womenhood

Counselling & Support for Women Without Children

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Privacy Policy

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Your privacy

At WomenHood Counselling, I aim to respect and protect your privacy.

Counselling involves sharing personal and sensitive information and I am committed to creating a warm, safe and confidential environment. I take all reasonable steps to protect your privacy and handle the personal information you share with me with care and confidentiality.

This Privacy Policy explains what information I collect, why I collect it, how it is stored and used, when it may be shared, and your rights in relation to your information.

WomenHood Counselling handles personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles, where they apply, as well as professional and ethical obligations outlined by the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA).

What information do I collect?

I only collect information that is reasonably necessary for providing counselling services and managing my professional relationship with you.

This may include:

- your name and contact details
- date of birth and emergency contact details
- information relevant to your counselling needs
- information about your physical or psychological health and wellbeing
- relevant personal, family, relationship or life history
- information discussed during counselling sessions
- counselling notes and other records relating to your care
- appointment, billing and payment information
- information you provide through email, forms, telephone or other communication with me.

Some of this information is considered *sensitive* or *health information* under Australian privacy law and is subject to additional privacy protections.

I aim to collect only information that is relevant and necessary for providing counselling and managing your care. I do not seek to collect or retain unnecessary personal information.

How is information collected?

Information is generally collected directly from you.

This may occur through:

- initial enquiries
- intake and consent forms
- counselling sessions
- telephone or email communication
- appointment and payment processes
- information you choose to provide through the WomenHood website enquiry form.

In some circumstances, information may be received from another person or organisation, such as a health professional or support person. I will always aim to obtain your consent before seeking information from another person.

There may be circumstances where information can be collected without your consent where this is required by law.

Why do I collect and use your information?

Your information is collected and used primarily to:

- provide safe and appropriate counselling services
- understand your needs and circumstances
- maintain appropriate counselling records
- communicate with you about appointments and your counselling
- manage billing and administrative requirements
- meet professional, legal and record-keeping obligations
- obtain professional supervision or consultation where appropriate
- respond to concerns, complaints or legal requirements.

Your information will not be used for purposes unrelated to your counselling without your consent, unless its use is required by law.

Confidentiality

The information you share during counselling is treated as confidential, and your personal information will not be shared without your consent.

The only exceptions to this are where disclosure is required by law or to prevent harm. That may include situations where:

- There is a serious and immediate risk of harm to you or another person
- There are concerns regarding the safety of a child or vulnerable person
- Records are subpoenaed by a court
- Disclosure is otherwise required by Australian law

Where it is reasonably practicable and appropriate to do so, I will discuss any necessary disclosure with you beforehand.

Professional supervision

As part of responsible professional practice, I participate in professional supervision.

Client situations may sometimes be discussed with my supervisor for the purpose of supporting safe and ethical counselling practice. I take reasonable steps to remove or disguise information that could identify clients.

Your personal information will not be used in teaching, publications, presentations or other public material without your informed consent and appropriate protection of your identity.

How is your information stored?

I take reasonable steps to protect your personal information from misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.

My current record-keeping and security practices include:

- Paper client files and counselling notes are stored in a locked filing cabinet
- My laptop is used only for work purposes and is password protected
- Electronic correspondence is conducted using Outlook with security updates
- Reasonable security measures are used to protect electronic information
- Information that is no longer required is securely disposed of in accordance with applicable legal and professional requirements.
- Payment is processed using the Squareup.com platform. Only name and address details are used in your client profile for invoicing; no other personal information is recorded here. Payment data is encrypted and your full credit/debit card details are never stored on my devices. You can read further about Square's security here.

*Note: I DO NOT use AI to record or generate notes.

Online and electronic security

I take reasonable steps to use secure systems and protect personal information when communicating electronically.

However, no online service, electronic communication or storage system can be guaranteed to be completely secure.

By communicating electronically or using online counselling services, you acknowledge that there is a small risk that information could be accessed without authorisation. I take reasonable steps to minimise this risk and protect your privacy.

Where possible, you are encouraged to use a private location and secure internet connection when participating in online counselling.

Use of third-party services

In providing counselling and managing the practice, I may use trusted third-party service providers, such as email, website, payment, booking or technology providers.

Where a third-party service handles personal information on my behalf, I take reasonable steps to select services with appropriate privacy and security measures.

Some technology providers may store or process information outside Australia. Where this occurs, I take reasonable steps to ensure that information is handled in accordance with applicable privacy obligations.

Overseas disclosure

Some electronic or technology services used by the practice may involve information being stored or processed outside Australia.

Where personal information is likely to be disclosed to an overseas recipient, I will take reasonable steps to ensure that applicable privacy requirements are met.

Website enquiries

If you contact WomenHood Counselling through the website, the information you provide will be used to respond to your enquiry and, where appropriate, to provide or arrange counselling services.

Please avoid including highly sensitive personal or health information in a website enquiry or ordinary email unless it is necessary.

The website may also collect limited technical information, such as information about website usage, cookies or device information, depending on the website services and settings in use.

Direct marketing

Your personal or health information will never be used for direct marketing.

If you sign up to receive general newsletter or communications from WomenHood, you can unsubscribe or ask to stop receiving communications at any time.

How long are records kept?

Client records are retained for the period required by applicable Australian law and professional requirements (usually for 7 years after the last counselling session).

Once the required retention period has ended, records will be securely destroyed or disposed of.

Accessing your information

You may request access to personal information that I hold about you. You may also ask for information to be corrected if you believe it is inaccurate, incomplete or out of date. An administration fee will be charged for the time to prepare and release documents.

Requests can be made in writing using the contact details below.

I will respond to requests in accordance with applicable privacy laws. In some circumstances, access to particular information may be limited or refused where permitted or required by law.

Keeping information accurate

I take reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information I hold is accurate, complete and up to date.

If your contact details or other relevant information changes, please let me know so that your records can be updated.

Privacy breaches

I take reasonable steps to prevent privacy breaches.

If a privacy breach occurs and it is likely to result in serious harm to an affected person, I will seek appropriate advice and respond in accordance with the Notifiable Data Breaches scheme and any other applicable legal requirements.

This may include taking steps to contain the breach, assess the risk, notify affected individuals and notify the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner where required.

Privacy concerns or complaints

If you have a question, concern or complaint about the way your personal information is handled, please contact me in the first instance.

I will listen to your concern, investigate it appropriately and work with you to resolve it wherever possible.

If you are not satisfied with how your privacy concern has been handled, you may contact the **Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)**. Website: www.oaic.gov.au

Changes to this Privacy Policy

This Privacy Policy may be updated from time to time to reflect changes in legislation, professional requirements or the way information is handled within the practice.

The most recent version will be available on the WomenHood website.

Contact

If you have any questions about privacy or how your personal information is handled, please contact me:

Judy Graham
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judy@womenhood.com.au
Website: www.womenhood.com.au