

PRACTICE POLICIES & INFORMED CONSENT

BALBODHI WELLNESS

NATURE OF SERVICES

Britney Avery is a Registered Social Worker in good standing with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, a certified and experienced yoga teacher, and currently holds an inactive Massage Therapy licence with the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario. She provides several services, including counselling and psychotherapy. Britney works with individuals (18+).

Counselling services are provided in a professional therapeutic relationship to assist clients in addressing issues by helping them identify strengths and needs, explore options, find solutions, make choices, locate information, provide resources, and promote coping strategies.

Psychotherapy services are provided in a professional therapeutic relationship to treat psycho-social or emotional difficulties, behavioural adaptations, and/or other problems of an emotional nature for the purpose of personal growth and development. This may include interventions addressing thought, cognition, mood, emotional regulation, perception, or memory that may impair an individual's judgement, insight, behaviour, communication or social functioning.

Britney uses a number of different therapeutic approaches and modalities in her practice, including but not limited to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, somatic and embodiment exercises, yoga, breathwork, mindfulness, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Brief Solution-Focused Therapy, and attachment and trauma-oriented therapy. Please refer to her website for more information: www.balbodhiwell.com, or you may discuss any questions you have with Britney.

Throughout this document, "counselling/psychotherapy" refers collectively to counselling and psychotherapy services.

BENEFITS & RISKS

Counselling/psychotherapy provides a space to explore thoughts, emotions, sensations, behaviours, memories, and relationships that may be causing difficulty in your life. Counselling/psychotherapy can be a source of support during a difficult time, creating opportunities for deeper personal insight and self-awareness, better understanding and coping with challenges, and assisting in improving relationships.

Sometimes, the counselling/psychotherapy process can be uncomfortable as it requires that you be willing to experience strong emotions and sensations, examine thoughts, reflect on difficult topics or times in your life, and try out new and different behaviours. The discomfort you may experience throughout counselling/psychotherapy is for the ultimate benefit of achieving your therapeutic goals.

While some difficulties in life will improve with time or through other avenues that do not require counselling/psychotherapy, by choosing not to engage in counselling/psychotherapy at this time, you may find that what's causing difficulty in your life may not change or improve. That being said, engaging in counselling/psychotherapy is voluntary, and you can choose to discontinue counselling/psychotherapy at any time.

If you have questions about the pacing or intensity of the therapeutic process, please discuss them with your social worker/therapist.

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Your social worker/therapist aims to ensure a high level of professionalism and clarity concerning boundaries and communication. Therefore, the following outlines the expected and appropriate forms of communication between you and your therapist:

- **In-person** sessions are the primary mode for therapeutic discussions and sensitive information.
- **Email** is to be used as the contact method outside of sessions, including scheduling, administrative inquiries, and sharing resources. Please avoid sharing sensitive personal information.
- **Phone calls** may be used for urgent matters, with your therapist's permission, where email is not appropriate or timely. Voicemails will be returned within 48 hours.
- **Text messaging** is not used as a form of therapeutic contact, and may be used for scheduling purposes when specifically arranged.
- **Social media** contact is not permitted, and your social worker/therapist will not request nor respond to friending, following, likes, or other forms of engagement on any social media app or platform.

All content shared through all forms of communication is included in your client file and is considered confidential and subject to the limitations outlined in the Confidentiality Policy.

Crisis & Emergencies

Your social worker/therapist will work with you to develop an appropriate safety plan when necessary; however, they cannot guarantee immediate responses to contact outside scheduled appointment times and, therefore, cannot respond to immediate crises or emergencies. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency, please contact emergency services by calling 9-1-1, access your nearest hospital emergency department, or call another known crisis support line:

London	Ontario	Canada
Reach Out 519-433-2023 1-866-933-2023 Chat: reachout247.ca	Telehealth 1-866-797-0000	9-8-8 Crisis Helpline Call or text: 988

Therapeutic Fit & Feedback

Sometimes, it may take a few sessions before determining that it is not a good therapeutic fit between you and your social worker/therapist. In this case, they will provide you with alternative referrals to explore.

