

Appendix B – Privacy Policy & Group Expectations

PLEASE NOTE:

Recording & distribution

As part of services, I will have access to privileged and proprietary information. I understand that I cannot record, photograph, screenshot, copy, or otherwise distribute any material, discussion, or presentation from the sessions/USS services or any other aspect of services provided, including what other clients share. Distribution includes but is not limited to personal or professional social media posts, blog posts, cloud sharing, or emails sent to any other person who is not currently staff of USS.

Group Expectations – Code of Conduct

To ensure a safe, respectful, and therapeutic environment for all participants, this Code of Conduct outlines the expectations for behaviour within our group sessions. Adherence to these guidelines is a mandatory condition of participation. Failure to comply may result in the termination of services (incurred service fees will still apply).

1. Confidentiality and Privacy

The Golden Rule: What is said in the group stays in the group. Members agree not to disclose the identity, personal stories, or specific disclosures of any other member outside of the session.

No Recording: The recording of sessions (audio, video, or text) by any member is strictly prohibited.

Digital Privacy: The group meets online, members must ensure they are in a private space where they cannot be overheard and must not share the meeting link or invite others. Your camera must be on and facing you at all times (if you have concerns arise, please flag your facilitator and then you can excuse yourself if needed). We recommend using headphones with a microphone for added privacy.

Limit Disruptions: You should be joining on time and leaving when the group ends. Late entries and early departures cause disruptions (please discuss your needs on a session-by-session basis with the facilitator). You should be in one stable spot for the duration of the group, please limit the amount of moving around as this is also

disruptive. You should not be doing other tasks while attending the group – (watching tv, playing video games, chores, making dinner, driving, etc.).

Social Media: Members agree not to connect with other group members on social media platforms or discuss group members online.

2. Respect and Non-Discrimination

Inclusivity: All members are entitled to a safe environment free from discrimination, harassment, or hate speech based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, or socioeconomic status.

Respectful Dialogue: Members must listen actively and without interruption. Personal attacks, name-calling, or belittling language are strictly forbidden.

Diversity of Experience: Members agree to respect that everyone has a different perspective and pace of healing. No one is obligated to share more than they are comfortable with.

3. Participation and Boundaries

- **Voluntary Sharing:** Participation is encouraged but never forced. Members have the right to pass or remain silent without judgment.
- **One Voice:** Only one person speaks at a time. The facilitator will manage turn-taking to ensure equitable participation.
- **No Crosstalk During Disclosure:** When a member is sharing, others should listen silently. Feedback or responses are given only when invited by the facilitator or the speaker.
- **Physical Boundaries:** In-person groups must maintain appropriate physical distance. Touch is generally prohibited unless explicitly agreed upon as part of a specific therapeutic exercise and facilitated by the therapist.

4. Substance Use and Alertness

- **Sober Participation:** Members must attend sessions free from the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or non-prescribed substances that impair judgment or communication. Further, members cannot use such substances during sessions (e.g. you cannot vape, smoke, or be consuming alcohol while on camera).
- **Medication:** Members are responsible for managing their prescribed medications and consulting staff ahead of time if there are any issues. If a member is too sedated

or impaired to participate safely, they may be asked to leave the session/be removed.

5. Conflict Resolution and Safety

- **Constructive Conflict:** Disagreements are a natural part of group work. However, conflicts must be addressed respectfully and directly within the group setting, not through passive-aggressive behavior or side conversations.
- **The "Stop" Rule:** Any member may invoke the "Stop Rule" if they feel a topic is becoming too intense or unsafe. The group can take a break, do a mindfulness check in, or change topics.
- **Zero Tolerance for Harassment:** Any form of bullying, intimidation, stalking, or sexual harassment will result in immediate removal from the program and further actions could be taken to safeguard victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

6. External Contact

- **No Side Agendas:** Members agree not to form exclusive sub-groups, romantic relationships, or business partnerships with other members during the course of the therapy/program.
- **Emergency Contact:** Members are not responsible for the safety or well-being of other members outside of the session. If a member expresses immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, the facilitator will follow mandatory reporting protocols. Other members should not attempt to intervene personally outside the group.

7. Consequences of Violations

Failure to adhere to this Code of Conduct may result in (any or all of the following):

1. A private discussion with the facilitator to address the behavior
2. A formal warning
3. Immediate termination from the group if the behaviour compromises the safety or therapeutic integrity of the group
4. Referral to external resources or regulatory bodies if the behaviour involves illegal acts or severe ethical violations

Privacy Policy

Email, Text Messages, & Voicemails: such messaging may be used by any member of USS, but for administrative purposes only. Messaging with the USS office should be limited to things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters and other related issues. Please do not send the facilitator/USS messages about clinical matters as confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. USS uses encrypted email to ensure your information is safe, but you are still cautioned not to send sensitive information via email as your end may not be encrypted. If you need to discuss a clinical matter outside of session time, please notify the team that you need to arrange a private video or phone call to discuss that matter further.

Social Media (including WhatsApp and Telegram): The facilitator/USS does not communicate with or contact any clients through social media platforms. In addition, if the facilitator/USS discover that an accidental online relationship has been established (e.g. friends on Facebook), it will be cancelled. These types of casual social contacts can create security risks for you and/or compromise the professional relationship. The facilitator/USS can participate on social media platforms as part of their professional work for marketing and advocating purposes. If you have an online presence, there is a possibility that you may encounter such social media accounts. If that occurs, please do not contact the facilitator/USS via direct messages, or identify yourself as a client via comments, response posts, or tags. Do not encourage others to contact the facilitator/USS for clinical needs through social media (refer them instead to the website). If you are aware of your facilitator/USS' presence on social media platforms and simply wish to follow the account, like posts, and share their content with others, that is acceptable and allowed. Please feel free to discuss the details of social media use further with USS if needed.

