

Four Positions on Confidentiality in Couple and Family Therapy © 1
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Dr. Jeff Chang (drjeffchang.webs.com)

Shaw (2015): four positions on confidentiality

- No information is confidential, that is, the therapist will not keep any secrets and will share all information received;
- All information is confidential except if a waiver is given by the client. This provides the highest degree of confidentiality and maximises the therapist's access to information. However, if you take this most stringent position, you may get stuck when clients disclose unforeseen material that you are morally and legally compelled to address, such as STDs, an affair, underage drug use, or sex. You can find your absolutist position very difficult to come back from when you need to...;
- Some individually revealed information is confidential, with the therapist listing up front the sorts of information and behaviours that will not be kept private. A more extreme version of this could be to treat each family member as an individual client, in which case the material from separate calls, emails, or sessions is not disclosed...;
- The degree of confidentiality will depend on the therapist's discretion. However, this increases the power imbalance in the work, an issue that has been well critiqued in the literature....

Which position are you most comfortable with, and why?

Reference

Shaw, E. (2015). Ethical practice in couple and family therapy: Negotiating rocky terrain. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 36, 504–517.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1129>

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