If you are concerned about any aspect of your counselling/psychotherapy, you are encouraged to discuss this with your social worker/therapist. Feedback may be provided verbally, in writing, or through a prepared feedback form, at the client's preference.

If this becomes impossible or unsafe, or if your concern is not resolved through discussion, you may contact the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers by email. For general inquiries, info@ocswssw.org. To file a complaint, investigations@ocswssw.org.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Your social worker/therapist collects personal health information to better understand you and your concerns, needs, and goals and to guide your treatment plan. No information will be released to a third party without prior written authorization. You have the right to withhold or withdraw consent to, or place conditions on, the disclosure of your information at any time (e.g., lock box principle).

Exceptions to confidentiality include the legal and/or ethical obligations of your social worker/therapist to:

- Inform a potential victim of a client's intention to harm them.
- Inform an appropriate family member, health care professional, or police, if necessary, of a client's intention to end his or her life.
- Release a client's file (or portions thereof) if there is an investigation or court order to do so.
- Inform the Children's Aid Society if there is suspicion of a child at risk of harm or in need of protection due to neglect, physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse.
- Report sexual abuse of a client by another regulated health professional.
- Report elder abuse of a resident in long-term care.

While these events are rare, they do occur. Your social worker/therapist's overall goal is to ensure you feel comfortable talking about your concerns, and they will first work with you to resolve these concerns, if possible.

Supervision & Consultation

As per the professional requirements, your social worker/therapist must engage in professional supervision and consultation, which means connecting with other mental health professionals for the purposes of professional development in using their therapeutic approach and modalities to ensure the provision of the highest-quality care. Information provided in these contexts is non-identifiable.

Conflicts of Interest

All social workers/therapists have a responsibility to assess for potential conflicts of interest before accepting a new client and reserve the right to decline services if they believe a dual relationship where personal, professional, or financial conflicts of interest could impair professional judgment. If someone connected to a current or former client seeks services, the situation is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. This includes considering the nature of the relationship, the clinical context, and any potential impact on therapeutic work, past or present. If a conflict is identified, your social worker/therapist will discuss this with you, where possible, before referring to another qualified provider. To protect client confidentiality and maintain clear therapeutic boundaries, your social worker/therapist will not knowingly provide counselling/psychotherapy to close friends, romantic partners, or immediate family members of current or past clients. This ensures your counselling/psychotherapy remains objective and confidential.

Clients are encouraged to raise any concerns about possible conflicts of interest at any time—either during a therapy session or by requesting a separate conversation. These discussions are welcomed and handled with care and confidentiality. Your social worker/therapist will always aim to work transparently and collaboratively to address concerns, clarify boundaries, and, if necessary, adjust care or provide alternative referrals.

Sudden & Unexpected Death

Finally, in the event of your social worker/therapist's unexpected death or illness, you may be contacted by a representative acting on their behalf. This representative will be obliged to ensure confidentiality and the standards set out by the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers and will provide you with a referral to alternative services.

RECORD KEEPING POLICY

Records are retained for at least 10 years from the date of the last interaction with the client or for 10 years from the client's 18th birthday, whichever is later. All information is maintained in compliance with the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)* of Canada and *Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA)* of Ontario. All personal information obtained, used, and disclosed in therapy sessions is done with your consent. Your personal information is protected by specific safeguards, including locked doors and cabinets, secure and encrypted practice management software (Jane), and computer and document passwords. You may request a copy of your records for a reasonable fee for the time spent preparing, copying and mailing the file (where applicable). Please note that records cannot be released when they contain the name of another person, and redaction of content is necessary to protect that person's confidentiality, and reports from other professionals cannot be released without the consent of that professional.

To access a copy of your record or to request corrections, please submit your inquiry in writing to britney@balbodhiwell.com. You will receive a response to your request within 30 days. There is no cost to correct your record.

