



Client Service Agreement

Thank you for trusting us to help you with your relationship. Please read this document carefully and note any questions you have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting. When you sign this, it forms an agreement between you and us on the terms of our service.

Defining the Client

The words “us”, “our”, “we”, etc. in this document refer to **CoupleSolutions**, represented by **Andre Lampa**. The words “you”, “your”, etc. refer to **all those who have signed this agreement**. The words “couple” and “partner” also extend to any in a group or family who sign.

When several of you sign, **our duty is to serve your joint relationship, not you as individuals, even when we meet alone (“solo”) with any of you.**

Otherwise, if you sign alone as an **individual client**, our duty is only to you and does not extend to anyone else, whether or not they meet with or speak to us in conjunction with you.

Nature of Services

Our role is to help people develop their intimate relationships in the ways they desire. When a couple is our client, our goal is to support each partner in taking responsibility for the relationship, though often in differing ways. In **couple therapy**, we do not solve disputes for you, but help you learn and practice new ways of being with and dealing with each other. If we first undertake **discernment counselling**, our goal is to help you gain clarity and confidence in deciding upon the future of a relationship, before requiring any commitment to improving it.

We employ a variety of well-founded theoretical approaches and practical techniques from psychology which are supported by scientific research and best professional practices. We do not make use of any mystical, supernatural, or religious beliefs, frameworks, or practices.

We may outline a specific plan for you, or work on developing goals on an open-ended basis. **We do not “fix” or “cure” anyone**, but help each of you to discover and make the changes you desire. You will benefit to the degree that you are **open, willing, and motivated**.

In every session, we make efforts to monitor each person’s current level of comfort and progress. Over time, our work usually leads to less distress and turmoil, solutions to specific problems, and more satisfaction and happiness in your relationship. Each of you may gain personal insights, learn new ways to cope, develop new skills, and change unwanted behaviours.

However, because of your individual differences, histories, and relationship dynamics, **we make no guarantees as to what you will experience or how your relationship may change**. As you progress, you may experience disturbing feelings or unwelcome life changes, due for example to uncomfortable processes, unexpected realizations, or shifting ways of relating. In some cases, one or more of you may elect to terminate the relationship. Such outcomes may be part of your joint or individual path of growth, and are not necessarily incompatible with our appropriate service to you. **You acknowledge that all responsibility for outcomes rests solely with you and your partner.**

Duration of Service

In **discernment counselling**, it usually takes less than five sessions to decide on a path, even a tentative one. After each session, you both decide whether to have another.

However, to make changes in longstanding relational patterns, a longer period of **couple therapy** is usually required. There may not seem to be much progress in the first few sessions, but your patience and perseverance will pay off. While you may refuse any particular discussion, exercise, or intervention, or discontinue altogether at any time, **we recommend you allow at least six sessions** before deciding whether therapy is worthwhile for you.

Particularly, it would be most helpful to all of us if you **voice any concerns about the therapeutic process or our service as soon as they arise**. We truly welcome the opportunity to make this work for you. If you remain uncomfortable or dissatisfied, or if for any reason we feel unable to serve you properly, we will attempt to refer you to a more suitable professional.

Upon a decision to discontinue therapy, we offer a **final wrap-up consultation at no charge** to help consolidate your gains, determine your future goals, and evaluate our service.

Professional Fees

You will be required to prepay for each session in order to hold the booked time. For cancellations or changes made with sufficient notice, prepayments are fully refundable or transferable to new bookings. However, **if you cancel or change a booking that is scheduled to start within 24 hours, do not appear for an appointment, or arrive late, you agree to be charged in full** for the booked time, even if the appointment must end as scheduled, or it does not proceed because we are no longer available.

We may change our fees at any time, except for sessions already prepaid. For any extra services that you request or require, such as telephone or on-site consultations, other types of therapy, preparation of reports or records, meetings with others, and so on, you will be required to pay for our time and expenses. We will give you advance notice of any extra or changed fees.

