

Counselling & Coaching Services

Thank you for choosing the counselling/coaching services of **Desiree Carlson MA, RCC**. Some counsellors and coaches make a clear distinction between those two roles. As a certified counsellor, existential therapist, and career coach, I adjust my counselling and coaching style to the specific needs of my clients. During our first meeting, we will discuss your goals, expectations, and preferences for our work together. This document is intended to provide you with important information about my experience, qualifications, and credentials, as well as to ensure you understand my expectations for your role.

Credentials and Work Experience: I have an MA in Gestalt Psychotherapy and a Masters in Existential Phenomenological Therapy. I have worked online with people around the world through Skype and Zoom for over 15 years and specialize in transcultural counselling. Within Canada, I am a Registered Canadian Counsellor (RCC #21117) and a Registered Professional Counsellor (RPC #4238). Internationally, I am certified by Landsberg Gersick (LGA) as a Family-Owned Business Consultant supporting families who share business to build governance mechanisms to protect their careers, relationships, and legacy. My research has focused on life transitions and creative adaptations to change, intimacy, and sexuality, as well as a systemic approach including career as the way in which we express and embody our dreams, interests, and skills. I seek to go beyond labels through using innovative and “outside the box” approaches.

Most of my experience over the past 17 years has been with adults experiencing life dilemmas, emotional distress, neurodiversity, relationship challenges, and life-changing events (e.g., becoming a parent, being diagnosed with a disease, losing a loved one / pregnancy loss, losing a job, immigrating to a new country, working through a career/life transition, dealing with cultural shock, living with disability). I have worked (individually and in groups) with hundreds of adults through group therapy, workshops, training programs and retreats. I have developed training programs for counsellors and other professionals around the world. I also advocate for challenging the myths/ideas about what therapy is, or should be, supporting an approach that brings accessibility and power back to the client.

Process of Counselling/Coaching: My approach to counselling/coaching will be directly connected to your goals for our work together. My approach is through the attitude of not knowing, allowing you to be the compass of the pace and topics you want us to work with. I tend to work in a very positive and solution-focused style. Our first session generally runs for an hour and it tends to give us enough time to discuss your concerns, desires, and goals that brought you to see me and, together, to decide on an approach for achieving your goals. Sometimes more than one session is needed to clarify the focus we will take together. It is important to be mindful that clarification and adjustments are ongoing through any counselling process; I will commit to engage fully with you and to introduce tools and activities that will allow us to move closer into what you are looking for.

Sometimes we are able to address your concerns and find clarity in the first session (e.g., you may wonder if you need to focus on a career issue or a relationship issue). Other times, it may take longer, and we will decide together how to best move forward for you to feel the space we create is safe and useful for you.

Once we are both on the same page, we will make a plan together and will work to uncover the best avenues for you to navigate forward to achieve your goal(s). You will likely experience the greatest success in the shortest amount of time if you are willing and able to complete activities and are open to trying out different things between our sessions.

Research has shown that a significant amount of counselling success can be attributed to a strong working relationship between the counsellor/coach and client. Therefore, it's very important that you feel comfortable letting me know if our relationship isn't working for you. I will do my best to refer you to another counsellor/coach who might be a better fit. Some clients prefer working with a counsellor/coach who has similar beliefs, values, or life experiences. Although I am very comfortable working across cultures and have successfully assisted clients from diverse backgrounds (e.g., Indigenous peoples from Mexico, students, immigrants, senior executives, expatriates, 2SLGBTQ+ clients, families, couples, polyamorous relationships, and people from around the world), it might be important for you to know a little about my own background. I am Mexican and lived most of my life in Cozumel, Mexico. I moved to Vancouver in 2019 with my blended family. I have 2 boys and was a single mother for the first 8 years. Today, I share life and responsibilities with my current husband, juggling multiple life roles (i.e., student, counsellor, mother, daughter). While it has been extremely difficult at times, it has taught me to constantly seek balance and never forget to have fun along the way. Although I consider myself an agnostic. I have a deep respect for all belief systems and am open to learning more about different spiritual views.



