

Information and Informed Consent

The purpose of this Information sheet is to help you and people you care about know some ideas and practices that have been helpful to me and to the people I have consulted with in the past. It outlines some of my responsibilities and your rights in our work together.

Narrative Approaches

Narrative ideas and approaches form the foundation of my work with people. These ideas and approaches are a growing set of ethically based and innovative therapy ideas that recognize the ways that people use stories, or 'narratives', to make sense of their lives, relationships and personal identities. This leads us to the idea that people can also 're-author' these stories to find other, perhaps more comfortable or useful meanings from their lives.

Your Knowledge and Values are Respected

I will ask about your life and concerns, so we can build a story of your hopes, intentions, purposes, values, beliefs, dreams, visions, and commitments. I want to learn about some of the personal and professional stories, knowledge and skills that you have, that may give us ideas about how to address the concerns that brought you here.

We might use writing, words, art, music, movement, play, logic or something else to build a catalogue of what you and others know. I will bring knowledge from other people's stories (with their permission). I will offer my training in collaborative and research-informed therapy ideas and approaches into our work for your consideration.

The Person is Not the Problem

You may notice that I will avoid speaking (and thinking) of you or others, as 'the Problem'. Instead, I will be speaking and thinking of the Problem as the Problem, and take a close look at the various relationships that people have to the Problem. We will work to change those relationships so that things are closer to how you would rather have them.

Externalized Conversations

If you say something like: "I am depressed", I might ask "How do you notice this Depression influencing your life?" This is one way for us to get some space from the Problem. That means we can then look at its characteristics and effects on your life, hopes, wishes, etc. We can make room for other stories of life, away from the Problem. These stories, in turn, can help us find the many places and ways that you may be helping the Problem to fail in its purposes.

My intention is to help us move away from the Problem's view of life, and towards more rich and full descriptions of life that you like better.

Life is Multi-Storied

Problem-dominated stories can crowd out other stories about you and your life. When this happens, it may be difficult to remember any part of life not bothered by the Problem. Part of my job will be to invite us to be curious about other, possibly hidden or forgotten aspects of your life- understandings, skills and abilities, possibilities, hopes or actions that do not fit with what the Problem would like us to believe about you. Many Narrative therapists have found, as I have, that people can often creatively reclaim or construct, with the help/support of others, their preferred stories and ways of living and experiencing life, by talking in this way.

My position: Influential, but De-Centered

I will strive to keep you and your ideas and preferences at the centre of our conversations. I want to be a responsible collaborator and co-author with the people I work with, rather than taking the position of an ‘expert-knower’. I am ready to share some of my ideas, skills and experiences regarding ways that problems can influence lives, and I want to first acknowledge and build on your unique story and understandings. Narrative approaches invite us to think of my role as similar to an ‘anthropologist or journalist’ by respecting and making more visible your own words, ideas, theories and practices of life.

Collaborative Practices

Problems often use isolation as a way to separate us from options, possibilities and connections in our lives. I will ask you, with your full approval and understanding, to sign release forms to allow me to work together with key family members, relatives, friends, associates and involved professionals, who may be helpful or concerned. Any requested assessment, report, summary or letter is reviewed with you. I will strive to collaborate in sensitive, responsible, ethical, legal, diplomatic and creative ways. And of course, information will not be shared without your permission, unless there is danger of harm to you or another person involved with you, or an order from a court of law. I am also obliged by law to make a report if I hear of abuse of you or your family members by a medical or counselling professional.

The Influence of Background Context

The background of many problems can be a history or experience of injustice and cultural difficulty. We may spend some of our time together considering such socially constructed, taken for granted stories of family, gender, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, economics faith, etc and their influences in your life and identity. This can help make the influence of these things more visible and may help you decide more clearly if and how those ideas and practices may fit with what you want in your life and relationships.

Questions, Concerns, Complaints, Suggestions

I highly value your feedback and will ask for your thoughts on our work together. I am responsible for ongoing professional development, and take part in regular supervision. If you would ever like to speak to my supervisor please let me know (the person in this role may change from time to time). You are protected by the ethical guidelines of my College, and by my professional standards, values and intentions, from any refusal of service or reprisal from such inquiries. Please feel free at any time to visit the website of my licensing College (The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers: www.ocswws.org) to learn more about the standards and ethics of my license, or to inquire into the complaints procedures.

Signed Permission to Conduct Narrative Therapy, Research, Evaluation and Follow-up

Your signature below confirms you have read this handout and give your legal consent to participate in Narrative Therapy. You also consent to complete brief evaluations or to allow videotaping to help inform my work and provide professional accountability, training and development. You also give me legal permission to contact you by phone, email or mail to check on how things went or are going as part of my follow-up care and research.

Record Keeping

We will write our notes together as much as possible and I am pleased to give you copies of materials created in our meetings. I am legally obliged to keep a record and to keep this record secure. If you have any questions about this record, I will be pleased to answer them.

Thank you.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____