the same. If you do not join the Zoom session at your allocated time, I will wait for 15 minutes before leaving the conversation. If you join the session late it will still end at the originally scheduled time. If, during your session, there are technical difficulties which mean that the Zoom session ends, I will call you and you will have the remainder of the session by telephone. The number of sessions will be discussed and agreed between us at the beginning of counselling and on an on-going basis.

Session Fees

This paragraph forms the terms and conditions that you agreed to when submitting your referral and is a legally binding financial agreement. The fee for each session is £50 payable by BACS transfer or cash. Please note this fee is subject to change, I will give a minimum of 30 days' notice of any price change. You will be charged the full fee if you are late for a session or do not give 24 hours' notice to cancel a session. I require payment on the day of the session, either via cash or bank transfer in advance of the session.

Bank Details

Bank: HSBC Business
Account Name: Sarah Smith Counselling
Account Number: 52506904
Sort Code: 40-03-33

If you require an invoice for your therapy session, I will provide this after payment has been received and will be marked paid when generated and sent by email to you. Please note that if I raise an invoice for you, your name, address and contact details will be kept on my finance system for 7 years.

Cancellations and Absences

If you are unable to attend a session, please email sarahsmithcounsellor@gmail.com or telephone 07516 355214. I require a minimum of 24 hours' notice to cancel your sessions, or you will be charged for the missed session.

If you are unable to attend your first session you will still be expected to pay the fee.
If you cancel sessions frequently, I will discuss the circumstances with you and a decision will be made about whether we continue the sessions.

If you miss one appointment without contacting me, I will try to contact you to discuss further sessions, and you will be charged for the missed session.

I will give you as much notice as possible when I am not available. If I am ill or have to cancel at short notice, I will try to contact you and rearrange the appointment, and you will not be charged. I will let you know about any holiday breaks with as much notice as possible, and I ask the same for your holiday breaks.

Comments and Complaints

I have a complaints policy and procedure which can support you to let me know if you are unhappy with something or you may want to comment on the service. Please ask if you would like to see a copy of this.

I have read, discussed and understood the above information and I am willing to work with this agreement. By signing this form you are giving Sarah Smith Counselling permission to hold personal information about you and to use it in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and this agreement. (You can withdraw your consent at any time).

Date:

Signed Therapist:
Print Therapist's Name:

Signed Client:
Print Client's Name: