

## Confidentiality during Book Club

**For the participant:** As a general rule, I will keep the information you share with me in our meetings confidential, unless I have your written consent to disclose certain information. There are, however, important exceptions to this rule that are important for you to understand before you share personal information with me in a meeting. In some situations, I am required by law or by the guidelines of my profession to disclose information whether I have your permission. I have listed some of these situations below.

> You tell me you plan to cause serious harm or death to yourself, and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the extremely near future. I must take steps to inform a parent or guardian of what you have told me and how serious I believe this threat to be. I must make sure that you are protected from harming yourself.

> You tell me you plan to cause serious harm or death to someone else, and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the extremely near future. In this situation, I must inform your parent or guardian, and I must inform the person who you intend to harm if known.

> You are doing things that could cause serious harm to you or someone else, even if you do not *intend* to harm yourself or another person. In these situations, I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether a parent or guardian should be informed.

> You tell me you are being abused-physically, sexually, or emotionally-or that you have been abused in the past. In this situation, I am required by law to report the abuse to appropriate, lawful authorities. If the therapist has a reasonable suspicion that a client or other named victim is the perpetrator, observer of, or actual victim of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of children under the age of 18 years. If a client states or suggests that he or she is abusing a child (or vulnerable adult) or has recently abused a child (or vulnerable adult), or a child is in danger of abuse, the mental health professional is required to report this information to the appropriate social service and/or legal authorities.

> Mental Health care professionals are required to report admitted prenatal exposure to controlled substances that are potentially harmful.

> You are involved in a court case and a request is made for information about your processing in book club. If this happens, I will not disclose information without your written agreement *unless* the court requires me to. I will do all I can within the law to protect your confidentiality, and if I am required to disclose information to the court, I will inform you that this is happening.

### Communicating with your parent(s) or guardian(s):

Except for situations such as those mentioned above, I will not tell your parent or guardian specific things you share with me in our private book club meetings. This includes activities and behavior that your parent/guardian would not approve of — or would be upset by — but that do not put you at risk of serious and immediate harm. However, if your risk-taking behavior becomes more serious, then I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether you are in serious and immediate danger of being harmed. If I feel that you are in such danger, I will communicate this information to your parent or guardian.

Even if I have agreed to keep information confidential – to not tell your parent or guardian – I may believe that it is important for them to know what is going on in your life. In these situations, I will

encourage you to tell your parent/guardian and will help you find the best way to tell them. Also, when meeting with your parents, I may sometimes describe problems in general terms, without using specifics, in order to help them know how to be more helpful to you.

Communicating with other adults:

School: I will not share any information with your school unless I have your permission and permission from your parent or guardian. Sometimes I may request to speak to someone at your school to find out how things are going for you. Also, it may be helpful in some situations for me to give suggestions to your teacher or counselor at school. If I want to contact your school, or if someone at your school wants to contact me, I will discuss it with you and ask for your written permission. A very unlikely situation might come up in which I do not have your permission but both I and your parent or guardian believe that it is very important for me to be able to share certain information with someone at your school. In this situation, I will use my professional judgment to decide whether to share any information. A written permission and release is required for this type of communication.

Doctors: Sometimes your doctor and I may need to work together; for example, if you need to take medication or visit a counselor. I will get your written permission and permission from your parent/guardian in advance to share information with your doctor. The only time I will share information with your doctor even if I don't have your permission is if you are doing something that puts you at risk for serious and immediate physical/medical harm.

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## Consent regarding Book Club

### **For the participant:**

This summer book club is unique! It will be fun, highly personal, and at the same time, a contractual agreement. Given this, it is important for us to reach a clear understanding about how our relationship will work, and what each of us can expect. This consent will provide a clear framework for our work together. Feel free to discuss any of this with me. The outcome of your participation depends largely on your willingness to engage in this process, which may, at times, result in discomfort when processing through topics pertaining to your self-evaluation. Remembering events and becoming aware of feelings attached to those events can bring on strong feelings of anger, depression, anxiety, etc. especially with the matters discussed in the book. I cannot promise that your behavior or circumstance will change. I can promise to support you and do my absolute best to support you in understanding what is in your field of control to change in order to have a more desired outcome.