USS Website: The facilitator/USS have a website that you are free to access: www.ummahsupportservices.org. The website provides information to the public about USS. If you have questions about it, please let USS know. You are welcome to share the website with others if you want to refer them for services. There is an online form they/you can submit via the Contact Me page on the website. Sensitive or confidential information should not be shared on that website form, USS cannot guarantee that the information won't be intercepted, hacked, and/or viewed by a third-party.

Online Client Portal: where applicable you will be invited to create an online client portal where you can book group sessions online and make payments. This account is only monitored by staff at USS. The platform is offered through a third-party company that is bound by the laws of Canada.

Use, Retention, and Disclosure of Personal Health Information (PHI)

This policy applies to all the PHI clients share with USS (e.g. information provided in the Intake Form, Third Party Consent form, information disclosed during sessions, etc.) PHI refers to any identifying information about an individual relating to their physical and/or mental health (this includes their medical history) and it can also be supplemental information required in order to provide the service (e.g. payment information, insurance eligibility, health care number, phone numbers, addresses, etc.). USS collects and uses your PHI in order to provide you with and maintain your services with USS. USS limits the collection of your PHI to only what is needed to provide you with service (what is needed is at the sole discretion of USS). Your consent to the collection and retention of your PHI is implied when you sign the Agreement to services and agree to and participate in services with USS. Disclosure of PHI will be discussed with you on an as needed basis and where required your written consent will be requested before any disclosure takes place. For more information about limits to confidentiality and other points that concern your PHI, please ensure that you have thoroughly reviewed the Agreement to services.

You may limit or withdraw consent all together for USS to have access to your PHI. Please note that this may interfere with services offered and where applicable, services may be terminated due to the withdrawal of consent (this will be assessed solely by USS). Certain PHI laws in Canada permit the retention and disclosure of PHI despite withdrawal of consent for instance, in case there is a crisis, emergency, or legal matter involving the client. The facilitator/USS may be required to use or disclose the PHI even if consent has been withdrawn by the client.

Health care laws in Canada require professionals to retain records for a certain period of time regardless of if the client has completed or terminated services. USS will abide by all applicable laws and after these periods have lapsed, most client information is destroyed, but some may be retained in order to protect USS due to the on-going potential to have claims or complaints brought against the facilitator/USS.

Safeguarding Your Communications and PHI

There are many safeguards utilized by USS to ensure your communication/sessions and your PHI is kept safe and confidential. USS uses an online database to store client files and conduct video sessions. These services are governed by Canadian laws and regulation regarding PHI. Access to client files is limited to staff at USS who are all bound by a confidentiality agreement and a non-disclosure agreement. USS uses encrypted email addresses to communicate with clients and send out emails. Our websites, profiles, and social media accounts (where technically possible) are also linked to encrypted email addresses. USS staff are encouraged to use Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) on their devices to conduct their work. Any third party that may work with USS will be required to abide by our privacy policies, sign a confidentiality agreement, and a non-disclosure agreement. Video sessions are conducted using Zoom. Zoom is an American company.

USS has taken every measure possible to ensure that the clinic account for Zoom is compliant with Canadian standards and laws but is not responsible for elements of the service Zoom offers that are entirely under the control of Zoom the company.

Although USS is taking all the above-mentioned protective measures, the nature of electronic communications/virtual care is such that the USS cannot fully guarantee that communications/care will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to communications/care. Clients understand and accept the risks and benefits of virtual care and services by signing the Agreement to services.

Clients should note that if the facilitator/USS suspects that sessions are not private, are being monitored by another unauthorized party, recorded, or breached in any other way, the sessions will be immediately terminated and fees will still apply (unless it is deemed that the breach was not due to client error). Further, if it is believed that the client was involved/aware of such activities, services can be terminated, and legal action against the client and any other party can be pursued by USS.

USS encourages all clients to take reasonable steps to ensure the security of their communications/care. Please see and follow the suggestions below.

Suggestions for Clients Accessing Virtual Care

1. Only use secure networks for communications (e.g. portal access) and sessions. For instance, do not use public WIFI networks (e.g. at a coffee shop) to access any of your private and confidential information.
2. Ensure that you password protect your devices and accounts used to access virtual care and ensure that your passwords are strong (e.g. do not use your name, letters or numbers in the order they appear on the keyboard, but do diversify your password with a combination of letters, numbers, and characters). We recommend using multi-factor authentication options for signing in wherever possible/offered.
3. Do not share access to your virtual care with anyone, ensure no one can see your information when you are logging in, and log out of all accounts when using a shared device (pressing back in a web-browser could give someone access to your account if you didn't log out properly).
4. Make sure you find a private place to sit for the sessions where you will not be interrupted. You should participate in therapy only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear the conversation. The session may be terminated by the facilitator if they find you are sitting in a public/disruptive environment and if you fail to comply with their request to move to a secure location. Sessions fees will still have to be paid if the session is terminated.

5. Use a headset with a microphone to further ensure privacy.
6. The facilitator/US\$ requires that webcams be on and the client (s) be visible at all times for all sessions. Ensure that you are in a comfortable and secure location prior to the session starting. You should not be moving around or doing other things during your session. The facilitator may terminate the session if you are not compliant with this, you will still be expected to pay the session fee if the session is terminated.
7. Ensure that you have a stable internet connection or ample data stores to access the virtual care/sessions. You can conduct internet speed tests to see how good your connection is. There are many services you can look up for this on the internet (by searching "internet speed test").