

Practice Break Guidelines



Practice Break Guidelines

Introduction

There are many reasons why ACC counsellor members might need or want to have a break in their counselling or supervision practice. Practice Breaks can be taken for **any reason** including prolonged illness, bereavement or self-care. They can equally allow for a period of specialised study, extended travel or different employment. We encourage counsellors to maintain their registered membership during their break to:

1. maintain eligibility for registered and accredited membership status,
2. keep up to date with changes in the profession in general and with changes in ACC's policies and procedures,
3. to continue to receive the benefits of membership associated with for, e.g. discounted training, Accord magazine and membership of a community of Christian counsellors.

It is important to inform ACC about your intention to take a break as soon as it becomes the clear option. This allows us to record this information against your record and for us to relax some of the obligations in relation to the terms and conditions of your membership. This also allows us to hold an accurate record of when you were practicing and when not, which may be helpful if a potential client is trying to contact you through the register or a complaint is made against you.

If you are a supervisor and a counsellor, and only **want to take a break from the practice of supervision**, you do not need to inform us. However, you must take appropriate action to minimise the impact on your supervisees, demonstrating particular care for counsellors in training and during the first year of their post diploma practice.

Permitted length

Taking a short planned or unplanned break for a holiday or a short period of illness does not constitute a practice break.

A practice break is characterized by a decision to stop doing the following:

1. seeing all clients (and potentially also all supervisees), and therefore the obligation of

2. having supervision

for a period that is significant for you of not less than three months and not normally more than two years.

If your practice break extends beyond two years, then please contact us and we will work with you to determine whether this is possible and if so, to design a set of refresher activities to ensure safe practice on your return.

What to do in planning for a break?

The key objective when planning for a break is to minimise potential harm to your clients and supervisees.

- Inform your supervisor of your decision/plans and discuss how and when you will tell your clients and the possible impact on them. You will also need to agree as to how to place the relationship and counselling process with individual clients 'on hold' for an agreed period of time or how to bring them to a close, identifying resources for referral and other forms of support. This will include reflection on the ending or suspension of your own supervisee and supervisor relationship.
- Inform your employer or agency of your decision/plans and the plan of action arising from discussions with your supervisor, ensuring that you are also complying with their practice break and notice policies.
- Inform and prepare your clients for the break in the counselling process and relationship and be open about its expected duration. Offer alternative choices such as referral within an agency or to another agency/counsellor. Signpost as appropriate to other psychological and spiritual support services. Ensure that any plans to resume the counselling relationship after the planned break are without obligation on the client's part. Agree how any contact will be re-established between you.
- Inform your supervisor of supervision practice and in discussion with them prepare your supervisees for the break in the supervision process and relationship and be open about its expected duration. If the supervisee is a student on placement contact their placement agency and training college to enlist help for the supervisee in finding a replacement supervisor. For newly qualified counsellors be prepared to assist them in their search for a temporary or longer-term replacement supervisor. Ensure that any plans to resume the supervision relationship after the planned break are without

obligation on the supervisees part. Agree how any contact will be re-established between you.

- Inform your insurance company of your decision to take a practice break and ensure that you comply with any instructions from them.
- Inform ACC of the date that you will be ceasing practice and the date you wish to resume.
- Record the beginning of your practice break in all relevant logs.

What to do in whilst on a practice break

The key objective whilst on a practice break is to ensure that you maintain a level of professional involvement that complements your ongoing development as a counsellor or supervisor.

You need to:

- Maintain your registered membership with ACC.
- Maintain insurance if required by your insurance company.
- Refrain from counselling and supervising.
- Evidence CPD proportionate to your practice break duration and relevant for your practice break purposes (see below for a further exploration).

You will **not** be obliged to:

- Have supervision.
- Undergo practice review.

CPD on a practice break

There are no hard and fast rules relating to having CPD on a practice break because the reasons for having your break may impact on your ability to fulfil all your CPD obligations. In cases for, e.g. where your practice break is prompted by 'burn-out', CPD activity needs to be geared towards self-reflection and psychological and spiritual restoration and healing. As a result, traditional CPD relating to counselling theories and practice may need to be on hold for a period. Similarly, for practice breaks which are related to serious illness, it may not be possible to fulfil the annual requirement for CPD hours. The important thing is to let us know your plans and intentions relating to CPD if they differ from the guidelines. [CPD requirements in relation to membership types are as laid out in ACC's CPD guidelines].

For practice review purposes we ask that you continue to log activities relating to CPD, retaining any certificates. Keep a note of the rationale of variations in quantity or type of CPD which fall outside of the current guidelines.

What to do when planning a return to practice?

For practice breaks under a year:

1. Have **at least one session** with your supervisor of counselling practice to discuss your readiness to return and to agree a return to practice plan in relation to re-engaging with clients 'on-hold' and commencing with new clients.
For practice breaks longer than six months, if general health, wellbeing and circumstances allow, hold a 'check-in' supervision session at or around the mid-way point in addition to one prior to commencing counselling again.
2. Where applicable have at least one session with your supervisor of supervision practice to discuss your readiness to return and as above to plan your re-engagement with supervisees' and/or commencing with new clients.
3. Engage in CPD as necessary for preparing yourself to 'be ready' to resume counselling or supervision practice.
4. Inform your insurance company about your impending return.
5. Contact ACC to confirm your date of return.
6. Resuming your memberships commitments in relation to record keeping, supervision, insurance and ongoing CPD.

For practice breaks over a year:

1. Have **at least two sessions** with your supervisor of counselling practice to discuss your readiness to return and to agree a return to practice plan in relation to
 - a) CPD to update you on any changes in professional standards and new research findings relevant to your practice and specialism, together with activities to act as a refresher and to build confidence and assurance that you 'are ready' to return to practice,
 - b) re-engaging with long-term clients 'on-hold' and re-establishing yourself in the market to attract new clients.

If general health, wellbeing and circumstances allow, hold 'check-in' sessions at six monthly intervals.

2. Where applicable have at least one session with your supervisor of supervision practice to discuss your readiness to return and as above to plan your re-engagement with supervisees' and/or commencing with new clients.
3. Inform your insurance company about your impending return.
4. Contact ACC to confirm your date of return.
5. Resuming your memberships commitments in relation to record keeping, supervision, insurance and ongoing CPD.