Any banking fees we incur for any of your rejected payments will also be charged to you. We reserve the right to withhold service if your account is not paid, to charge interest on outstanding balances, and to seek payment by normal collection means. If approached in advance in circumstances of unusual financial hardship, we may be willing to negotiate an adjustment.

Receipts are supplied on request. If you provide the details of your benefits coverage, we will help you determine whether our service is eligible for an insurance claim. However, it is your responsibility to pay our fees directly, whether or not your insurer reimburses you.

Upon termination of our service, we will refund you any prepaid fees for unused sessions. (If you have prepaid for a discounted package of sessions, you will be refunded the difference between that amount and the regular price for all sessions that have already occurred.)

Confidentiality With Outside Parties

As you grant us your trust, you will be asked to disclose a range of sensitive personal information that we reasonably expect may be relevant to our work together. In general, **we will not identify you as our client, nor disclose any of your personal information to anyone else**, including your family members, employers, or other physical or mental health care providers. Nevertheless, **the following circumstances are exceptions to this confidentiality**.

- All of you may give us **express written authorization** to disclose to a particular party.
- As do most mental health professionals, we regularly find it helpful to **consult other professionals** about our cases (usually at our own expense). Such consultations always exclude any identifying information about you, and anyone we consult would also be ethically bound to protect your privacy in the same ways we do. We will **not** inform you about these consultations unless we feel it is important to our work together. Any consent you give for audio or video recordings of our sessions would extend to this use.
- If you reveal or we suspect a **risk or occurrence of child abuse or physical harm to yourself or others**, we may have a legal obligation or ethical duty to report the relevant information to the appropriate parties. This may include those at risk and/or those who may help provide protection, such as the MCFD, the police, medical personnel, etc.
- In Canada, **there is no right of privileged communication** that prevents counsellors from being compelled to reveal client information. However, we will not do so unless ordered by legal authorities. Furthermore, any assessments and opinions suitable for criminal or civil legal proceedings, custody evaluations, etc. are outside our scope of practice and expertise.

Notwithstanding the above, to maintain a sense of safety and trust during this sensitive process, you agree not to reveal to others any statements or disclosures made by your partner or us in our meetings, nor use such information to the detriment of your partner or others, nor seek from us any notes, records, declarations, or testimony for civil or family legal proceedings.

(Andre Lampa is responsible for compliance with the Personal Information Protection Act, which further outlines your rights and how we may collect and use personal information.)

Confidentiality Between Members of the Couple

We often request to meet alone with single members of a client couple or group to get a fuller understanding of that individual. Any partner may also request such solo sessions.

A solo session is also an opportunity for that person to assess and develop their desire and ability to work on the relationship while not directly influenced by the presence of their partner. It may occasionally include intensive individual work not directly relevant to the relationship.

While truth and disclosure are typically seen as optimal for a healthy relationship, we recognize that in some instances privacy and discretion between partners may be more appropriate and beneficial for the relationship. In any case, each person has the right and responsibility to decide for themselves what they wish to reveal to their partner. Thus, with the same exceptions to *Confidentiality With Outside Parties* listed above, **we will not disclose any information we gain in solo sessions or private messages to the other partner**. We will only inform the other partner (in advance) that such a meeting is taking place.

Nonetheless, in contrast to feelings or opinions which are often subjective or transient, if a person privately discloses **secret facts, plans, or history** (that they may or may not be responsible for) and explicitly **requests that we keep that secret from their partner**, we must consider several complex questions in determining how our work might proceed.

- How might withholding (or disclosing) put either partner at risk of harm?
- How might withholding (or disclosing) affect the potential of the relationship?
- How might withholding (or disclosing) interfere with carrying out our work together?

We may then, **in consultation with the secretive partner but at our discretion**, take any of these courses of action:

- Keeping the information confidential but present in mind, we may **attempt to continue our work** for the best relationship possible in the circumstances. Even so, if that becomes inadvisable or significantly at odds with the undisclosed reality, it may become untenable for us to continue, leading to the remaining alternatives.
- While continuing provisionally, we may **privately guide and support the secretive partner to try to find a way to disclose** any essential or inevitably-revealed matters.
- We may offer to **discontinue joint services and continue individually with the person holding the secret**. If acceptable to both partners, this person then becomes our sole client and any further duty of ours to the relationship and the other partner ceases. If the matter is later resolved, joint work may or may not resume, at our discretion.
- We may **withdraw our services completely**, perhaps referring the couple or individuals for help elsewhere.

