



BIRCH TREE
PSYCHOLOGY

BIRCH TREE PSYCHOLOGY'S DUAL RELATIONSHIP POLICY

THIS DOCUMENT OUTLINES BIRCH TREE PSYCHOLOGY'S POLICIES RELATED TO THE IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE WORKPLACE. PLEASE READ IT TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE BUSINESS CONDUCTS ITSELF IN RELATION TO MANAGING DUAL RELATIONSHIPS AND THE REASONS FOR THE NEED TO PROTECT CLIENTS FROM THE ADVERSE IMPACT THAT DUAL RELATIONSHIPS CAN HAVE UPON THE THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT ANYTHING WITHIN THIS DOCUMENT, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO BRING THEM UP WHEN YOU MEET WITH YOUR CLINICIAN.

Birch Tree Psychology (BTP) adheres to the AHPRA and APS Ethical Frameworks in all its work. This policy addresses all dual relationships relating to BTP clients within the workplace. A client is defined as anyone attending BTP as:

- an individual client
- a couple
- a group member
- a trainee
- a supervisee
- a workshop participant

What is a 'Dual Relationship'?

The APS *Ethical guidelines for managing professional boundaries and multiple relationships* (2007) defines dual relationships as those that: 'occur when a psychologist rendering a psychological service to a client also is, or has been:

- (a) in a non-professional relationship with the same client;
- (b) in a different professional relationship with the same client;
- (c) in a non-professional relationship with an associated party;
- or (d) a recipient of a service provided by the same client.'

BTP acknowledges that in the course of their professional lives, psychologists frequently face the potential for multiple relationships, and that this especially occurs in small organisations such as BTP and within rural communities such as the Macedon Ranges and the Bendigo region. However, we also recognise the importance of managing multiple relationships with the highest regard for the welfare of our clients, and the need to be alert to risk factors in our professional practice.

Examples of dual relationships that might arise within BTP might be:

- A volunteer attending a workshop delivered by a BTP therapist
- Clients attending workshops delivered by their therapist
- Therapists supervising staff that they also line manage
- Therapists being members of the same sports groups as clients
- Therapists having their children at the same school as a client

This is not an exhaustive list and it should be noted that therapists, volunteers and others may become clients by, for instance, attending a workshop delivered by an (other) BTP therapist.

The APS *Ethical guidelines for managing professional boundaries and multiple relationships* (2007) also states that 'Psychologists exercise sound professional judgement when managing multiple relationships in order to avoid any potential for exploitation or harm to clients, and to ensure the effectiveness of the psychological service'. Psychologists also need to 'clarify the boundaries of the professional relationship with clients in order to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest'.

BTP recognises that each dual relationship is unique to the people involved and to the circumstances at a particular time and place. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each BTP therapist to give very careful consideration to any possible dual relationship with a client (as defined above) as it arises, and to the possible consequences. The issue should be discussed in clinical supervision and perhaps with other therapists in order that therapists are able to satisfy themselves and justify to others, that they have thoroughly considered the implications and believe that the dual relationship would, at least, not be detrimental to and would, ideally, benefit the client.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to review Birch Tree Psychology's Dual Relationship Policy. If you have questions or concerns about any of these policies and procedures or regarding any potential conflicts of interest or dual relationships, do bring them to the attention of your clinician so that they can be discussed.