



PRACTICE PRIVACY POLICY

COMMITMENT TO PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Regain Balance Counselling, Health & Wellbeing is committed to protecting your privacy and maintaining the confidentiality of your personal and health information.

This Privacy Policy should be read alongside the Counselling Agreement and explains how information is collected, used, stored, and disclosed, and outlines your rights in relation to that information.

This practice operates in accordance with:

- The *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* and the *Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)*
- The *Australian Counselling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics and Practice*
- Mandatory reporting and legal disclosure obligations under Australian law
- Relevant Commonwealth and State legislation

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of counselling practice. All reasonable steps are taken to safeguard your information and to ensure it is handled ethically, lawfully, and respectfully.

WHAT IS PERSONAL AND SENSITIVE INFORMATION?

Personal Information is information or an opinion that identifies you. *Sensitive Information*, including health information, receives a higher level of protection under the Privacy Act.

Information collected may include:

- Identifying and contact details
- Date of birth and emergency contact information
- Health, wellbeing, and psychosocial information relevant to counselling
- Referral information (where applicable and with consent)

Only information that is reasonably necessary for the provision of counselling services or to meet legal, ethical, and administrative obligations is collected.

HOW INFORMATION IS COLLECTED

Information may be collected through:

- Intake, consent, and assessment forms
- Counselling sessions
- Telephone, email, and online communications
- Secure practice management systems
- Other health professionals or third parties, with your consent

You will be informed about the purpose of collection and how your information will be used.



USE AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Personal information is collected and used for the primary purpose of providing counselling services, maintaining clinical records, and managing the practice in accordance with professional and legal obligations. Information may be disclosed without consent only where:

- Disclosure is required or authorised by law
- There is a serious and imminent risk to the safety, health, or wellbeing of the client or others
- Mandatory reporting obligations apply (for example, child protection requirements)
- Disclosure is required by subpoena, court order, or other lawful process

Where disclosure without consent is required, this will be discussed with you wherever appropriate, practicable, and safe to do so.

Information will not be disclosed to third parties without your prior written consent, except where permitted or required by law or ethical duty of care.

With your written consent, information may be disclosed to relevant third parties where appropriate for your care or service coordination, including (but not limited to):

- General Practitioners or other health professionals
- Specialist assessment or treatment providers
- Schools or educational professionals
- NDIS providers or support coordinators
- Insurance providers where claims are being made

Written consent will specify the information to be shared, the purpose of disclosure, and the recipient of that information. Consent may be withdrawn at any time, subject to legal or contractual limitations.

DUAL RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY CONTACT

Regain Balance Counselling operates in regional community-based settings where incidental contact outside the counselling room may occur. A *dual relationship* refers to any situation where another relationship exists alongside the therapeutic relationship.

In line with the ACA Code of Ethics, dual relationships are avoided where possible and carefully managed when unavoidable to protect confidentiality, professional boundaries, and therapeutic integrity.

Where multiple individuals from the same family, household, or social network seek counselling, confidentiality, impartiality, and fairness are prioritised. Information disclosed by one client will not be shared with another without explicit consent.

The counsellor does not act as a mediator or take sides in family disputes unless this forms part of an agreed family counselling process. If a dual relationship or conflict of interest is identified that may



compromise care or neutrality, alternative arrangements or referrals may be recommended in the best interests of those involved. To protect client privacy, the counsellor will not acknowledge clients in public unless the client initiates contact.

ACCESS TO RECORDS AND CORRECTION OF INFORMATION

You may request access to your personal information or request correction of information that is inaccurate, incomplete, out of date, or misleading. Requests should be made in writing, and reasonable steps may be taken to verify your identity before access is provided.

Where appropriate, access will generally be provided within a reasonable timeframe. An administrative fee will be charged for the preparation and provision of copies of records, where permitted by law.

Access to personal information may be refused or limited in circumstances permitted under applicable privacy legislation, including where providing access may pose a serious threat to the life, health, or safety of any individual, unreasonably impact the privacy of others, or where another lawful exception applies.

DATA SECURITY, TECHNOLOGY USE, AND RECORD RETENTION

Reasonable administrative, technical, and physical safeguards are used to protect personal information from misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure.

CLINICAL RECORDS, DIGITAL PLATFORMS, AND RECORD RETENTION

This practice uses secure electronic systems, including Halaxy for practice management, client records, appointment administration, invoicing, and secure storage of clinical information, and NovoPsych to support clinical assessment, outcome monitoring, treatment planning, and clinical documentation. These platforms are subject to their own privacy and security measures and are used in a manner consistent with applicable Australian privacy legislation and professional obligations.

Reasonable steps are taken to ensure that third-party service providers used by the practice maintain appropriate privacy and security safeguards. The practice uses Australian-based clinical and practice management platforms, including Halaxy and NovoPsych, which store client information on secure Australian servers and operate in accordance with applicable Australian privacy and data security requirements. Where third-party service providers are engaged by these platforms, reasonable steps are taken to ensure that privacy obligations and security standards are maintained.

By engaging with this practice, clients are informed that their personal information may be collected, stored, managed, and processed through secure electronic practice management and clinical documentation systems for purposes directly related to the provision of counselling services.



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Personal information is collected, used, stored, and disclosed only for purposes reasonably necessary for the provision of counselling services, administration of the practice, clinical record keeping, professional supervision and consultation for the purpose of ensuring quality and ethical practice, or as otherwise permitted or required by law. Information shared in supervision will be limited to what is reasonably necessary and will be de-identified wherever practicable.

Personal information will not be used or disclosed for secondary purposes without consent unless authorised, permitted, or required under applicable privacy legislation or other legal obligations.

Client records are retained in accordance with applicable legal, regulatory, insurance, and professional requirements, including the ethical obligations of the Australian Counselling Association (ACA). Records are generally retained for a minimum of seven (7) years from the last client contact, or longer where required by law, professional obligations, insurance requirements, or where the client was a minor at the time services were provided.

When records are no longer required to be retained, reasonable steps will be taken to securely destroy or permanently de-identify the information in accordance with privacy obligations and professional standards.

COMPLAINTS AND PRIVACY CONCERNS

If you have concerns about how your information is handled, you are encouraged to raise these directly with the practice. If concerns cannot be resolved, you may lodge a complaint with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC).

This Privacy Policy is reviewed periodically to ensure ongoing compliance with legal and ethical requirements.