



PRIVACY POLICY

At **Regain Balance Counselling, Health & Wellbeing**, I am committed to providing high-quality counselling services while respecting your privacy and confidentiality. I adhere to the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) outlined in the Privacy Act 1988. This privacy policy outlines how I manage your personal information and my obligations to you, ensuring transparency and protection in all aspects of my services.

COMPLIANCE WITH PRIVACY LAWS AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

I comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Australian Counselling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics*, which guide how I handle your personal and health information. My practices are also aligned with the *Code of Conduct for Certain Health Care Workers (Community Services Complaints Regulations 2019)* and relevant privacy regulations to safeguard your rights to confidentiality and privacy.

WHAT IS PERSONAL INFORMATION AND WHY DO I COLLECT IT?

Personal Information refers to any information or opinion about you that identifies you, including sensitive health information related to your physical or mental health or disability.

The types of Personal Information I collect include:

- Name, contact details (e.g., phone number, email address, home address)
- Date of birth
- Religious or faith affiliation
- Emergency contact information
- Health information (e.g., physical, mental, or emotional health history)

I collect this information in various ways:

- Client intake forms
- Interviews and counselling sessions
- Telephone and email communication
- My website (via consent)
- From publicly available sources and, when necessary, from third-party health providers, with your consent



I only collect Personal Information that is essential to the service I provide to you, and I will explain the reason for collecting this information and how it will be used at the time of collection.

USE AND DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

I use your Personal Information solely to provide you with the best counselling services. I will not use or disclose your information for any other purposes without your informed consent, unless required by law or in accordance with the ACA Code of Ethics and privacy laws.

I may share information with other health professionals or third-party service providers (e.g., administrative support, technology providers) only when necessary and with your consent. I will ensure these third parties uphold privacy and confidentiality standards similar to my own.

THIRD-PARTY INFORMATION

In certain circumstances, I may receive Personal Information from third parties, such as other healthcare providers. I will only collect such information after obtaining your consent. I will make reasonable efforts to ensure you are informed about the details of the information I receive and how it will be used.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACA CODE OF ETHICS

As a registered practitioner with the Australian Counselling Association (ACA), I am bound by the ACA Code of Ethics, which sets clear standards for maintaining confidentiality. This means that, in most cases, your information will not be shared with others without your explicit consent, except in the following circumstances:

- **Risk of Harm:** Where there is a risk of harm to you or others (e.g., imminent danger or risk of abuse).
- **Mandatory Reporting:** In some cases, I am required by law to report certain information to authorities, such as if I believe a child or vulnerable person is at risk of abuse or neglect. This is a legal obligation and overrides confidentiality.
- **Legal Requirements:** When disclosure is required or authorised by law (e.g., subpoena, court order, mandatory reporting).
- **Explicit Consent:** If you give explicit written consent for disclosure to a third party (e.g., other health professionals).



I will discuss with you the potential limits to confidentiality before commencing therapy, ensuring you are fully informed of the circumstances under which confidentiality might be breached.

DUAL RELATIONSHIPS AND BOUNDARIES

Regain Balance Counselling operates within regional and community-based settings where incidental contact outside the counselling room may occasionally occur. A *dual relationship* refers to any situation where another relationship exists alongside the therapeutic relationship (for example, living in the same community, having mutual acquaintances, or encountering one another in public settings).

In accordance with the *Australian Counselling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics*, dual relationships are avoided wherever possible and are carefully considered and professionally managed when unavoidable. The primary focus in all situations is the protection of client confidentiality, appropriate boundaries, and the integrity of the therapeutic relationship.

Dual relationships may also arise where more than one person from the same family, household, or extended family network seeks counselling. In such circumstances, confidentiality, impartiality, and fairness are prioritised. Information disclosed by one client will not be shared with another family member without explicit consent. The counsellor does not take sides or act as a mediator in family disputes unless this has been clearly agreed to as part of a defined family or joint counselling process.

If providing counselling to multiple individuals within the same family or social network creates a conflict of interest or may compromise therapeutic neutrality, alternative arrangements or referrals may be recommended in the best interests of all parties.

Where there is a likelihood of incidental contact in the community, this will be discussed openly and transparently. To protect client privacy, the counsellor will not initiate acknowledgement in public unless the client chooses to do so first. If a dual relationship is assessed as likely to compromise the quality of care or professional boundaries, an alternative plan or referral may be recommended.

ACCESSING YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

You have the right to access and correct your Personal or Health Information that I hold. If you wish to view, correct, or update your information, you may contact me directly. To ensure the security of your information, I require identification before granting access. In most cases, I will provide access



to your information within 14 days. However, if you request a copy of your records, I charge an administrative fee of \$100 to cover time and costs associated with the provision of this information.

Access may be refused or restricted in certain cases, including:

- Where access would have an unreasonable impact on the privacy of other individuals.
- If providing access would prejudice an investigation of unlawful activity or pose a serious and imminent threat to health or safety.
- Where providing access is prohibited by law.

MAINTAINING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

It is important to me that the Personal Information I hold is accurate and up to date. If any of your details change or if you believe the information I hold is inaccurate, please inform me so that I can update my records.

I will take reasonable steps to ensure that your information is accurate, complete, and up-to-date, and will notify you of any corrections made.

DATA SECURITY, TECHNOLOGY USE, AND RECORD RETENTION

Regain Balance Counselling, Health & Wellbeing uses secure electronic systems to store and manage client information. Reasonable administrative, technical, and physical safeguards are implemented to protect Personal Information from misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure, in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* and the *Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)*.

Practice Management Software (Halaxy)

Client demographic information, appointment records, and clinical notes are stored using Halaxy, a secure, encrypted practice management system designed for Australian health practitioners. Access to client records is restricted and protected by authentication controls.

AI-Assisted Clinical Documentation (Heidi Health)

I may use Heidi Health, an AI-assisted clinical documentation tool, to support accurate and efficient notetaking during counselling sessions. This technology assists with generating draft written summaries for clinician review and editing. Counselling sessions are not audio recorded, and any



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temporary data used for transcription is deleted in accordance with the platform's data retention and security practices.

The use of AI-assisted documentation does not replace clinical judgement. I remain solely responsible for the content, accuracy, and clinical relevance of all client records.

Personal Information is retained only for as long as required to provide services and to meet legal and professional record-keeping obligations. When information is no longer required, it is securely destroyed or permanently de-identified.

YOUR RIGHTS

- You have the right to access your Personal Information.
- You have the right to request corrections if the information I hold is incorrect or incomplete.
- You have the right to be informed about any third parties who may have access to your information.
- You have the right to lodge a complaint if you believe I have not complied with my privacy obligations.

If you have any concerns or wish to access or amend your Personal Information, please contact me. I am here to ensure your rights are respected and to provide high-quality, confidential services in line with the ACA Code of Ethics and privacy regulations.

CONTACT ME

If you have any questions or concerns about my privacy practices or your personal information, please do not hesitate to contact me by emailing admin@regainbalance.com.au.

Your privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance to me.
