



Welcome to Peak Resilience!

First, we would like to commend you on the sometimes difficult decision to come to counselling. Getting started can often be the toughest part. Before we start the counselling process, we will explore information that will help you understand the possible risks and benefits associated with counselling. The purpose of informed consent is to build safety and understanding within our therapeutic relationship, in order to get the best possible results.

We will continue to revisit informed consent throughout our therapeutic relationship, if we're trying a new therapeutic tool or if any of the circumstances in our therapy change. Informed consent is an ongoing, collaborative process.

Peak Resilience acknowledges with respect and gratitude that the land on which we work is on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples - xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations, whose ancient relationships with the land continue to this day.

What is Counselling? What are the Risks and Benefits?

Counselling can be quite different than talking to a friend or loved one. Counselling provides a space and opportunity for you to explore behaviour, relationships, feelings, or thoughts that trouble you and cause difficulty in your life. Counselling is also a legitimate source of support in a crisis or during a difficult time. The counsellor will provide empathic support and will help you challenge old ways of thinking or behaving that aren't serving you anymore. If you've tried counselling before, your counsellor will probably ask you what was helpful and unhelpful about the counselling you've had. This is so we can tailor our services to your specific wants and needs. If this is your first time trying counselling, you and your counsellor will figure out what works best for you over time.

The benefits of empathic support and changing unhelpful ways of thinking can be drastic. You may start to feel more self-compassion, understand unhealthy habits, and create new ways of thinking and behaving. Counselling can also bring deeper personal insight and awareness, better ways of understanding and coping with problems, and improved relationships.

You should know however, counselling sometimes requires that you be willing to examine difficult topics or times in your life, to experience stronger than usual emotions, and to try out new and different behaviours. These changes in behaviours may result in changes in personal relationships, some of which can be positive, some can be challenging. Finally, changes through counselling often require persistent effort in your life and typically take a bit of time.

What's an example of a risk and benefit? Let's say a woman comes to counselling because she has extremely low self-worth and is sick of hating herself. Through an empathic, supportive relationship with her therapist, she starts to love herself more. However, through therapy she also realizes the reason she has low self-worth is because her family was never very supportive to her, and often cut her down verbally. She starts to distance herself from the hurtful family members, resulting in more tension. Although the woman feels drastically better overall, she is now trying to figure out how to set strong boundaries with family and some hurtful friends too.

Consent in Counselling

What you choose to discuss and explore in counselling is all up to you. You are the boss! The counsellor's job is to truly understand your struggles and goals, so they can help you fully utilize your existing strengths and find your own solutions. At various times in counselling, your counsellor might recommend various therapeutic activities or "homework", and you can always give or deny consent at any time in the counselling process.

The Counselling Relationship

Multiple studies over the years have shown that the most important predictor of success in counselling is the relationship you have with your counsellor. At the beginning of counselling, you will just be getting to know your counsellor and how they work. We recommend trying at least three sessions to determine if your counsellor is a good fit for your needs. Ideally, you'll feel honoured, respected and cared for in your counselling sessions.

The counselling relationship is different from other relationships in that it's relatively one sided. You will most likely be sharing quite a few details about yourself and your life, while the counsellor will share few details about their personal life. This ensures the focus can be kept on you. This is your time to feel cared for and explore your struggles, so your counsellor will maintain necessary boundaries to avoid overlapping or dual relationships. For example, your counsellor will not:

- Engage in any other business with you other than therapy
- Be your therapist if they are your friend or family member
- Engage in a friendship, romantic, or sexual relationship with current or former clients
- Give medical, legal or financial advice
- Receive gifts (other than small token gifts such as a thank you card)
- Be your teacher, supervisor or evaluator while engaged in counselling with you
- Be connected on social media (e.g.- cannot accept "friend requests")

If for some reason you don't feel like your counsellor is the right fit for you, we would be happy to transfer you to another counsellor.

All of the counsellors at Peak Resilience understand that finding the right "fit" is a very individual process and we don't take offence when people decide to switch. Our only goal is that you find counselling helpful. Alternatively, there is a very small chance that your counsellor may recommend you see a different counsellor if they feel there is a conflict of interest or they are not the best counsellor for your needs. If this is the case, they will be as transparent as possible to let you know the reason for their recommendation.

In order to maintain the safety of your therapy, please don't attend sessions under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This will ensure that your participation in counselling is voluntary and intentional. If you seem as though you're under the influence of alcohol or drugs, your counsellor may recommend you to end the session and return another day. If this is the case, the fee for the session would still apply.

