

Brennan McCormick | Registered Counsellor

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Counselling and Therapeutic Support Services

Privacy Notice

As a client you have certain rights that are important for you to understand. This document explains the management of information that is shared as a part of your counselling process. Your privacy is a priority, and I handle your personal information with your consent and in compliance with **South African privacy law, including the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA)**.

Collection of Information

As part of providing a counselling service to you, I will need to collect and record personal information that is relevant to your current situation. I collect basic personal information such as name and contact details and sensitive confidential data such as personal beliefs, ethnicity, and relationship status. Your information will only be used for the purposes for which it was collected, that is, providing counselling and therapeutic support services. Records are kept for a period of 6 years from the date of the last consultation. Records will be safely destroyed thereafter.

All communications between the patient and the Registered Counsellor become part of the patient's clinical records, which are stored in a client file. Client files are held in a secure filing cabinet that is accessible only by me. Similarly, electronic records are stored in a password protected document on a password protected PC that is accessible only by me.

Third Parties

Information is not disclosed to third parties without your permission unless there are exceptional circumstances where the law requires information to be passed on. For example, this can occur when the information you have provided is subpoenaed by a court of law or failure to disclose the information would place you or another person at serious risk of harm.

There may be times where, as part of the counselling process, it may be helpful for me to liaise with other people or agencies that are relevant to your counselling goals (e.g., your GP, specialist, etc.). Contact is only made with other professionals with your confirmed permission, unless the legally mandated confidential limits mentioned above apply. Third parties assisting with treatment must comply with the privacy requirements as regulated by POPIA.

Where specific requests are received for information in your records (e.g., for medical aid audits), I will request **additional written consent** from you, detailing exactly what information will be shared. Any third parties assisting with treatment must comply with privacy requirements under POPIA.

Accessing Your Information

You have the right to:

- ask what personal information I have about you,
- ask what personal information was sent to service providers or any other third party,
- ask to update, correct, or delete any out-of-date or incorrect personal information I have about you,
- object to the processing of your personal information, and
- lodge a complaint about my practices with the Information Regulator.

Use of AI-Assisted Tools

With your permission, I may use **AI-assisted tools** to improve **administrative efficiency** and **documentation**. These tools are used **only** as aids for note-taking and record-keeping; **all counselling decisions remain entirely my own** as your Registered Counsellor.

Where AI-assisted tools are used:

- Notes are processed within **secure, privacy-compliant platforms** such as **PsychNote, Heidi, or Zoom's paid Custom AI Companion**, which includes **enhanced security features** designed to protect sensitive data.
- Once notes are finalised, **all data is deleted** from the AI platforms. No personal information is stored on third-party servers.
- You are welcome to **opt out** of the use of AI-assisted tools at any time without impacting your counselling process.

Notification of Suspected Security Breach

I have implemented reasonable security measures based on the sensitivity of the information I hold. These measures are in place to protect the information from being disclosed without authorisation, from loss, misuse, and unauthorised access, and from being altered or destroyed. If you suspect that I (or you) have had a security breach, please notify me immediately by sending an email to brennanjm2003@gmail.com.

The responsibility for compliance with POPIA and PAIA lies with the registered Information Officer for this practice, Brennan McCormick, Registered Counsellor.

You can withdraw or change your consent at any time by contacting me at brennanmctherapy@gmail.com.