

LIFEWATER COUNSELLING CONTRACT

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and write down any questions you might have so that we can discuss them. When you sign this document, it represents an agreement between us.

COUNSELLING SERVICES

The process of counselling is not easily described or summarized general statements. It varies according to the personality of those involved and the nature of the problems brought forward. There are many different methods that may be used to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Unlike a medical doctor visit, counselling calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

By nature, counselling has both 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. Also, you may be surprised to find out some people in your life aren't supportive of what you are learning. On the other hand, talk therapy has been shown to have tangible benefits for people who go through it, and it often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and/or significant reductions in feelings of distress. While there are no guarantees of what you will experience, I have hope that your situation can improve if you engage in the counselling process.

OUR MEETINGS

Our first session will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the first session, I will be able to offer you an impression of what our work could include if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinion of whether you feel comfortable working with me. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another counsellor for a second opinion.

Sessions typically happen once a week or once every two weeks and are about 55 minutes long. How many sessions to expect and exactly how often to meet is hard to predict so we will have to discuss and decide that together. Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide **24 hours advance notice of cancellation**, or unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control.

ABOUT ME

I am a Registered Clinical Counsellor and a member in good standing with the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors (RCC# 3834). My training and educational background include a Bachelor of Education and a Masters of Arts specializing in Clinical Counselling and I now have a total of eighteen years of counselling experience.

As both teacher and counsellor it gives me great joy to come alongside couples or individuals as they move beyond their present difficulties into new and healthier patterns of living. As a believer in the Christian faith, additional training has given me tools to use the Bible as part of the counselling process. This biblical perspective will only be added to your counselling experience upon request.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Please know that the things you tell me about are private and will remain confidential unless:

- You give me permission to tell other people (who may be able to help you such as other professionals or your loved ones).
- I evaluate that you may hurt yourself or someone else (in terms of death or bodily harm, and in which case I will find you some additional support).
- You have given me critical information about child abuse, child neglect, or elder abuse.
- I legally must, due to the law in Canada (as in the case of a court order).

If we accidentally meet in a public place, I would not greet you unless you initiated that interaction. This is because I value and respect your right to privacy. I will always try to act with your best interest in mind. Figuring out how to do this may mean my asking other professionals for some advice about your case. If I do so your identity will not be shared.

MINORS

If you are under sixteen years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents the right to examine our clinical notes. It is my policy to request an agreement from parents that they agree to give up access to your records. If they agree, I will provide them only with general information about our work together, unless I feel there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or someone else. In this case, I will notify them of my concern. I may also provide them with a summary of your treatment when it is complete. Before giving them any information, I will do my best to discuss the matter with you, and together we can address any objections you may have with what I'd planned to share.

COUPLES COUNSELLING

I have completed the Level 1 Training in Gottman Method Couple's Therapy. The Gottman Method is unique in that it utilizes an intense assessment process to best determine an effective course of action for our therapeutic time together.

In counselling couples, my preference is to meet together for an initial 1.5 hour consultation. This provides me an opportunity to hear about the history of the relationship from both perspectives, as well as outline my therapeutic approach. Each individual then attends a solo session, bringing with them their completed assessment package. After a thorough review of the paperwork, we will all meet together again and a therapy plan and a session schedule will be developed.

PROFESSIONAL FEES, BILLING AND PAYMENTS

Initial Consultation: no charge (30 minutes)

Individual Counselling: \$95 (per 55 minutes)

Couple & Family Counselling: \$145 (per 90 minute session)

Gottman Method Couples Therapy: \$175 (initial 90 minute session inclusive of paperwork review & development of therapy plan), after the initial session, fee drops to \$145 per 90-minute session.

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage which requires another arrangement. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. If you are in a difficult financial position you may qualify for alternative payment arrangements or assistance. Therefore, if the fee is preventing you from entering into counselling, please request more information so we can discuss your options.

If there is the possibility that you are covered by insurance, please carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services. I am a "Registered Clinical Counsellor". Many plans cover only for Clinical Psychologists, Psychiatrists or Social Workers. I recommend that you read the fine print carefully and/ or call your plan administrator to determine the extent of your coverage.

CONTACTING ME

As I do not answer the phone when I am with a client, therefore I am often difficult to reach immediately. My voice mailbox is confidential, so please leave a message and I will make every effort to return your call on the same day, with the exception of weekends and holidays.

REVIEWS, REFERRALS and ENDING THERAPY

In counselling it is your right to question any of the procedures used during therapy. If you wish, I will happily explain my approach and methods to you. I will also keep written records of what we talk about for seven (7) years and you have the right to review these records and/or receive a copy at any point in that time.

You may choose to end our counselling at any point in time, for any reason, without moral, legal or financial obligations (other than those already accrued). Simply telling me ahead of time will help us to end well and close your file appropriately. If you suddenly stop coming to counselling, I may call or email you to make sure that you are okay. During the counselling experience if you have any concerns, please talk to me. But, if that feels impossible or unsafe, please go to www.bc-counsellors.org and follow their helps/complaints procedure.

QUESTIONS?

Do you have any questions that I haven't addressed about consenting to counselling?

OFFICE HOURS & LOCATION

My office hours are somewhat flexible. Please call or email to arrange an appointment.

My office is in a self-contained area of my home at **5201-19th Street** in Vernon, BC.

Driving directions: Take 48th Street (Silver Star Road), turn left at 20th Street (this is the road that runs directly behind Wal-Mart/Rona), turn right at 53rd Ave, and then take an immediate right at 19th Street.

Please feel free to park on the left side of the driveway, and then follow the sidewalk along the left side of the house to my office door. Ring the doorbell and then let yourself into the waiting room.

By signing below, you are saying that you have read and understood this form and what it means in terms of your rights, confidentiality and billing, and that you agree to receive counselling from Sandra Buller.

Signature of Client(s) _____	Date _____
Signature of Client(s) _____	Date _____
Signature of Parent or Guardian _____	Date _____
Signature of Counsellor _____	Date _____