Counsellor Qualifications

Your counsellor possesses a Master's degree and has also engaged in various post graduate training in order to provide effective, ethical counselling services. Counsellors at Peak Resilience belong to professional organizations that provide continuing education, code of ethics, as well as accountability in care.

Counsellors may be professional members of the British Columbia Association of Clinical Counsellors, the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, and/or the British Columbia College of Social Workers. Your counsellor will discuss their background with you specifically in your first session, or whenever you have questions about their background or education. You can also read your counsellor's bio at peak-resilience.com/#counsellors for more information.

At Peak Resilience, we use many modes of therapy including but not limited to: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Solution Focused Therapy, Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, Person Centred Therapy, Dialectical Behavioural Therapy, Motivational Interviewing, and Strength Based Therapy. Your counsellor will discuss the best approach that will help you reach your goals.

At the bottom of this form, your counsellor will note their professional ID number, and this information will also be provided on each emailed receipt you receive after every paid session.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a necessary condition of counselling, often because the things that people need to share are what they don't want other people to know about. Confidentiality continues after the end of the counselling relationship. This means your counsellor will not speak with anyone but you about your story and situation.

In order to provide the best counselling possible and for the counsellor's continued clinical development, your counsellor will occasionally talk with a clinical supervisor or colleagues about some of the issues you are dealing with. Clinical supervisors or colleagues will be bound by the same confidentiality as your counsellor. As part of the supervision and clinical development process, your counsellor may ask your consent to record one or more of your sessions. The counsellor will review the "recorded sessions informed consent form" with you prior to recording anything, and of course you can choose to deny consent to this with no penalty to you or your counselling relationship.

The team of counsellors at Peak Resilience have access to all client files. However, our code of ethics enforces a "need to know" policy- so we only access information on a need to know basis and will not look up clients unless there is a specific reason to. For example, if you wanted

to change counsellors, your new counsellor could access your information to continue your care.

If you would like your counsellor to share information with anyone else outside of Peak Resilience, we will discuss the risks and benefits of this, and you can sign a release of information form stating what information you'd like released, to whom, over what period of time. You have the right to revoke this permission at any time. An example of a benefit of getting a release to contact another person would be to coordinate care with a doctor or psychiatrist.

Limitations to Confidentiality

There are three important limits to maintaining confidentiality all counsellors must follow. These primarily concern risks of harm:

- There is risk of harm or neglect to a child or vulnerable/dependent adult
- If a counsellor believes you are at risk of harming yourself or another person;
- For the purposes of complying with a legal requirement such as requests from ICBC or WorkSafe BC.

Communication

We want communication to be as convenient and confidential as possible. If you need to contact your counsellor, you can call Peak Resilience reception at 604-682-PEAK (7325) and provide your first name, your counsellor's name and the number they can reach you at.

Another easy, fast way of reaching your counsellor directly is through their direct email. Peak Resilience uses the Google Workspace email service, which is consistently leading the industry in encryption and security, but we still recommend that you don't email sensitive health related information. The email correspondence between yourself and Peak Resilience will be copied into your account file, so your counsellor can provide the best and most seamless care possible.

When you call our main reception or email our general connect@peak-resilience.com email, our reception or administration staff can access your information on our system. We will only access the information that is necessary to help you at that time (such as your name, contact information and appointment time). All of our staff are bound by an oath of confidentiality and will not release any of your information at any time. Reception staff only have access to your profile information (name, address etc) and are unable to access your clinical notes.

Please do not email or call if you are currently in crisis, as we cannot guarantee an immediate response. If you are in crisis, please call the crisis centre at 1-800-784-2433 or emergency services at 9-1-1.

In general, feel free to email or call if you have relatively simple inquiries. If you have more complex issues to discuss, those are best left for your therapy sessions (unless you have discussed an email counselling arrangement with your counsellor directly).

Your Personal Information

Your personal information is only collected to be utilized by your counsellor in the delivery of counselling services to you. Your personal information will not be disclosed to any third party without expressed, written consent by you or in the case of the above limits to confidentiality.

