

Limitations on Confidentiality in Couples or Family Counseling

This written policy is to inform you, the participants in family therapy or couples therapy, that when I agree to work with a couple or a family, I consider that couple or family (the treatment unit) to be the patient. For instance, if there is a request for the treatment records of the couple or the family, I will seek the authorization of all members of the treatment unit before I release confidential information to third parties. Also, if my records are subpoenaed, I will assert the psychotherapist-patient privilege on behalf of the patient (the treatment unit).

During my work with a couple or a family, I may see a smaller part of the treatment unit (e.g., an individual or two siblings) for one or more sessions. These sessions should be viewed as a part of the work that I am doing with the family or the couple, unless otherwise indicated. If you participate in one or more of such sessions with me, please understand that these sessions are confidential in the sense that I will not release any information to a third party unless I am required by law to do so or unless I have your written authorization. In fact, since these sessions are a part of the family or couple therapy, I would also seek the authorization of the other individuals in the treatment unit before releasing confidential information to a third party. However, these sessions with part of the treatment unit (i.e. one person) are not confidential within the rest of the treatment unit (i.e. partner, family).

This "no secrets" policy is intended to allow me to continue to treat the patient (the couple or family unit) by preventing, to the extent possible, a conflict of interest to arise where an individual's interests may not be consistent with the interests of the unit being treated. It will also allow everyone in therapy to gain a sense of trust and emotional safety knowing that there is no hidden information from any client. For instance, information learned in the course of an individual session may be relevant or even essential to the proper treatment of the couple or the family. If I am not free to exercise my clinical judgment regarding the need to bring this information to the family or the couple during their therapy, I might be placed in a situation where I will have to terminate treatment of the couple or the family. This policy is intended to prevent the need for such a termination.

Also, couples therapy is not for everyone. Couples therapy is more vulnerable than individual therapy. It is easier to get defensive in treatment. I will do my part to prevent that, but ultimately, it is up to the individuals involved. If therapy becomes too argumentative it will be suggested to terminate therapy and resort to individual therapy until such a time as couples therapy can be resumed.

We, the members of the (couple/family or other unit) being seen, acknowledge by our individual signatures below, that each of us has read this policy, that we understand it, that we have had an opportunity to discuss its contents with the therapist, and that we enter couple/family therapy in agreement with this policy.

Date _____ Signature _____

Date _____ Signature _____

Date _____ Signature _____