



# Mission Psychology Group

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Registered Psychologists

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## 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 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

My approach to therapy draws primarily on cognitive-behavioral and mindfulness principles. Cognitive 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' 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 or other third party payor, I may be obliged to provide basic information, for example, the dates we've met, my fees, and perhaps a treatment plan and progress report. Depending on your coverage, I will review this with you directly.
5. If you have been referred by another health care professional--for example, a physician--it is standard practice that I will follow up with them, either by phone or in writing, to discuss aspects of your care, clinical impressions and possible recommendations. Please clearly notify me if you do NOT wish for me to have communication with the referring care provider. In the absence of this notification, it is assumed that your referring care provider and I have implicit consent to collaborate in the best interest of your care.

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 Privacy Policy**

Therapy sessions are private, confidential meetings for all parties involved. Please note that audio and/or video recording of any aspect of therapy, without the express written consent of the psychologist, is a criminal offence. Our office does not permit sessions to be recorded at any time.

## **My Background**

I am a Registered Psychologist in the province of British Columbia and a doctoral graduate of the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, at UBC. My training and practice have focused on individual and relationship issues, as well as reproductive health issues and obesity. I have been working directly with individuals and couples on these issues for two decades.

Prior to completing my doctoral degree in Psychology, I was an elementary and high school teacher and a school counsellor. I have a keen interest in the wellbeing of children and youth, and enjoy working with adults struggling with parenting challenges. I have interned in a variety of settings, wherein I have worked with a wide breadth of mental health issues. My doctoral training included internships at Lion's Gate Hospital, GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre in Vancouver, and Kelowna General Hospital's Rehabilitation and Psychiatry departments. I am an affiliate Psychologist to Kelowna Regional Fertility Centre and Vancouver's Olive Fertility Centre, as well as a Consulting Psychologist to Kelowna Band Surgery Centre. I have also proudly served as a provider of psychological assessment and therapy services for the RCMP and Veterans Affairs Canada for many years.

I am an active member of the College of Psychologists of BC and the BC Psychological Association, and am a retired member of the Alberta College of Psychologists.

## 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.

### 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, mindful relaxation and guided imagery work 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 communicating with others. Sometimes we will “just talk”, but always in a purposeful way.

Most of my clients see me once every two to four weeks, for several 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 and Counselling Orientations**

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. Therapy also involves ongoing assessment on the part of the psychologist. This continuous assessment is necessary to best understand clients' strengths and vulnerabilities. Assessment may be informal or more of a formal process. The latter may include semi-structured or structured interview questions, and/or questionnaires. Psychologists are sometimes required to write reports for other care providers or third parties (for example, insurance companies). These reports typically summarize the psychologist's observations and any assessment results. It is important that clients understand that the results of this assessment process can be distressing. This risk is an inherent risk that all clients assume, when they agree to any assessment-based relationship with a psychologist. 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 connected and satisfying, and clients feel better equipped to deal with life's challenges. Often clients report more confidence and confidence in relating to distressing feelings and thoughts, regardless of the challenges that life brings.

## **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. If something comes up and you need to cancel your session, our office requires **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 1<sup>st</sup> appointment at our office. Please **pay for each session at its end** by debit, or with a cash payment or cheque. My office will issue you a formal 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 your responsibility to look into such benefits and seek reimbursement from your insurer.

### **If You Need to Contact Me**

Because I have a busy family of my own 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.**