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Marriage and Relationship Counselling Policy

1. Purpose and Commitment

Mae Counselling provides marriage and relationship counselling to couples seeking guidance, understanding, communication improvement and support in navigating relationship challenges.

The purpose of counselling is to create a respectful and constructive environment where both partners have the opportunity to be heard, understood and supported.

Mae Counselling maintains professional neutrality and does not enter into alliances with either spouse.

The counsellor's role is to facilitate the counselling process, encourage accountability and support constructive communication between both partners.

2. Mutual Respect and Participation

Both partners are expected to:

- Treat one another with dignity and respect throughout every session.
- Allow each person an opportunity to speak without interruption or intimidation.
- Listen to each other's perspectives, even where there is disagreement.
- Refrain from insults, belittling, threats, intimidation or aggressive behaviour.
- Take responsibility for their own words, actions and contributions to the relationship.
- Participate in sessions with a genuine willingness to engage in the counselling process.

Neither partner is entitled to dominate the session or prevent the other from expressing themselves.

3. Professional Neutrality and Impartiality

Mae Counselling maintains professional impartiality throughout the counselling relationship.

- The counsellor will not take sides or automatically validate one partner over the other.
- Both individuals will be given appropriate consideration and opportunity to express their experiences.
- Counselling will focus on relationship dynamics, communication, understanding and constructive solutions.
- Neither partner should expect the counsellor to act as an advocate against the other.
- The counsellor will maintain professional boundaries with both individuals equally.

The purpose is not to determine who wins an argument, but to help both partners recognise patterns, understand their contributions and work towards healthier relationship outcomes.

4. Confidentiality and Individual Disclosures

Confidentiality is fundamental to the counselling process.

Both partners must understand and agree to the confidentiality arrangements before counselling commences.

Where individual conversations or separate appointments are offered, the counsellor will explain how information shared individually will be managed and whether it may be relevant to the joint counselling process.

Mae Counselling will not promise absolute secrecy where information raises significant safety concerns, creates an ethical conflict or is subject to legal disclosure obligations.

A clear confidentiality agreement will be established before any individual sessions associated with marriage counselling take place.

5. Communication Outside Scheduled Sessions

To maintain appropriate professional boundaries:

- Communication with the counsellor must remain relevant to counselling and appointment administration.
- Neither partner should use the counsellor as a means of monitoring, investigating or communicating messages to the other spouse.
- The counsellor will not participate in personal disputes outside the agreed counselling framework.
- Private messages, calls or attempts to obtain preferential treatment will be managed in accordance with professional boundaries.
- Any additional individual appointments must be agreed upon within the practice's counselling arrangements.

6. Attendance and Commitment

Both partners are expected to:

- Attend scheduled appointments punctually.
- Provide reasonable notice when requesting cancellations or rescheduling.
- Participate respectfully and constructively.
- Approach counselling with openness and a willingness to work through relevant concerns.
- Understand that meaningful relationship progress requires commitment beyond the counselling session itself.

7. Payment Requirements

- Session fees and payment arrangements will be communicated before appointments are confirmed.
- Payment responsibilities will be agreed upon at the time of booking.
- Any outstanding fees must be addressed in accordance with Mae Counselling's payment policy.
- Both partners must understand the financial arrangements before commencing counselling.

8. Unacceptable Conduct and Immediate Cessation

Mae Counselling maintains strict professional and behavioural boundaries.

The following conduct is unacceptable:

- Threatening, intimidating or verbally abusive behaviour.
- Humiliation, insults or persistent personal attacks.
- Deliberate attempts to undermine or manipulate the counselling process.
- Harassment or inappropriate comments directed towards the counsellor or the other partner.
- Any behaviour that compromises the physical or emotional safety of those involved.

Where conduct becomes inappropriate or compromises the safety and integrity of the session, the counsellor reserves the right to pause or terminate the appointment immediately.

Where necessary, future appointments may be declined and alternative support or referral options discussed.

9. Safety and Suitability for Joint Counselling

Marriage counselling is not appropriate in every circumstance.

Where there are concerns involving domestic violence, coercive control, intimidation, threats or an imbalance of safety between partners, the counsellor may determine that joint sessions are unsuitable.

Individual assessment, specialist referral or alternative support may be recommended where necessary.

The safety and wellbeing of both individuals must remain a priority.

10. Scope of Practice and Professional Responsibility

Mae Counselling will provide services within its professional qualifications, training and scope of practice.

Where a couple's circumstances require specialist psychological, psychiatric, legal, domestic violence or other professional assistance, an appropriate referral may be recommended.

Counselling is a collaborative process and does not guarantee reconciliation, resolution of every dispute or a particular relationship outcome.

11. Acknowledgement and Agreement

By commencing marriage or relationship counselling with Mae Counselling, both partners acknowledge that they have read, understood and agreed to the conditions outlined in this policy.

Both individuals agree to respect the professional boundaries of the practice and participate in the counselling process in good faith.

Mae Counselling is committed to fairness, respect, confidentiality, accountability and the preservation of professional integrity throughout the counselling relationship.