PAYMENT & CANCELLATION POLICY

The full agreed-upon fee for service must be paid via credit card (Jane Payments/Stripe) or e-transfer (britney@balbodhiwell.com) immediately following your appointment. A receipt will be provided for submission to your insurance company. Clients may elect to have their credit card information securely stored electronically on file for ease of payment. Fees are subject to change with reasonable notice.

Service Fees:

- **60-minute individual therapy session:** \$150 (HST exempt).
- **Time adjustments:** If more or less time is required for an appointment, clients will be charged to the nearest 15-minute increment per the hourly rate (\$37.50/15 minutes).
- **Requested documents:** the preparation and delivery of requested documents (e.g. letters of support, progress reports, etc.) are charged a flat fee of \$100/document. Any time required beyond one hour is then charged a prorated amount per the hourly rate.
- **Sliding scale:** Sliding-scale appointments are available for those experiencing significant financial hardship and/or marginalization. These appointments are limited and subject to availability. If this situation applies to you, please inform your therapist so they can send you further information.

Extended Health Insurance

Currently, the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) does not cover the cost of psychotherapy treatment. However, many private and extended health insurance plans offer financial benefits for counselling and psychotherapy administered by a Registered Social Worker (RSW). Please refer to your private insurance plan and/or administrator for details on your available funding and if you require a referral from your primary healthcare provider to access these benefits.

Cancellations & Missed Appointments

A minimum of 24 hours' notice (48 hours preferred) is required to cancel or reschedule an appointment. Clients who cancel without the required notice may be responsible for the full session fee unless the appointment can continue virtually instead of in-person, rescheduled within 7 days, or subject to compassionate grounds, such as sudden illness, emergency, or bereavement. Rescheduling is subject to your social worker/therapist's schedule and availability. Please be aware that insurance plans typically do not cover fees for cancelled appointments.

CONSIDERATION FOR TELEHEALTH SERVICES

Telehealth services are available to clients with access to appropriate technology and a stable internet connection and may be offered in-lieu of in-person appointments when appropriate.

Benefits & Risks of Telehealth Services

Telehealth services allow sessions to be conducted when in-person appointments are inconvenient or impossible and reduce the risk of illness transmission when the therapist or client pose an infectious threat but are healthy enough to complete a session. Despite best efforts to mitigate risks, telehealth appointments are subject to limitations, including threats to privacy, confidentiality, and security due to possible cyberattacks, receiving services in a public or unsecured location, technological failure, and distraction and miscommunication.

Telehealth Procedures

Security procedures are followed to comply with Ontario's Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) and Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). End-to-end encrypted software (Jane Online Appointments or Zoom Workplace) is used to conduct telehealth sessions and protect client information. Access links to telehealth sessions will be emailed to the client within one hour of the appointment time, unless otherwise agreed upon. Telehealth sessions will be conducted in a private setting, and both therapist and client must be informed of the possible presence or interruption by other individuals. A gesture or codeword may be used to discreetly signal the presence of others, when necessary. Both parties will refrain from recording telehealth sessions unless express consent is obtained. Any recorded material is considered confidential personal health information and will be handled as such.

Service Interruption to Telehealth Appointment

In case of a power outage or technological failure during a telehealth appointment, your social worker/therapist will allow five minutes to reconnect and then contact you at the phone number on file, provided the phone is in use and unaffected by the interruption, or via email to determine if the appointment may proceed over the phone. If an appointment is deemed appropriate to proceed over the phone, clients who choose to cancel may be subject to the cancellation policy and fee. If it is deemed inappropriate to proceed over the phone, there will be no fee for the cancelled or rescheduled appointment.

THERAPIST'S RIGHTS

Respectful therapeutic relationships are essential. If policies are repeatedly not followed, or client behaviour becomes harassing or abusive, your social worker/therapist may discontinue services. Where possible, concerns will first be discussed with the client to attempt to resolve issues collaboratively. If a resolution is not possible, service will be terminated with a referral for alternative providers.