



shalem

Mental Health Network

WELCOME INFORMATION

Welcome to Shalem Mental Health Network. We hope your experience at our counselling centre will be a positive one for you and your family. The decision to come for counselling, while often a hard one to make, indicates a desire for personal and relational health. The following information is provided for you so that you can make an informed decision about joining the counselling process. Please ask for clarification should you have questions at any time not addressed below.

How can we help?

Sometimes the challenges we face in our daily lives become too difficult to manage alone. We may need someone to talk to who can help us find solutions. Shalem Mental Health Network is a non-profit, Family Service Ontario agency, which offers a variety of counselling programs including individual, couple, family and groups. These help people cope with challenges such as:

- Personal, job, relationship, parenting and family problems
- Aging and caring for an aging family member
- Living with a developmental disability
- Separation, divorce and new relationships
- Surviving domestic violence and sexual abuse
- Attachment Difficulties in relationship
- Spiritual growth and meaning
- Recovery from spiritual abuse
- Accessing community resources
- Cultural adjustment issues
- Dealing with sexual orientation and gender identity issues
- Living in poverty

Are services available to anyone?

Shalem Mental Health Network is strongly committed to inclusive practices for all our clients and staff.

Our services are available to everyone, regardless the individual's age, ability, cultural background, race, sexual orientation or gender identity. If we are not able to provide service directly because of limitations in our programs, we will support you in finding appropriate services in the community. Because we are a Christian agency, our staff hold a faith-based worldview. Our goal is to offer counselling geared to meet the needs of clients, and respect each client's unique life experience.

What can I expect from my counselling?

At Shalem Mental Health Network, we offer an encouraging and supportive environment. Our skilled professional counsellors have Masters of Social Work Degrees or equivalent, and are bound by their professional code of ethics. They will help you explore and understand your problem and assist you to develop solutions.

Your therapist is committed to the virtues of honesty and integrity, so it is important to state that counselling is not without its pain and risks. It often involves identifying painful emotions and unhelpful personal or relational patterns. All these processes can evoke discomfort or pain. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure that, as much as possible, such discomfort does not exceed your ability to cope.

How can I get the most out of my counselling?

Counselling can be a very positive experience, but it takes hard work and dedication. That is why it is important to attend all of your scheduled sessions and to be open to new ways of looking at yourself. It is also really important to be an active participant and to tell us what you find to be helpful or unhelpful throughout the counselling process.

How do fees work?

Shalem is a non-profit agency, and collects fees for counselling services as they are provided. The standard fee is \$70 per 50-minute session. If your session is longer than 1 hour, the rate will be adjusted accordingly. If you cannot manage payment, please raise the issue with your therapist, who may discuss other payment options with you. Fees can be paid at the end of each session unless you and your therapist make other arrangements, and can be paid in cash or cheque, debit or credit cards.

What if I cannot pay my fees?

We will adjust your fees to fit your circumstances. Funding from our supporters allows us to be flexible if you are unable to pay. If your financial situation changes at any time, please let us know right away so we can make appropriate arrangements with you. You will be asked to pay your fee at the time of the interview. If you miss two payments, we will have to suspend sessions until your account is settled.

What if I cannot make my appointment?

If you are unable to attend a scheduled appointment, please notify us at least 24 hours before your session. This way we can offer your time to another client. If you do not give us at least 24 hours advance notice, we will charge a \$50 fee for the session time.

What if I want a different counsellor?

We understand how important it is for you to feel comfortable with your counsellor and this can take time. That is why we encourage you to get to know your counsellor before deciding whether his/her style is right for you. If you still think you will have trouble working together, you can call the number on the back of this sheet and ask to speak with your counsellor's supervisor. Together we will find a solution.

How private is my counselling?

Anything discussed between you and your counsellor is confidential within Shalem Mental Health Network. It may be shared with your counsellor's supervisor and possibly the clinical team in order for your counsellor to get advice on how to be most helpful to you.

We will not release any information about you without your written consent. However, there are special circumstances when we may be obligated to release information you give us:

- If we believe you or someone else is in imminent danger of physical harm and information we have might prevent it
- If a child under 16 may be in need of protection
- If we are subpoenaed by a court of law
- If we are presented with a search warrant

As well, you should be aware that as part of ongoing standards and quality control review, client files are randomly audited from time to time by non-staff personnel, who will respect the confidentiality of the file, in an effort to maintain professionalism and a high standard of care for you, our client.

Will anyone interrupt us?

Sessions are considered private times where you can raise sensitive issues within the safety and confidentiality of an hour set aside for you and your therapist. In an effort to ensure safety and support for both clients and staff, our crisis policy states that in the event of an emergency, sessions may be interrupted.

Can I see my record?

You may request to see a copy of written information about yourself, at any time, by submitting a File Information Request. We will then call you to set up an appointment for you to review your personal information here at the agency, with a counsellor present to provide clarification and support. You can request, in writing, that information about yourself be released to you or to specific people such as your doctor or another agency.

How long does the agency keep my record?

Your service records will be retained for a period of 10 years from the time of your last date of service or 10 years after the 18th birthday of a child if they are the primary client. After this period your records will be destroyed. In some cases, files may be kept for a longer duration.

What if I have a complaint?

We want to know what you think of our service! All of our staff welcome your comments and we encourage you to speak with your counsellor directly about any concerns you may have about our service. You can also call and ask to speak with your counsellor's supervisor. Contact the Managing Director, Danielle VandenAkker, at 905-528-0353, to be directed to the appropriate person.

How can I get a hold of my therapist between sessions?

You are free to contact your therapist by phone, by calling directly or leaving a message at intake and having your call returned. Office staff will be able to tell you about your therapist's availability. While our staff have email accounts with the agency, we are not able to guarantee confidentiality, and so recommend phone contact. Do feel free to discuss this with your therapist.

What if I need to speak to someone outside of regular business hours?

We will discuss options and provide you with after-hour resources that can be contacted in a crisis or emergency because we are not available for service outside of our regular hours.

What if I'm sick?

In an effort to provide a safe setting to our clients, we ask that if you are experiencing symptoms of the flu, you call our office and cancel your appointment. We will reschedule your session at the next possible time. Our staff members, likewise, have been instructed to not attend sessions if they are ill.

How can you help us?

To provide the best service possible, Shalem uses different methods to evaluate the service we provide. You may be asked to complete a questionnaire prior to your first session and again at some point later in service; and/or may be contacted by phone or mail to answer some questions regarding our service. Your participation in these service evaluation activities is voluntary. Refusal to participate will in no way affect your service.

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