In cases of changes in our service, we may not provide any particular explanation or reason. Please note that, nevertheless, resulting suspicions (founded or not) of partners may provoke a confrontation between partners. At that point, lying or stonewalling by a secretive partner would only add to any eventual reckoning of damaged trust and personal integrity.

In sum, despite our intent to act ethically, secrets between couples may unfortunately leave one or the other partner feeling estranged or even victimized. This can be detrimental to the therapeutic relationship as well as in the partnership. If a person absolutely requires secrets to be kept from their partner, it may be preferable to consult us or another counsellor as an individual, prior to beginning work as a couple.

Contacts and privacy

Please note, by professional ethical standards, **we are unable to accept from clients any invitations, gifts, or tokens, or extend our dealings in any other ways, business or personal.**

To protect your privacy, if we happen to encounter you in public outside of sessions, we will usually not acknowledge or speak to you first. Similarly, we regret that **we cannot interact with or acknowledge you in social media forums** such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. While we very much value and appreciate personal recommendations to others, if you choose to refer someone to us, we suggest that neither you nor they inform us of the connection between you.

If you wish a phone call from us, please inform us of the best times to reach you. Please note that, aside from initial phone contacts, we only consult on personal matters in pre-arranged sessions. **We suggest restricting email, SMS, voicemail and like messages to administrative matters** such as appointment details and payment arrangements. One reason for this is that electronic accounts, channels, services and devices are not necessarily always completely secure from access by others. You may **use the secure contact mode of WhatsApp** to send us confidential messages or documents. If needed, please ask us about secure videoconferences.

Nevertheless, if you communicate sensitive information to us using any unsecured means, you thereby imply that you desire an exchange about such information, authorizing and assuming any risk of our use of those same unsecured means to respond to you in kind.

Electronic messages such as emails and SMS messages occasionally get delayed or even lost in transit. Normally, **you may expect us to respond to or at least acknowledge your message in less than 24 hours**. If we will be unavailable for an extended time, we may provide you with the name of a colleague to contact if necessary. In an emergency, please get help through www.crisislines.bc.ca, locate community services through www.bc211.ca, or call the police at 911 if there is physical danger.

Security of Electronic Records

We take the security of your contact and personal information very seriously. Yet, it can never be completely guaranteed.

On any of our digital devices used to access or maintain records locally, we employ a range of appropriate technologies to protect data from unauthorized access, such as file and/or device encryption, best practices for passwords, two-factor authentication, firewalls, antivirus software, remote tracking, and remote wipe.

We do not store any of your information on our website server, never have your credit card details, and do not grant access to client records to contracted individuals.

We may transmit or store some records using Internet services. We attempt to ensure that all such data is encrypted before transmission and at rest, and accessed only by secure protocols.

You or we may use services of companies such as 10to8.com for bookings, the Gottman Checkup or VIA Institute for assessment, PayPal, Interac, or BMO for payment processing, or others who may have access to appropriate elements of your personal or contact information. These third parties shall be solely responsible for protecting such data from unauthorized use or disclosure. In accord with the business relationship you may form with such third parties when using their booking, testing, payment or other services to work with us, those firms may send you communications which bear the name of CoupleSolutions. However, we do not endorse or warrant such third parties and shall in no way be liable or responsible for the availability, accuracy, maintenance, or security of any of your data held or handled by them, or for any financial arrangements you enter into with them.

Signatures

By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understand this document and agree with these terms. You may withdraw your consent through giving notice at any time, thereby terminating future services while the remainder of these terms shall survive.

For CoupleSolutions:

Date _____ Name Andre Lampa Signature _____

Client(s):

Date _____ Name _____ Signature _____

Date _____ Name _____ Signature _____