Private verses secret

What is the difference between privacy and secrecy? I have explored this in great depth as it is something that may come up in therapy. Privacy is the state of being unobserved, for example, changing clothes – this I keep private, and I am merely withholding from the public view. Private matters are those traits, truths, beliefs, and ideas about us that we keep to ourselves. They might include our fantasies and daydreams, feelings about the way the world works and spiritual beliefs. Private matters when reveled either accidentally or purposely, give another person some insight into the reveler.

Secrecy is the act of keeping things hidden to which the secret goes beyond private into hidden. While secrecy does spill into privacy, not all privacy is secrecy. I have learnt that secrecy stems from deliberately keeping something from others out of fear. Secrets consist of information that has a potential negative impact on someone else emotionally, physically, or financially. The keeper of secrets believes that if they are revealed either accidentally or purposely, it may cause harm to them and those around him/her.

Just to clarify – a secret often contains an element of shame that private does not. We may keep something private for all kinds of reasons but most of the time we keep something secret out of fear and shame of what others would think if they knew. We keep something secret because we believe the cost of telling is so high that it's virtually not a choice at all. Privacy is voluntary and secrecy is not. Here are some examples, Private – I got terrible grades in my degree course. Secret – I forged my degree. Keeping something private is an act of choosing boundaries and staying comfortably within them. Keeping something secret is an act of hiding from the pain of disclosing something shameful. This difference is centered around feelings. It is this element of shame or fear attached to the secret that makes it different from private.