Counselor Fact Sheet

Telephone Counselling Rules

- All calls to be answered within three (3) rings.

- Always use your counsellor name. Do not disclose the location of the 990 call centre.

- Do not give out personal information. This includes your full name, your telephone number, where you work, where you live, etc.

- Never take a call from somebody you recognize.

- Remember your limitations. You are a counsellor and not a therapist, psychologist or medical doctor. Callers with severe problems should be referred to other services.

- It is okay to tell a caller that you do not have the information they are seeking right there, but you can try and find it for them or you can refer them to someone who knows.

- Never meet a caller. Meeting a caller is strictly forbidden, both for safety reasons and also because it compromises the anonymity of the Talkline.

- Never force callers to give details they are not comfortable with.

- Keep it confidential. All conversations with callers must be kept strictly confidential.

- Handover a call to a different counsellor, if you feel uncomfortable with the call.

- If your identity is compromised by a caller DENY your true identity.

- Do not judge or moralise. Accept callers as they are. Clients have a right to their own value systems. He/she does not want to be told what is right and what is wrong from the counsellor's perspective.

- Do not prescribe treatment for any ailment. It is not the counsellor's role to give medical advice.

- Do not reassure. Never say, 'Everything will come right' to a caller. You cannot see the future, and this may not be true. False assurances will not help a caller to deal with his/her situation in a realistic manner.

- Do not block strong emotions. One of the main purposes of counselling is to help a client express their emotions.

- Stay centred on the client. Remember that the counselling session is about the client, not about the counsellor. This includes their feelings, attitudes, beliefs and opinions.