PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

Participant Identification Code _____

SECTION 1

Study title

How do person-centred therapists' experience their menstrual cycle in relation to their client work?

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to explore how counsellors/psychotherapists (therapists) experience their menstrual cycle in relation to client work, employing a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. While existing research considers the client's menstrual cycle within psychotherapy, no studies have examined the therapist's. Findings may encourage greater awareness of how therapists' menstrual experiences shape therapeutic work and have implications for clinical practice and training. Given the absence of literature, this study seeks to establish a foundation for future doctoral research.

Why have I been chosen?

It is important that the researcher assesses as many participants as possible, and you have indicated that you are interested in taking part in this study.

You have been selected because you; are over the age of 21; based in the UK; are qualified in person-centred psychotherapy/counselling; are currently* practicing with clients; are experiencing a 'natural' menstrual cycle (not using hormonal contraceptives or undergoing hormone therapy); are not pregnant and have no diagnosed reproductive health condition affecting menstruation (e.g. endometriosis, PCOS); have an existing awareness of their menstrual cycle (e.g. tracking, menstrual awareness practice); can access personal therapy if needed to support wellbeing during/after participation.

Two other participants will be involved in this study.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to take part, you will receive this information sheet and be asked to sign a consent form. You may withdraw your data up to two weeks after your interview without providing a reason. After this point, withdrawal may not be possible as results may already be prepared for publication. However, all data will be anonymised, ensuring your individual contribution is not identifiable.

What will I have to do?

You will first complete a brief screening call (telephone) with the researcher to confirm eligibility.

Following this, you will engage in a 60-minute semi-structured interview (extendable to 75 minutes if reasonable adjustments are required). Interviews will be conducted via video call, audio-recorded, and facilitated by the researcher.

An optional 20-minute debrief may be arranged within two weeks of the interview; this discussion will not form part of the data set. Participants may withdraw consent for the use of their interview data at any point within two weeks following the interview.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Participation may support reflection on the relationship between your menstrual cycle and client work, although this cannot be guaranteed. More broadly, the study aims to enhance understanding of how therapists' menstrual experiences influence clinical practice, inform psychotherapy training, and establish a foundation for future doctoral research.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, participants may experience distress before, during, or after the interview. To support wellbeing, a 20-minute debrief will be offered following the interview, providing space to reflect on emotional impact and, if necessary, receive signposting to appropriate support. As part of the inclusion criteria, participants must be in a position to access personal therapy during or after the research process.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

The researcher has put a number of procedures in place to protect the confidentiality of participants. You will be allocated a participant code that will always be used to identify any data you provide. Your name or other personal details will not be associated with your data, for example, the consent form that you sign will be kept separate from your interview data. All paper records will be accessible only to the research team, and all electronic data will be stored on a password-protected laptop. All information you provide will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Under the GDPR and DPA personal data collected for research purposes can be kept indefinitely, providing there is no impact to you outside the parameters of the study you have consented to take part in. For specific details on how your data will be stored and kept for

this study, see Section 2 of this letter. If you choose not to partake in this study, your data will be erased within one week of notifying the researcher.

To ensure quality and equity, this project may be subject to audit by the Metanoia Institute Research Ethics Committee. In such cases, a designated auditor may request access to signed consent forms. These documents will only be viewed by the auditor or authorised audit team members.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The data collected in this study will be anonymised, and the results of this study will be published in the Metanoia research repository and shared with the researcher's professional peers and colleagues. It may be presented in relevant forums, such as at conferences, podcasts, or in journal articles, or included in future doctoral research. However, the data will only be used by members of the research team and at no point will your personal information or data be revealed.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has received full ethical clearance from the Metanoia Institute Research Ethics committee (MREC) who reviewed the study.

Contact for further information

If you require further information, have any questions or would like to withdraw your data then please contact:

Beth Phelps / research@bethphelps.co.uk

Thank you for taking part in this study. You should keep this participant information letter as it contains your participant code, important information and the research teams contact details.

SECTION 2

Metanoia Institute Privacy Notice for Research Participants

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) protects the rights of individuals by setting out certain rules as to what organisation can and cannot do with information about people. A key element to this is the principle to process individuals' data lawfully and fairly. This means we need to provide information on how we process personal data.

The Institute takes its obligation under the GDPR very seriously and will always ensure personal data is collected, handled, stored and shared in a secure manner. The Institute's Data Protection Policy can be accessed here:
https://www.metanoia.ac.uk/about/data-protection/

The following statements will outline what personal data we collect, how we use it and who we share it with. It will also provide guidance on your individual rights and how to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO), the regulator for data protection in the UK.

Why are we collecting your personal data?

We undertake research as part of our function and in our capacity as a teaching and research institution to advance education and learning. The specific purpose for data collection on this occasion is to enable the researcher to; contact you regarding this research project; identify your suitability to participate; collect data via interview transcript for the purposes of this study (transcripts will be anonymised).

The legal basis for processing your personal data under GDPR on this occasion is Article 6(1a) consent of the data subject.

Transferring data outside Europe

In the majority of instances your data will be processed by Metanoia Institute researchers only or in collaboration with researchers at other UK or European institutions so will stay inside the EU and be protected by the requirements of the GDPR.

