

Welcome to my practice.

This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions that you might have, so we can discuss them at our next session. Once you sign this, it will constitute a binding agreement between us.

ABOUT THE THERAPY PROCESS

Therapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personality of both the therapist and the client and the particular problems the client has. It is not like visiting a medical doctor; it requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work both during our sessions and at home.

Therapy has both benefits and risks. The risks sometimes include experiencing uncomfortable levels of feelings, like sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger and frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. Therapy often requires recalling unpleasant aspects of your history. Therapy has also been shown to have benefits for people who undertake it. It often leads to a significant reduction of feelings of distress, better relationships, and resolutions of specific problems. However, there are no guarantees about the outcomes.

By the end of the first hour, I will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what our work will include and an initial treatment plan, if you decide to continue. You should evaluate this information along with your own assessment about whether I am a person with whom you feel comfortable working. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions regarding me as your therapist, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you secure an appropriate consultation with another mental health professional.

SESSIONS

My normal practice is to conduct an intake session, during which time, we can both decide whether I am the best person to provide the services that you need, in order to meet your treatment objectives. If we decide to continue with therapy, I will usually schedule one 50-minute session (one 90-minute session in the case of family therapy) per week at a mutually agreed upon time, although sometimes sessions will be longer or more frequent. Once this appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24 hours

advance notice of cancellation or we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances which were beyond your control.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

My hourly fee is \$100. In addition to weekly appointments, it is my practice to charge this amount on a prorated basis for other professional services you may require, such as report writing, telephone conversations which last longer than ten minutes, attendance at sessions or consultations with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, or the time required to perform any other service which you may request of me. In unusual circumstances, you may become involved in legal matters that may require my participation. You will be expected to pay for the professional time required, even if I am compelled to testify for another party.

Because of the complexity and difficulty of legal involvement, I charge \$250.00 per hour for attendance at any legal proceeding, related to my clinical practice.

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise. Payment schedules for other professional services will be negotiated at the time these services are requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or installment payment plan.

If your account is more than 60 days in arrears and suitable arrangements for payment have not been agreed to, I have the option of using legal means to secure payment, including collection agencies or small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, the costs of those proceedings will be included in the claim. In most cases, the only information that I would release about a client's treatment would be the client's name, the nature of the services provided, and the amount due. It is not unusual, however, that a judge may subpoena an entire case record.

CONTACTING ME

I am often not immediately available by telephone. While I am usually in my office between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., I do not answer the phone when I am with a client. When I am unavailable, I have voice mail where you can leave a message. I make every effort to return calls on the same day with the exception of weekends, holidays, or days I am out of the office. If you are difficult to reach, please leave the times you will be available. I am not in group practice so you should know that I handle all of my own calls. In the event of an emergency call

outside of my office hours, you can leave a message and text message me your phone number. While I will do the best I can to return your call, I cannot guarantee that I will be able to get to you in less than 24 hours.

If you are in a life-threatening crisis, you should immediately proceed to an emergency room, or, preferably, a psychiatric hospital. If I am unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a trusted colleague you can contact, if necessary.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

Both the law and the standards of my profession require that I keep appropriate treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of the records, but if you wish, I can prepare an appropriate summary.

Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or can be upsetting to a client. I recommend that you review the records in my presence, so we can discuss the contents. We can discuss what the fee would be for such a meeting. I am sometimes willing to conduct such a meeting without charge. Clients will be charged an appropriate fee for any preparation time that is required to comply with an information request.

If you are under eighteen years of age, please be aware that the law does provide your parents with the right to examine your treatment records. It is my policy reach an agreement with parents and children about how we handle confidentiality. I believe that a child needs confidentiality in sessions in order to trust that treatment is safe, and I also believe that parents need to understand how their child's treatment is proceeding. Safety issues will always be discussed with parents immediately. I will also provide parents with updates regarding treatment, and a summary when it is complete if requested to do so. Before giving parents any information, I will discuss the matter with the child and will do the best I can to resolve any objections either parents or children may have about what I am prepared to disclose.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, the confidentiality of all communications between a client and mental health provider is protected by law, and I can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. However, there are some important exceptions.

In most judicial proceedings, you have the right to prevent me from providing any information about your treatment. However, in some circumstances, such as

child custody proceedings and proceedings in which your emotional condition is an important element, a judge may require my testimony if he/she determines that resolution of the issues before him/her demands it, and my case records may be subpoenaed.

There are some situations in which I am legally required to take action to protect others from harm, even though that requires revealing some information about a client's treatment.

If I believe that a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person is being abused, I must file a report with the appropriate agency. If I believe that a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required to take protective action, which may include notifying the potential victim, notifying the police, or seeking appropriate hospitalization. If a client threatens to harm him/herself, I may be required to seek hospitalization for the client, including contacting family members or others who can help provide protection.

Should such a situation occur, I make every effort to fully discuss the situation with my client before taking any action.

As a Marriage & Family Therapist Intern, I am required to consult with my supervisors regarding cases. My supervisors are, of course, also legally bound to keep the information confidential.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have at our next session. As you might suspect, the laws governing these issues are quite complex, and I am not an attorney. While I am happy to discuss these issues with you, should you need specific advice, formal legal counsel may be desirable. I will provide you with relevant portions or summaries of the applicable state laws governing these issues, as well as the web and street addresses along with the telephone number of the Board of Marriage and Family Examiners, which governs the professional practice of MFTs, at your request.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

Client Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____