

Our Counselling Client Contract – Working as a Couple

Counselling Works

Your partnership, poly, or friendship relationship is unique, special, and valuable to you and to me. We have agreed to work together on the issues that you bring together.

You are welcome to bring whatever you need to. No topic is taboo. I will not take sides or make judgement. I provide a safe and exploratory space for you to discuss your choices together. You have come for support together, and that is our focus.

Throughout this information sheet I will use 'couple' to refer to us working all together, and 'individual' for each person. Of course, there may be more than two people in your 'couple'.

Mutual Respect

I have a policy of mutual respect. My professional and personal ethics require me to intervene actively if I experience damaging physical or emotional abuse in our sessions.

I hope that you will allow yourself to experience a wide range of emotions together, in fact both experimenting with emotions, and mutually agreed and welcome physical contact, are encouraged. However, I reserve the right to actively intervene in session, at my discretion, if I feel that anyone's emotional or physical safety is being compromised. This includes bullying, mobbing, and harassment. I am trained in breakaway and safe-space techniques.

We begin from a position of respect: from you and for you; for each other as individual people; that you each have the right to make informed choices about how you live and develop your lives, for yourself and with others.

Thinking About The How

Our work comes from the 'I' in relationship. I will encourage you to speak from there. This may feel a little strange to you at first. None of this is a magic formula or technique, it simply helps others to hear our needs and wishes, and us to listen to theirs more attentively.

It can be helpful for you to consider saying:
'Sam, I feel happy when ...' or 'Sue, my experience is that ...'

It can be less helpful to say:
'You are ...', 'She always ...', 'His problem is ...'

It is important that any physical touch is requested, or offered, respectfully and exploratively, especially as you begin in our work together. This may be challenging to you, especially if your relationship is, or is not, a tactile one: 'Sam, I'd like to hold your hand ...', 'Sue, can I have a hug ...'

If you need, for example, to go to the bathroom or stretch your legs, then please let the other(s) know about your need before you get up. Please speak from the 'I' about your physical and emotional needs in our sessions:

'I need to go to the bathroom now, and I will be back.', 'I have to stretch my legs because I have cramp'

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What You Can Expect From Me

My role is to support you as a couple in discussing your issues, concerns, and ways of interacting together.

Sometimes my role will also be to mediate and intervene directly to help facilitate understanding.

This can be a challenge to embedded patterns, behaviours, and ways of being in your relationship together – and that may provoke strong emotions in you. I ask you to stay with that process and the richness it can bring.

Individual Sessions

Our regular way of working will be to meet for couple sessions together, because our work is focussed on the relationship between you.

In certain exceptional situations, I may agree to work with you individually, in addition to us all working together. We all need to agree on this beforehand and discuss how this may best support you all in our work.

Extra individual sessions are only with the explicit agreement of everyone. And, importantly, every individual agrees to have the same number of extra individual sessions. We will not usually meet again for a couple session before everyone has had their agreed extra individual session.

As in all our work, you take individual responsibility for sharing your content and your process with me individually, and as a couple in- or out- of session.

There is an important exception to this: If something shared with me factually in an individual session becomes a topic in a couple session, and those facts are not disclosed truthfully, I may choose to raise this as a ‘conflict of trust’. If we cannot resolve such a conflict of trust, it may mean ending all aspects of our work together, both couple and individual.

Working Well Together

I hope that you have found this document useful.

If you have any additional thoughts about how our sessions can provide a safe, ethical, and confidential space for you, then please do share them when we next meet.