



mission
psychology
group

Dr. Kristina Towill & Dr. Ann-Louise Ellwood
Registered Psychologists

#306 - 3001 Tutt Street, Kelowna, BC V1Y 2H4
P (250) 763-3302, F (250) 763-3308

INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS

Dr. Kristina Towill, R. Psych. (CPBC # 1545)

Welcome to my practice. I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to be of help to you.

This brochure answers some questions clients often ask about my therapy practice. It is very important to me that you know how we will work together. I believe that our work will be most helpful when you have a clear understanding of what we are trying to do.

This brochure briefly discusses the following areas:

- ❖ My training, professional background, and approach to therapy
- ❖ What typically happens in the first, and subsequent appointments
- ❖ How long therapy might take
- ❖ The risks and benefits of therapy
- ❖ The terms and limits of confidentiality, and
- ❖ Appointment and Fee information

I encourage you to carefully read through this entire brochure, and to note any areas on which you are not clear or any question that you may have. After you read this brochure, we will discuss in person any questions or comments that you have, and how these issues will apply to your own situation such that you will most optimally benefit from my services.

About Psychotherapy

Because you will invest a good deal of time and energy into therapy, it is imperative that you choose a therapist carefully. I strongly believe that you should feel comfortable with the therapist you choose, most importantly with his or her skills and competence. When you are confident in your therapist's ability and ethics, you are likely to benefit most from therapy. The following information will familiarize you with how I practice, as well with my training and background. Don't hesitate to discuss any of this with me personally. If you were referred by another professional, or came by my name through a friend, I encourage you to ask that person about their experiences with me.

My approach to therapy draws primarily on cognitive-behavioural principles and strategies. Cognitive-behavioural therapy has a large research base to support its efficacy with a wide range of problems. At the heart of this approach is the notion that much of how we feel and behave is caused by our thoughts – that is, how we think about ourselves, others, and the world around us. I will alter this approach to address your specific problems and goals. Depending on the clients' own goals for therapy, we may look at some of the following areas:

- ❖ Clients' expectations of themselves, significant others & of their relationships
- ❖ Core beliefs and thinking styles,
- ❖ Current stressors, fears, or anxieties that are compromising the enjoyment of relationships and life in general.

About Confidentiality

I will treat with great care all the information that you share with me. It is your legal right that our sessions and my records about you are kept private. In general, I will tell no one what you tell me. If I need to consult or otherwise speak about you to another professional, I will always ask you to sign a "Release of Information" form.

In all but a few rare situations, your confidentiality (that is, your privacy) is protected by law and by the rules and ethics of my profession. Here are the most common cases in which I cannot ensure that your confidentiality will be protected:

1. If you are involved in legal proceedings, my records could be subpoenaed and/or I could be asked to testify in court.
2. If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or another person, the law requires me to try to protect you or that other person. This usually means telling others about the threat, for example, the police.
3. If I believe that a child has been or will be abused or neglected, I am legally required to report this to the authorities.
4. If some or all of your therapy is being covered by an insurance company, I may be obliged to provide basic information, for example, the dates we've met, my fees, and perhaps a treatment plan. Depending on your coverage, I will review this more with you during our first session.

I also may consult with other therapists or professionals. This helps me to give you high-quality treatment. Your name will never be used in these consultations.

My Background

I am a Registered Psychologist in the province of British Columbia (Registration #1545), and a doctoral graduate of the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, at UBC. My training and practice focuses on individual and relationship issues, as well as sexual and reproductive health. I have been working directly with individuals and couples on these issues for over a decade. Prior to completing my doctoral degree in Psychology, I was an elementary and high school teacher, and a school counsellor. These experiences, coupled with my experiences as a Psychologist, afford me a comfort and competence in working with marital mediation cases, in particular, when young children are involved. Additionally, I have interned and worked in a variety of settings, including hospitals. In these settings, I have worked with a wide breadth of mental health issues – for example, depression, anxiety, and a host of psychiatric conditions. My doctoral training in sexual and reproductive health has included internships at GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre's Sexual Health Service in Vancouver Hospital and Health Sciences Centre for Sexual Medicine. I proudly provide Psychological assessment and counselling services to the RCMP as well as Veterans Affairs. In addition to my private therapy practice, I am a Consulting Psychologist to Olive Fertility Centre in Vancouver and to the Kelowna Regional Fertility Centre in the Okanagan, as well as to Kelowna Band Surgery Centre. I have served as an Associate Professor at UBC-O's Psychology Department, teaching a variety of Psychology courses. I am a specialist lecturer for Pfizer Canada and other pharmaceutical companies.

I am an active member of the College of Psychologists of BC and a retired member of the Alberta College of Psychologists. I am also a member of the BC Psychological Association; the International Association of Cognitive Psychology; the International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health; and the Sexual Information and Education Council of Canada and the Counselling Special Interest Group of the Canadian Fertility and Andrology Society.