As a part of counselling, records are kept of your therapy sessions. These records include minimal information that is important for your counsellor to remember when providing ethical and effective care. We aim to include the most minimal information possible in your notes, to decrease possible harm that may occur on the very low chance your file is legally requested by outside parties. Our files are electronic and we use a Vancouver-based company called "JaneApp" to manage our clinic information, scheduling and credit card payments. The data in our system is encrypted using 256-bit encryption when sent between your counsellor's device and the Jane servers (in the same way as your banking information would be). If you'd like more detailed information about the privacy in the Jane system, please visit <https://janeapp.com/guide/basics/security-faq>. At any time, you may simply request a copy of your file, and one will be made available within 30 days with an administration fee of \$50.00.

Your records with Peak Resilience will be kept in perpetuity unless a clear request is made to the contrary. Should your counsellor pass away unexpectedly, another counsellor at Peak Resilience will take responsibility for their clinical records. Any records older than three years will be destroyed. All current clients will be asked if they wish their records to be transferred to a new counsellor. All remaining records will be destroyed once the three year mark is reached.

Length, Frequency, and Termination of Sessions

While appointments are typically scheduled in one hour blocks, you will actually receive 50 minutes of direct time each session. This allows for 50 minutes of clinical expertise, then 10 minutes to record notes from your session. The frequency of sessions will be determined and negotiated during our time together, based on your struggles and goals.

You are free to terminate counselling at any time and there is no pressure to continue to attend counselling. If you decide to end your counselling, we hope you can find a way to discuss your contemplation regarding completing counselling with your counsellor. If we haven't heard from you in a while, we may email or call you to follow up. This is so the counsellor can ensure you have all the necessary resources in place.

Feedback Process

During each session (most likely close to the end of the session), your counsellor will ask for your feedback regarding how you felt the session went. This is a great time for you to reflect on the session and express what stood out to you, what you found helpful and what wasn't as helpful.

Sometimes giving feedback can feel uncomfortable. Ideally, you can build safety within your counselling relationship so giving feedback feels somewhat scary but doable. If you are unable to discuss feedback with your counsellor, believe that your counsellor will be unwilling to listen and respond, or that they have behaved unethically, please inform the Clinical Director of Peak Resilience, Jennifer Hollinshead at jennifer@peak-resilience.com.

If the feedback process within Peak Resilience does not satisfy your concerns you can contact your counsellor's association or regulatory body to make a formal complaint (British Columbia Association of Clinical Counsellors; Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association; British Columbia College of Social Workers).

Should you decide to pursue legal action against your counsellor or Peak Resilience you agree that the courts of the province of British Columbia shall have exclusive jurisdiction to hear any complaint, demand, claim, or cause of action that arises from your relationship with Peak Resilience.

Counselling Fees

Peak Resilience is an alternative counselling practice, which means our clients pay our counsellors directly for service. Our fees are designed to make high quality, ethical, and sustainable therapy available for more people. This means our regular rates supplement our lower cost or free services (such as services for indigenous clients).

Session fees are set at \$150.00 +GST per 50 minutes for individuals and \$195.00 +GST per 50 minutes for couples, and are due at the end of each session. For extended sessions, the fees will increase proportionally to the time allotted (a 75 minute individual session will be \$250.00 +GST for example). We believe the quality of the services we provide are commensurate with our fee structure. If you have any concerns about your fee, please speak with your counsellor or Jennifer Hollinshead at jennifer@peak-resilience.com.

Emailed receipts will be issued for each paid session and will include your counsellor's name and professional association ID number for insurance claims. Receipts can only be provided for services that have been rendered, and can only be issued to the individual receiving the services (we cannot provide receipts in advance or with anyone else's name). We can provide invoices (that show the outstanding balance) for future sessions at the client's request. This can be helpful if another party is covering the payment.

Receipts can be submitted to your extended health care benefits provider after each session. Please confirm with your health care provider to ensure that Registered Clinical Counsellors and/or Registered Social Workers are covered in your plan. If you determine they are not covered, you have the option to write a letter to your employer or benefits provider to ask them to include RCCs or RSWs to the plan. Sometimes, only Registered Psychologists are covered in health care plans (because plans are usually based in Ontario- which does not have RCCs and only has Psychologists). Health care spending accounts can often cover the cost of counselling as well.

Cancellation Policy

Clients will be charged their full session fee for all missed sessions or sessions cancelled with less than 48 hours notice. Clients arriving late for appointments are entitled to receive the remainder of the scheduled appointment for the full appointment fee. If you are unable to pay the fee for your session, we will be unable to provide counselling services until the balance is paid.