Additionally, I have outlined benefits and risks to attending the book club:

Benefits: Participating in book club can result in several benefits to you, including a better understanding of your personal goals and values, improving personal relationships, and resolution of specific problems you are facing in your life. It is important to recognize that change is not magic, and change does not occur overnight. Your willingness to participate fully in group and your openness to take feedback from the facilitator and other group members will play a role in how much you gain in the group sessions. The extent to which you are open and honest about yourself will play a role in how quickly you can achieve your goals.

Risks: There can be discomfort involved in participating in book club. You may remember unpleasant events, or experience feelings of anger, fear, anxiety, sadness, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other unpleasant feelings. If these distressful emotions arise, please choose to process with the group or group facilitator. During the process of group therapy, it is normal to have intense feelings and reactions to other group members or even towards your group facilitator. Again, these are understandable emotions that should be discussed and processed in the group setting. If you believe that group is not the most appropriate setting for you to heal and grow, please talk with your facilitator about other possible options. If I believe that group is not the most appropriate setting for you to heal and grow, I will speak with you and your parent(s)/guardian(s) about other possible options.

If we see each other accidentally outside of the book club, I will not acknowledge you first. Your right to privacy and confidentiality is of the utmost importance to me, and I do not wish to jeopardize your privacy. However, if you acknowledge me first, I will be more than happy to speak briefly with you but feel it appropriate not to engage in any lengthy discussions in public or outside of the therapy office.

### **For the participant:**

#### Consent for Virtual Meetings

1. I understand book club will be conducted via Zoom.
2. I understand that potential benefits are easier access to meetings and the convenience of meeting from a location of my choosing.

3. I understand there are potential risks to this technology, including interruptions, and technical difficulties. I understand as a result, the meeting could be discontinued and rescheduled if it is felt that the videoconferencing connections are not adequate for the situation. In this case, the session will be rescheduled to another time that works for all parties.
4. I have had the opportunity to ask questions in regard to virtual meetings. My questions have been answered and the risks, benefits and any practical alternatives have been discussed with me in a language in which I understand.
5. To maintain confidentiality, I will not share my telehealth appointment link with anyone unauthorized to attend the appointment.

#### A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

A safe environment is created and maintained by both the facilitator of a group and its members. Primary ingredients are mutual respect and a chance to create trust. Another primary ingredient for a safe environment has to do with confidentiality. Your group facilitator is bound by law to maintain confidentiality, as group members are bound by honor to keep what is said in the group in the group. I realize that you may want to share what you are learning about yourself in group with another person outside of group, however, do not to talk about how events unfold in group or in any other way compromise the confidentiality of other group members. Confidentiality within the group setting is a shared responsibility of all members. While a group leader may not disclose any client communications or information except as provided by law, group members' communications are not protected. As such, confidentiality within the group setting is often based on mutual trust and respect.

If you are ever feeling unsafe in group, you are encouraged to discuss this with your group facilitator. If for any reason you experience any negative reactions or blocks towards participation, please share this with the group. Your voice is your power and your right.

#### Electronic Communication

I cannot ensure the confidentiality of any form of communication through electronic media, including text messages. If you prefer to communicate via email or text messaging for issues regarding scheduling or cancellations, please do so. While I may try to return messages in a timely manner, I cannot guarantee immediate response and request that you do not use these methods of communication to discuss group content and/or request assistance for emergencies. My business cell number to call or text is: 813-922-2400; my email is [alyssa@peacefulcounselingandconsulting.com](mailto:alyssa@peacefulcounselingandconsulting.com). I will communicate with you 3 days before each meeting, as a courtesy reminder to the upcoming readings, as well as any (possible) pre-work assignments.

#### Attendance:

Your presence in group is highly important.

It is understood that an emergency may occur that will prevent you from attending group. If leaving the group, I ask you give members a 1 week notice when you decide to leave group. This is requested because each member of a group is important--your presence and your absence impacts members and facilitators--and we want to allow time for members to process when members choose to leave.