

CHOICES

Vancouver Island Counselling
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Navigating Attachment and Transition in Therapy

Change is a natural part of life, but that doesn't make it easy! In therapeutic spaces especially, where trust, safety, and connection are carefully built over time, transitions can bring up a range of emotions: uncertainty, loss, gratitude, even growth.

This month, we're exploring the role of attachment in therapy and what it means to navigate change in a healthy, supportive way.



Why Attachment Matters in Therapy

At its core, therapy is a relationship. A strong therapeutic connection can offer a sense of safety, consistency, and understanding—often becoming a space where clients can explore thoughts and emotions more openly than anywhere else.

Attachment in therapy is not only normal, it's essential. Research consistently shows that the quality of the therapeutic relationship is one of the strongest predictors of positive outcomes.

May 2026 Edition

Healthy therapeutic attachment often looks like:

- Feeling safe to express vulnerability
- Trusting that your counsellor is present and non-judgmental
- Experiencing consistency and reliability in sessions
- Developing a sense of being seen and understood

These connections can be deeply meaningful—and sometimes, that's where transitions can feel particularly challenging.

"Connection is why we're here; it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives."
— Brené Brown



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Understanding Transitions

Life doesn't pause outside the therapy room. Counsellors also experience sudden losses in life, loss of family, and loss of health, when there is sudden and unexpected loss, it impacts in a different way than a loss that is talked about and planned for. When we have time to mentally adjust to the upcoming loss, the impact is less severe and more transitional. The key factor is time and mental preparation.

At Vancouver Island Counselling, we try our best to mitigate sudden losses in every way that we can, and sometimes it is simply unavoidable. In the cases where a counsellor suddenly disappears from the office setting, we do our best to mitigate the impact and hope that people understand our mission of respect, integrity and compassion also run through the transition process as we adapt to get through sudden and unexpected losses, the hardest of all losses.

When change happens, it can bring up important feelings for clients, such as:

- Loss or grief
- Anxiety about starting over
- Questions about continuity of care
- Reflection on the progress already made

These responses are valid. In fact, they can also be therapeutically meaningful, offering an opportunity to explore how we experience endings, change, and connection in broader life contexts.

What Makes Attachment Healthy in Therapy?

A healthy therapeutic attachment balances **connection** with **boundaries**. Unlike personal relationships, therapy is designed to centre your growth, with clear structure and ethical guidelines that protect both client and counsellor.

Healthy attachment in therapy includes:

- Recognizing the relationship as supportive, but time-limited or evolving
- Understanding that your counsellor's role is to empower your independence, not create reliance
- Being able to process feelings about the relationship within the therapy space
- Building skills and resilience that extend beyond any one therapeutic connection

In this way, therapy becomes not just a place of connection, but a place of strength-building.

Moving Through Change

Transitions, while difficult, can also be meaningful turning points. They offer a chance to:

- Reflect on the work you've done and the progress you've made
- Practice navigating endings in a supported way
- Carry forward insights and skills into new relationships or chapters

If you find yourself in a time of change, know that it's okay to feel a mix of emotions. Change doesn't erase the value of what's been built, it often highlights just how meaningful it was.

Final Thought...

Therapeutic relationships are unique: they are real, impactful, and purposeful. While they may shift over time, the growth, insight, and resilience developed within them stay with you.

If you have questions or concerns during times of transition, we encourage open conversation. Therapy is, above all, a collaborative process—and your experience matters every step of the way.