We charge the full fee for missed and late appointment times because we are charged for various overhead costs, so missed appointments are very expensive for us. In addition, your missed appointment or late cancellation means we were not able to schedule someone else in that time spot. We hope you understand this policy, and invite you to discuss it further with your counsellor if you have any questions or concerns.

Session fees may be paid by cash, debit, credit card or cheque made out to Peak Resilience. When paying by cash, no change will be provided. If a cheque cannot be honoured due to insufficient funds, a \$25.00 administration fee will be charged in addition to the session fee.

We understand accessing private practice counselling services can be a financial investment. We invite you to repeatedly reassess your investment in counselling with your counsellor directly. Our goal is that you feel the return on your investment has been satisfactory at the least, but hopefully exceptional.

No Symptom Policy

We've learned a LOT from the pandemic- including wiping out colds and flus because we were isolating when we had symptoms! So, moving forward (pandemic or *hopefully* no pandemic), our cancellation policy now includes a no-symptoms policy.

For our in-office clients:

Please email your counsellor and connect@peak-resilience.com to request that your appointment be changed from "in person" to "virtual" if you (or anyone you have been in close contact with) has communicable disease symptoms and/or a confirmed case of COVID-19.

If you come into our physical office with communicable disease symptoms, your appointment will be cancelled and you will be charged the full fee. We love you, we just don't love your cold!

Communicable disease symptoms include (but are not limited to):

- Fever
- Runny nose/nasal congestion
- Cough, sore throat and/or difficulty swallowing
- New loss or decrease in sense of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Headache
- Chills
- Hoarse voice
- Unexplained fatigue or aches and pains
- Nausea/Vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain

For clients who access in-office services (in addition to clients who access us virtually), we'll email you a unique recurring Zoom link to access your virtual counselling sessions.

How to find your recurring zoom link:

- Save the email you received with your Zoom link or
- Find it in your document sharing centre at peakresilience.janeapp.com

When in doubt, stay home and take advantage of virtual sessions so we can keep the most vulnerable members of our community safe.

What about the Peak Resilience Team?

Our no-symptom policy extends to our staff. We reserve the right to change your in-person session to a virtual session if your counsellor is experiencing communicable disease symptoms and cannot access the office. If this should happen, we will notify you as soon as possible and point you to your recurring zoom link for your session time. If you're unable to access virtual counselling from your home, bring your device (phone/tablet/computer) and we'll ensure you have comfy, confidential space to meet with your counsellor virtually.

We expect that switching from in-person to virtual sessions will be relatively common throughout the cold and flu season, and we appreciate your patience and understanding.

Acknowledgement of Informed Consent

My signature below indicates I understand and accept the preceding statements. I have had an opportunity to discuss the contents of this informed consent with my counsellor, had my questions answered to my satisfaction, and am fully prepared to enter into a counselling agreement with my counsellor at Peak Resilience.

Name of Client	Signature	
Name of Counsellor	Signature	Date
(BCACC)	or	(BC CSW)
Counsellor's Professional Association (Circle)	ID Number	

The information provided in the informed consent process was adapted from various sources including:

The BC Association of Clinical Counsellors Standard for Informed Consent to Clinical Counselling and the Collection, use and Disclosure of Personal Information
<http://bc-counsellors.org/app/uploads/2015/09/1BCACC-Standards-Informed-Consent-2010.pdf>

Informed Consent for Counselling at the University of Lethbridge Counselling Services
http://www.uleth.ca/sites/default/files/informed_consent_U_of_L_sept_9_2010.pdf

BC Association of Clinical Counsellors Personal Information Protection Act: A Counsellor's Guide for Developing Client Personal Information Protection Policies and Procedures
<http://bc-counsellors.org/app/uploads/2015/10/PIPA-ACounsellorsGuideOctober2004.pdf>

BC Association of Clinical Counsellors Payment for Clinical Counselling Practice Standards

<http://bc-counsellors.org/app/uploads/2015/09/2BCACC-Standard-Payment-Clinical-Counselling-Services-2010.pdf>

BC Association of Clinical Counsellors Standard for the use of Technology in Counselling

<http://bc-counsellors.org/app/uploads/2015/09/7BCACC-Standard-Use-of-Technology-2011.pdf>

G-Suite Email Service Provider Security FAQ

<https://gsuite.google.com/faq/security>

Jane App Guide: Basics- Security-FAQ

<https://janeapp.com/guide/basics/security-faq>

Jane App: Privacy

<https://janeapp.com/privacy>