I think of my role as one of an expert guide and educator. My goal is to work with whatever problems you may have, such that in short order you are able to cope with and resolve these challenges on your own. I pride myself on working efficiently and competently, and we will regularly look at our progress and goals to ensure that our work together is maximally beneficial to you.

What Can I Expect From Our Sessions?

The First Session

How sessions will look depends a lot on the challenges you're facing and your own goals for therapy. Speaking generally, in the first session we will usually spend one to one and a half hours reviewing your background – including your family background, current relationship, medical history, and so on – and your present circumstances and experience of the problem(s). I will ask you about your understanding of the problem(s), and will likely share some thoughts that I have about these challenges as well. By the end of the first or second session, I will share with you my impression of the problem and how I envision us proceeding. I view our working relationship as one of collaboration and partnership. I will use my knowledge and skills to assist you and I will look to you for problem areas that you'd like to work on, goals, and so forth. Good therapy requires effort, perseverance, and your active involvement in exercises we do, both in and between sessions. I have a large library of books on various topics that may be relevant to your situation, and I am happy to lend them to you. I may also give you handouts and articles, and encourage you to educate yourself as much as possible on the area in which you are having difficulty.

The Second & Subsequent Sessions

After the first session, we will tailor the sessions to maximize the benefit you derive. I may invite you to partake in specific exercises – for example, deep relaxation and guided imagery or communication exercises with your spouse – or I may spend time explaining “homework” exercises that I would like you to do between sessions, in the privacy of your own home. These may relate to changes in the way you think about and react to situations in your day-to-day life; or may involve experimenting with new means of intimate connections, and so on. Sometimes we will “just talk”, but always in a purposeful way. For example, I might encourage you and/or your significant other to explore how particular thoughts or beliefs are impacting on your life and relationships, and what other beliefs you can “practice” that would better support your health and happiness. Of course, I will always explain the rationale of any technique I use and you are free to decide whether you'd like to proceed, or try another strategy.

Most of my clients see me once a week, or once every two weeks, for a few months. After that, we may meet less often, ensuring that things are on track and that you're continuing to make good progress. My goal is to work as efficiently as possible, such that no more time, energy, and money are invested than need be. I am not a therapist that spends years probing early childhood experiences. Rather, I'm most interested in assisting you in the **here and now**, so that you can live your tomorrow with the skills and perspective to enjoy satisfying lives and relationships. You are absolutely free to stop therapy at any time, and I will be very happy to provide you with alternative resources and professionals to contact should this be your choice. As we work together, we will collaboratively decide when stopping therapy would be a good choice.

The Risks and Benefits of Therapy

As with any treatment, there are some risks as well as many benefits to therapy. Some clients will experience, for a time, uncomfortable levels of negative emotions. Clients may recall unpleasant memories. Sometimes major life decisions are made, including decisions that involve changed relationships or separation from significant others. Sometimes, too, a client's problem may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment. Most of these risks are well accepted by clients as they go about making important changes in their lives. Of course, I will be available to discuss any possible negative effects of our work together.

Overwhelmingly, my clients report positive changes in their lives and relationships. Relationships may become more intimate and satisfying, and clients feel more equipped to deal with life's challenges. Often there is a reduction in negative feelings, and a resolution to longstanding problems. In addition to the countless positive testimonies clients have shared with me about our work together, the therapeutic approach that I use has been shown to be effective in hundreds of well-designed research studies.

About Our Appointments

Cancelled Appointments

A cancelled appointment delays our work. I consider our meetings very important and ask that you do the same. Please try not to miss appointments whenever you can help it. When you must cancel, please try and give me at least a week's notice. If something comes up last minute, I ask that you give me **48 hours notice, NOT INCLUDING WEEKENDS**. For example, if you are scheduled for an appointment on Monday, you must call to cancel by Wednesday, the week before your appointment, or you will be charged for the full session. Except for unpredictable emergencies, **you will be charged the regular fee for any missed sessions where you have not given 48 hours notice.**

Fees, Payment, and Billings

Fees are charged based on the services rendered. You will be notified both verbally and in writing, of your session fee prior to your 1st appointment at our office. Please **pay for each session at its end** with a cheque or cash payment. My office will issue you a receipt for all payments made.

If you have partial or full coverage for our sessions through an insurance provider or other extended health provider, it is usually your responsibility to look into such benefits and seek reimbursement from your insurer. **Regardless of third party coverage, my fee is expected to be paid at the end of each session.**

If You Need to Contact Me

Because I have a young family and work on a part-time basis, my days at the office are very full. If you have issues that you wish to discuss with me between our sessions, I would ask that you make an appointment to see me. **If you are in crisis between sessions, you should call 911; see your family physician immediately; or go to the nearest emergency room at your local hospital.**