

Complete Couples  
The Lovibond Centre  
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Complete Couples

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## **Terms & Conditions**

By booking a consultation with Complete Couples, you agree to be bound by the following terms and conditions:

### **Booking**

1-hour or 90-minute counselling sessions may be booked on an ad-hoc basis by mutual agreement. Relationship workshops and training sessions are booked by special arrangement.

### **Payment**

Payment is kindly requested on the day of session appointments, either by cash, personal cheque or bank transfer. Partners are deemed to be jointly responsible for the payment of session fees. Complete Couples reserves the right to suspend future appointments in the event of non-payment of session fees. Prior payment in full by bank transfer is required for workshops and training sessions.

### **Location of Consultations**

All regular consultations will be conducted at The Lovibond Centre, unless specifically arranged elsewhere at the time of booking, or in the unlikely event that it becomes necessary to relocate a consultation due to unforeseen circumstances; in which case, Complete Couples will endeavour to provide as much notice as possible, and will seek the consent of all parties before agreeing on an alternative venue.

### **Cancellation Policy**

Clients are required to provide a minimum of 48-hours notice in the event that they are unable to attend a session they have booked, or else they remain liable for full payment of the session fee.

Complete Couples will endeavour to provide clients with at least 48-hours notice in the event that a booked session has to be rescheduled due to unforeseen circumstances.

In the event that Complete Couples is unable to deliver a service that has been booked and fully paid for in advance, our liability will be limited to a full refund of the payment received.

### **Conduct of Sessions**

Sessions begin and end at the appointment times agreed in advance between Complete Couples and the client. It is each client's responsibility to arrive on time, and sessions will not ordinarily over-run in the event of late arrival. If Complete Couples should be unable to begin a session on time, or needs to terminate a session before the pre-arranged time, we will endeavour to make up any loss of time by mutual agreement with the client. The same principles apply to workshop sessions, for which timings will be mutually agreed in advance.

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Complete Couples aims to provide a safe environment in which to explore relationships. We therefore kindly request that clients:

- i) Conduct themselves with due respect to all parties attending sessions, and in particular, avoid blaming, threatening, or otherwise abusive language or behaviour;
- ii) Refrain from using 'phones, tablets and similar devices during sessions;
- iii) Commit to the counselling process and its aims (as mutually agreed by all parties concerned) throughout the period during which sessions are undertaken; both during and outside session times.

### **Confidentiality**

Counselling involves the discussion of sensitive, personal information. This information, in conjunction with the identity of a client, will not be disclosed by Complete Couples to external parties, other than in the following exceptional circumstances, under which Complete Couples reserves the right, or may be bound by law, to break confidentiality:

- i) Where Complete Couples has reason to believe that there is a serious risk of harm to a client or others with whom a client may come into contact. Under these circumstances, Complete Couples may need to consult a supervisor and/or contact the client's GP or other health professional. Complete Couples will always attempt to discuss this with the client beforehand, but under certain circumstances (e.g. where life is at risk) this may not be possible;
- ii) Where a client informs Complete Couples that they were/are involved in, or have information about acts of terrorism, either being planned or which have already taken place, Complete Couples are legally obliged to inform the police, without giving notice to the client (Terrorism Act 2000, section 38B);
- iii) Where the courts or the police order or require the disclosure of information (e.g. where a client has information about the whereabouts of a missing child who is in care – section 50 Children Act 1989), Complete Couples would need to consider whether breaking confidentiality is required;
- iv) Where Complete Couples receives a specific written request from the client to share information with a named third party (e.g. a legal representative).

In accordance with recognised working practices, Complete Couples counsellors may consult a third party counselling professional for supervision of their work. In such instances, while actual scenarios presented by clients may be shared, the identity of clients will not be disclosed.

### **Seeing Individual Partners & Issues of Confidentiality**

Sometimes, it may be useful for the counsellor to work with either or both couple partners individually. Under these circumstances, there needs to be prior agreement or understanding as to what happens if one client reveals a secret to the counsellor, or information which they do not want their partner to know.

