

# CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROFESSIONAL CARE

As our clients and confidantes, you have the right to privileged communication and professional care with respect to therapy and all other aspects of our communication, including intake forms, emails and appointment scheduling. This also applies to our Blog ("Comments from the Couch") and the various tools on the website ([www.TheDucklows.ca](http://www.TheDucklows.ca)).

What we are saying is that without your prior consent (or, if you are under the age of 18, from your parent or guardian), we are not permitted to have conversations about you with others or write about you to anyone. We do not provide details about your counselling or person in any written, teaching or other form of communication.

Note, that when you completed your Intake Form on my web site, you were informed of this policy (see: <http://theducklows.ca/contact/intake-form/> at the bottom of the Intake Form). This needs to be accepted by you prior to any counselling treatment.

Because we provide holistic care for our clients, we may ask you to allow us to speak to other people with whom you are consulting such as psychiatrists, pastors, lawyers, doctors, psychotherapists, school counsellors, occupational or speech therapists and other professionals. For our clients under 18 years of age, we may also ask you to sign a waiver so that we can speak with your parent(s) or guardian(s).

There are a few exceptions to confidentiality that we would like you to know about. The exceptions are:

- If you ask us to send information to another professional (e.g. your physician or lawyer) we will ask for your signed release to do so. However, because you request this, we are not obligated to do so (see "reports to others" below).

- If you were referred by your physician or other professional, we will ask you to send a note or speak to him or her indicating that you are working with us. Sometimes we will simply ask you to take a business card to her/him.
- We are legally required to tell the Ministry of Children and Family if we should learn of a child being abused or harmed in some way. These children do not need to be under your guidance. If you report to us any abuse of a child by any adult, we are obligated to make a report.
- We are legally required to report a circumstance when someone's life is in danger, your own included.
- We are legally required to comply with a subpoena to appear in court or to provide e-notes and written notes and related documents to the court.
- If we are working with a couple or working with family members together, confidentiality can be somewhat complex. This is discussed with you personally.
- We may consult with another professional (or group of professionals) about our work together, but in this case your name and other identifying information is not used.

Paddy supports and follows the ethical guidelines of the College of Psychologists of BC regarding client confidentiality and other matters of therapeutic ethics. Carole supports and follows the ethical guidelines of Registered Clinical Counsellors in BC.

#### **Other comments for consideration:**

**E-notes and computers:** I take notes on a tablet computer, though Carole does so only seldom (I am a better typist). I gave up on paper years ago. It might seem unusual to see me typing while we are talking. If you have any concern or awkwardness about this, please let me know. And, I do everything reasonably possible to secure your e-files. My various computer geek friends and clients tell me that my e-notes are well secured.

**Coverage and costs:** You should also check to see if your fees for Paddy and Carole are covered by extended health plans (check your policy for amounts of coverage). Carole is a Registered Clinical Counsellor and I am a Registered Psychologist. If other members of your family are also covered under your insurance, you should have additional coverage per couple (e.g. double the amount) and more so for family therapy. Receipts might also be used for deductions on your income tax. See elsewhere on this website for current costs for counselling: <http://theducklows.ca/counselling-can-be-expensive/>.

**Subsidies:** We offer subsidies under a "Thirds Program" for those unable to afford the full counselling fee. We will subsidize your costs by 1/3 of the counselling fee as long as

another organization (e.g. church, community, family, etc.) provides 1/3 of the fee for a maximum of 10 sessions. In effect, this means that you receive 10 sessions of counselling for 1/3 of the price. (Paddy and Carole only determine whether one qualifies for the subsidy.) See <https://tinyurl.com/ydeb9y2f>.

**Blog and tools:** These are resources for you, therefore they are personal. In all published material, we take care to disguise the identities and situations of all of our clients. Though they are “for you,” they are not “about you.” See <http://theducklows.ca/blog-paddy-ducklow/>.

**Psychological assessments:** Paddy provides vocational and personality assessments on request. Some of the assessment results are provided directly to you. Other interpretative data is given to you in verbal form where discussion and interpretation is a priority. The Ducklows may provide this service to missionary and church organizations where you will be the client of the organization and not directly our clients. In that case, the organization may decide to provide assessment information to you. See: <http://theducklows.ca/life-id-identifying-your-life/>

**Skype, FaceTime and other online conversations:** Both Carole and Paddy provide this service with the understanding that this format may create additional vulnerabilities. The client is responsible to ensure communication protection as best as they are able. See: <http://theducklows.ca/sex-therapy-on-skype/>.

**Religion, faith and church:** I (Paddy) have been a Christian pastor, psychology-theology professor and missional consultant for many years. This might cause you to think I am “uptight” or “exclusive.” While I have a deep and real faith, I have seldom been accused of this. In fact, I am welcoming, inclusive, generous and hopeful, far from conservative-fundamentalistic and propositional. You are welcome to join with me (and Carole) whatever your encompassing perspective is. You will probably be celebrated. See: <http://theducklows.ca/pre-judging-others/>

**LGBTQ clients:** We make no distinction in providing individual, couple or family counselling, or any other therapy, for those on the gender continuum. Self-defined LGBTQ clients are welcome and will be respected. See: <http://theducklows.ca/gays-lgbtqs-welcome/>.

**Cancellations:** For booking appointments in a hurry, watch for cancellations once a day and especially on weekends when most people reschedule. If you cancel without giving me 48 hours notice, or if I cannot fill the time, 2 things will happen. You will get charged for the missed time (sorry), and somebody else misses their chance for the spot. This is where headaches happen. I ponder and ruminate and then send an invoice. Shoot! I hate to do this.

But I do. Then you get pissed off and start dissing me. I hate that too. See: <https://tinyurl.com/yc2rexyf>

**Reports to others:** It is common to have lawyers, insurance companies and others, request client information about your personal life. These people provide requests signed by you asking me to disclose what you have already told me is confidential. Here is the problem: say you were in a rear-ender and have soft-tissue damage and the lawyer is representing your financial interests. But I am seeing you for marriage counselling and I receive this request about the car accident. As I am not permitted to edit my e-notes, do you wish for me to forward your conflictual, financial, parenting and sexual history to a legal assistant, lawyer and others to have access to my private notes? I hope you say "NO" loudly. And this is why I standardly reject such requests.

**In summary:** Be assured that we will take every measure possible to guard your name, reputation and integrity. We will do our best to treat you honourably and respectfully in all our transactions. When we make mistakes, we will take responsibility and make amends where we can.

If you have any questions about confidentiality or other ethics / trust issues, you may ask TheDucklows about this at any time.