Referrals: Some of my clients are referred by others (e.g., colleagues, other professionals, parents, employers). This creates slightly different dynamics than with clients who have independently chosen me as a counsellor or coach. If this is your situation (i.e., you have been referred to me by someone else), we will spend part of our time at the first session clarifying the expectations of the person who referred you as well as clarifying your personal goals. We will also discuss the logistics of confidentiality, reporting, payments, and mandates that may impose limitations on our work together. If appropriate, you may be asked to sign a *Consent to Release Information* form.

Confidentiality and Record-Keeping: I will keep anything that you tell me in strictest confidence unless I have your permission to tell someone. The only exceptions are: (1) Within Life Strategies Ltd., we work as a team. Team members have access to files, emails, and financial records. We also consult each other to ensure that we are providing the best possible support to our clients. All team members are committed to keeping client information confidential. (2) I may consult another professional about your concerns and how I might help you, but I will do so without using your name. You have the right to ask me not to consult with anyone. (3) If you tell me you are going to harm yourself or someone else, or inform me of a case of child or elder abuse, I am required to do anything I reasonably can to prevent it or, in the case of child abuse, to report it. (4) If we connect using technology, including but not limited to e-mail, phone, text message, video conferencing, and online assessment tools, there are limits to confidentiality that are important to acknowledge. Refer to our [Technology & Your Privacy](#) infosheet for more details. (5) On rare occasions, counselling records or counsellors/coaches are subpoenaed. Note: This has never yet happened within Life Strategies Ltd., nor my practice as a counsellor.

Our records are stored securely. Our computers are password protected and we keep client files for 7 years after our last contact and then destroy them (i.e., delete, shred, or burn).

Your Rights as a Client / Potential Risks: You have the right to understand my reasons for making suggestions or using particular procedures. I will try to explain clearly, but if you have any questions, please ask them—another of your rights. You also have the right to refuse to do anything I suggest. And you have the right, at any time and for any reason, to decide you do not want to continue working with me. Counselling/coaching may provoke unpleasant feelings or memories. Please let me know if you need to change the pace or process of our work together. In some cases, particularly if you have been referred by a third-party funder such as an insurer, there are additional risks to consider if you want to terminate counselling. I am happy to discuss all your options with you to help you to make informed choices.

Logistical Considerations: I currently only provide online sessions. I recognize, however, that some clients may still prefer to connect in person and if this were the case, I can refer you to another professional who offers this option.

Most counselling sessions take place weekly or monthly and last one hour. Depending on your concerns, however, sessions may be scheduled more or less frequently, for longer or shorter times as appropriate. The number of sessions needed varies with each person and problem; after I fully understand your concerns, we will discuss the number of sessions you might need. Life Strategies Ltd.'s standard fee for counselling/coaching is \$150+ tax per hour, payable by cash, cheque, VISA, or MasterCard. For short contacts, fees may be billed in increments (\$25/10 minutes). Assessment materials and other resources are priced individually and are not included in the hourly fee. Package prices are available for some career assessments and vocational rehabilitation reports. Payments are due immediately after our session. Scheduled sessions require cancellation 24 hours in advance or a 50% cancellation fee will apply.

Concerns or Questions: Through memberships in the following associations, I have committed to follow several codes of ethics. If you have any concerns about our work together, my hope is that we will have the kind of working relationship that you will be comfortable raising those concerns directly with me. However, please know that you may also contact the following associations directly to report or discuss any ethical concerns.

BC Association of Clinical Counsellors (re my RCC status): www.bcacc.ca

Canadian Professional Counselling Association (re my RPC): www.cпка.ca

Desiree Carlson MA, RCC



I have read and understand the information in this document

Signature: _____

Date: _____