In any instances in which your data might be used as part of a collaboration with researchers based outside the EU all the necessary safeguards that are required under the GDPR for transferring data outside of the EU will be put in place. You will be informed if this is relevant for the specific study you are a participant of.

Your rights under data protection

Under the GDPR and the DPA you have the following rights:

- to obtain access to, and copies of, the personal data that we hold about you;
- to require that we cease processing your personal data if the processing is causing you damage or distress;
- to require us to correct the personal data we hold about you if it is incorrect;
- to require us to erase your personal data;
- to require us to restrict our data processing activities;
- to receive from us the personal data we hold about you which you have provided to us, in a reasonable format specified by you, including for the purpose of you transmitting that personal data to another data controller;
- to object, on grounds relating to your particular situation, to any of our particular processing activities where you feel this has a disproportionate impact on your rights.

Where Personal Information is processed as part of a research project, the extent to which these rights apply varies under the GDPR and the DPA. In particular, your rights to access, change, or move your information may be limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we may not be able to remove the information that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible. The Participant Information Letter will detail up to what point in the study data can be withdrawn.

If you submit a data protection rights request to the Institute, you will be informed of the decision within one month. If it is considered necessary to refuse to comply with any of your data protection rights, you also have the right to complain about our decision to the UK supervisory authority for data protection, the Information Commissioner's Office.

None of the above precludes your right to withdraw consent from participating in the research study at any time.

Collecting and using personal data

Your data will be collected securely by the researcher, using the following measures:

- **Paper documents** (e.g. consent form and participant information letter) are digitised and shredded.
- **Digital records** (e.g. consent form, participant information letter, participant application form) are stored in password-protected files on an encrypted laptop.
- **Interview transcripts** will be anonymised and kept separately from your participant application form, participant information letter, and consent form, and stored in password-protected files on an encrypted laptop.
- **Your email address** will not be saved to my email contacts, but will appear in the participant application form, which is stored as above.
- **Your phone number** will be saved to my business phone for the duration of this study, labelled with your participant code, but will appear in the participant application form, which is stored as above.

Under the GDPR and DPA personal data collected for research purposes can be kept indefinitely, providing there is no impact to you outside the parameters of the study you have consented to take part in. For this study, your data will be kept for the following timeframes:

- **Paper documents** are digitised and shredded within one month of receipt.
- **Digital records** (e.g. consent form, participant information letter) and **anonymised interview transcripts** will be kept indefinitely. Your participant application form will be erased one month after your interview.
- **Your phone number** will be erased once the study is published, unless you consent to be contacted in relation to further research.
- **Emails** will be erased when no longer needed.
- **Your email address** will be erased with email records, unless you consent to be contacted in relation to further research.

Your data will never be sold or misused.

If you choose to withdraw consent from participating in the research study within the timeframe given in the participant information letter, all your data will be destroyed within one week of notifying the researcher of your intent to withdraw.

Data sharing

Your information will usually be shared within the research team conducting the project you are participating in, mainly so that they can identify you as a participant and contact you about the research project.

Responsible members of the Institute may also be given access to personal data used in a research project for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your records. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

If we are working with other organisations and information is shared about you, we will inform you in the Participant Information Letter. Information shared will be on a ‘need to know’ basis relative to achieving the research project’s objectives, and with all appropriate safeguards in place to ensure the security of your information.

Storage and security

The Institute takes a robust approach to protecting the information it holds with its encrypted server and controlled access.

Retention

Under the GDPR and DPA personal data collected for research purposes can be kept indefinitely, providing there is no impact to you outside the parameters of the study you have consented to take part in.

Having stated the above, the length of time for which we keep your data will depend on a number of factors including the importance of the data, the funding requirements, the nature of the study, and the requirements of the publisher. Details will be given in the information letter for each project.

Contact us

The Principal Investigator leading this research is Beth Phelps

Email: research@bethphelps.co.uk

In case you have concerns about this project you can contact Dr Peter Blundell.

Email: peter.blundell@metanoia.ac.uk

Address: Metanoia Institute, Ealing, W5 2QB

Tel: 020 8579 2505

The Institute's official contact details are:

Data Protection Officer
Metanoia Institute
W5 2QB
Tel: +44 (0)20 8579 2505
Email: dataprotection@metanoia.ac.uk

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Participant Identification Code _____

Title of Project: How do person-centred therapists' experience their menstrual cycle in relation to their client work?

Name of Researcher: Beth Phelps **Please initial each box:**

1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the information letter and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	1
2.	I understand that it is my choice to take part and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without penalty.	2
3.	I agree that this form (with my name) may be seen by a designated auditor.	3
4.	I agree that this research may be used in professional presentations and publications.	4
5.	I agree that my non-identifiable research data may be securely stored and used anonymously by others for future research. I am assured that the confidentiality of my data will be upheld through the removal of any personal identifiers.	5
6.	I understand that my interview will be recorded and subsequently transcribed.	6
7.	I agree to take part in the above study.	7

Name of participant: Date: Signature:

Researcher: Date: Signature:

1 copy for participant. 1 copy for researcher.