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The default policy of Complete Couples is as follows:

- i) If such a secret is revealed in an individual session or via other communication, the secret will be kept confidential, unless a prior policy of transparency has already been agreed by all parties;
- ii) The counsellor can only break confidentiality under certain ethical circumstances (outlined above under 'Confidentiality');
- iii) While confidentiality will be respected, where the counsellor believes that disclosure of the secret is in the best interests of the relationship, the therapist will strongly encourage the client to reveal the secret to their partner.

**General Information on Confidentiality/Transparency**

It should be noted that although Complete Couples has a default policy of confidentiality when working with individual partners of a couple, different counsellors work with the issue of confidentiality vs. transparency between partners in different ways. There are a number of pros and cons with either way of working, as set out below:

Transparency ('no secrets') Policy

Pros:

- The counsellor does not risk alienating either partner by holding 'secrets' (see below for the risks and difficulties of holding secrets);
- The counsellor is likely to feel more comfortable with both clients, as the counsellor will not be holding secrets;
- The counsellor is more likely to be trusted by both partners, because the counsellor will never be hiding anything;
- The therapist is more likely to build a strong working alliance with both partners;

Cons:

- Either partner may be unwilling to share certain details (such as an affair), which may render counselling less effective than it could be;
- If under a prior general agreement for transparency, a partner subsequently reveals something they want the counsellor to keep secret (e.g. during an individual session), the choices for the counsellor are to honour the original agreement and break confidentiality, compromise the original agreement by keeping the secret, or end couple sessions. Sometimes, the counsellor might suggest an intermediate solution; that there should be a certain maximum number of individual sessions to work on supporting the client to disclose a secret to their partner in a couple session.

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Confidentiality Policy

Pros:

- Historically, client confidentiality has been one of the greatest ethical obligations owed by the counsellor; both to protect clients and to allow clients to speak freely and safely without fear of social condemnation or retribution. The duty to maintain confidentiality is set down within the code of ethics by virtually all professional therapy organisations. Without such a policy, either partner may feel unable to begin to raise fundamental issues, which, with the agreement of the client and support from the counsellor, might ultimately be successfully addressed in a subsequent couple session;
- A client may be more relaxed and forthcoming when seen individually, on the basis that what they say will be treated as confidential by the counsellor;
- The counsellor is arguably able to do better work knowing all the facts;
- The ethical principle of 'self-determination', or 'autonomy' requires that clients can make up their own minds whether or not they wish to reveal a secret to their partner. If they reveal a secret to the counsellor, it is not up to the counsellor to force a decision on the client to disclose. This could be seen as an imposition of the counsellor's personal values on the couple;
- There are potentially some secrets pertaining to a client's past (such as abuse as a child, a twenty-year old affair, or occasional illicit drug use well before meeting their partner), which may be better left undisclosed, since disclosure could be unhelpful or even detrimental to the relationship;

Cons:

- With the assurance of complete confidentiality, a client may reveal something they wish to keep from their partner (such as an affair). In this event, the counsellor must hold the secret, which could be to the benefit of one partner, and the detriment of the other. The result might be a therapeutic imbalance created by the secret being kept between the counsellor and one partner, which is potentially counter-productive to couple therapy, and compromises the working alliance. Should the unaware partner learn of this collaboration between the counsellor and the other partner, he or she is likely to lose trust in the counsellor and may terminate therapy;
- Upon hearing a secret, the counsellor may begin to lose empathy for, or feel resentment towards the secret-holder;
- The counsellor may feel guilty for deceiving the unaware partner and consciously or unconsciously collude with that partner to make amends;
- The counsellor may not be cognitively able to hold the secret, and it may be accidentally revealed.

***Complete Couples reserve the right to amend terms & conditions from time to time without prior notice.***