

Information for Clients

The Benefits and Risks of Therapy

As with any treatment, there are some risks as well as many benefits with therapy. You should think about both the benefits and risks when making any treatment decisions. For example, in therapy, there is a risk that clients will, for a time, have uncomfortable levels of sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other negative feelings. Clients may recall unpleasant memories. These feelings or memories may bother a client at work or in school. Also, clients in therapy may have problems with people important to them. Family secrets may be told. Therapy may disrupt a marital relationship. Sometimes, too, a client's problems may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment. Most of these risks are to be expected when people are making important changes in their lives. Finally, even with our best efforts, there is a risk that therapy may not work out well for you.

In therapy, major life decisions are sometimes made, including decisions that involve changing relationships, work situations and lifestyles. These decisions are a common outcome of therapy as a result of an individual's questioning many of their beliefs and values. As your therapist, I will be available to discuss any of your problems, concerns, or possible negative side effects in our work together.

While you consider these risks, you should know also that the benefits of therapy have been shown by scientists in hundreds of well-designed research studies. People who are depressed may find their mood lifting. Others may no longer feel afraid, angry, or anxious. In therapy, people have a chance to talk things out fully until their feelings are relieved or the problems are solved. Clients' relationships and coping skills may improve greatly. They may get more satisfaction out of social and family relationships. Their personal goals and values may become clearer. They may grow in many directions-as persons, in their close relationships, in their work or schooling, and in the ability to enjoy their lives. I do not take on clients I do not think I can help. Therefore, I will enter our relationship with optimism about our progress.

Consultations

If you could benefit from a treatment I cannot provide, I will help you to get it. You have a right to ask me about such other treatments, their risks, and their benefits. Based on what I learn about your problems, I may recommend that you see another professional. If I do this, I will fully discuss my reasons with you, so that you can decide what is best. If you are treated by another professional, I will coordinate my services with them and any other professional when it is clinically indicated and I have your permission. If for some reason treatment is not going well, I might suggest you see another therapist or another professional in addition to me. As a responsible and ethical therapist, I cannot continue to treat you if my treatment is not working for you. If you wish for another professional's opinion at any time, or wish to talk with another therapist, I will help you find a qualified person and will provide him or her with the information needed.

What to Expect from Our Relationship

Therapy is most productive when it is conducted in an atmosphere of trust. You expect me to be honest with you about your problems and progress. I will expect you to be honest with me about your expectations for services, your compliance with medication, and any other barriers to treatment.

As a professional, I will use my best knowledge and skills to help you. This includes following the rules and standards of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). In your best interests, the NASW puts limits on the relationship between a therapist and a client, and I will abide by these. Let me explain these limits, so you will not think they are personal responses to you.

State laws and the rules of the NASW require me to keep what you tell me confidential (that is, private). You can trust me not to tell anyone else what you tell me, except in certain limited situations. I explain what those are in the "About Confidentiality" section of this brochure. Here I want to explain that I try not to reveal who my clients are. This is part of my effort to maintain your privacy. If we meet in public or socially, I will not initiate conversation or say hello out of respect for your privacy. My behavior will not be a personal reaction to you, but a way to maintain the confidentiality of our relationship. It will be your choice to say hello or initiate any conversation with me or not to. Either way, it will not affect our professional relationship.

In addition, in your best interest, and following the NASW's standards, I can only be your therapist. I cannot have any other role in your life. I cannot, now or ever, be a close friend or socialize with any of my clients. I cannot be

a therapist to someone who is already a friend. I can not have a personal or business relationship with anyone who is or has been my client.

About Confidentiality

I will treat with great care all the information you share with me. It is your legal right that our sessions and my records about you be kept private. That is why I ask you to sign an "Authorization to Receive and Disclose Protected Health Information" form before I can talk about you or send my records about you to anyone else. In general, I will tell no one what you tell me. I will not even reveal that you are receiving treatment from me.

In all but a few rare situations, your confidentiality (that is, your privacy) is protected by state law and by the rules of my profession. Here are the most common cases in which confidentiality is *not* protected:

1. If you were sent to me by a court for evaluation or treatment, the court expects a report from me. If this is your situation, please talk with me before you tell me anything you do not want the court to know. You have a right to tell me only what you are comfortable with telling.
2. Are you suing someone or being sued? Are you being charged with a crime? Are you being accused of being an unfit parent? If so, and you tell the court that you are seeing me, I may then be ordered to show the court my records. Please consult your lawyer about these issues.
3. If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or another person, the law requires me to try to protect you or that other person. This usually means telling others about the threat. I cannot promise never to tell others about threats you make.
4. If I am concerned that a child has been or will be abused or neglected, I am legally required to report this to the authorities.

There are two situations in which I might talk about part of your case with another therapist. I ask now for your understanding and agreement to let me do so in these two situations.

First, when I am away from the office for a few days, I may have a trusted fellow therapist "cover" for me. This therapist will be available to you in emergencies. If you speak with this therapist he or she will share this information with me so that I am aware of your emergency or need while I was unavailable. Of course, this therapist is bound by the same laws and rules as I am to protect your confidentiality.

Second, I sometimes consult other therapists or other professionals about my clients. This helps me in giving high-quality treatment. These persons are also required to keep your information private. Your name or other identifying information will never be given to them, and they will be told only as much as they need to know to understand your situation.

Except for the situations I have described above, my office staff and I will always maintain your privacy. I also ask you not to disclose the name or identity of any other client being seen in this office.

My office staff makes every effort to keep the names and records of clients private. My staff and I will try never to use your name on the telephone; other clients may be in the office and overhear it. All staff members who see your records have been trained in how to keep records confidential.

If your records need to be seen by another professional, or anyone else, I will discuss it with you. If you agree to share these records, you will need to sign an "Authorization to Release and/or Receive Information" form. This form states exactly what information is to be shared, with whom, and why, and it also sets time limits. You may read this form at any time. If you have questions, please ask me. For your privacy, I will only release records to another medical or mental health professional.

For quality assurance purposes, health insurance or managed care companies may ask for more information regarding you symptoms, diagnoses and my treatment methods. I will let you know if this type of request is made. Please understand that I have no control over what the insurance or managed care company does with this information. I will give the minimal amount of information needed.

You can review your own records at any time. I only ask that you schedule an appointment with me to review records so that you are able to gain an accurate understanding of the record's contents. This will also give us an opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns you may have. I cannot allow you to examine any records created by another person and sent to me. In order to access these records you will need to go to the original source.

In some very rare situations, I may temporarily remove parts of your records before you see them. This would

happen if I believe that the information will be harmful to you or anyone else, but I will discuss this with you.

About Our Appointments

An appointment is our commitment to work. We agree to meet and to be on time. If I am ever unable to start on time, I ask your understanding, as I may be helping another client with an emergency situation. If you are late, we will probably not be able to meet for the full time because it is likely that I have appointments after yours.

A cancelled appointment delays our work. I will consider our meetings very important and ask you to do the same. Please try not to miss sessions if you can possibly help it. When you must cancel, please give me as much notice as possible. Your session time is reserved for you. I am rarely able to fill a cancelled session unless I know a week in advance. If you start to miss a lot of sessions, I may be unable to keep scheduling you during primetime hours (ie. afternoons and evenings). **Except for when there are unpredictable emergencies, you will be charged \$60 for a missed appointment without canceling and \$45 for cancelling within 24 hours of your appointment time. Please note that insurance companies will not pay for this.**

While our appointments are very important, so is your physical health and the health of others. In the event that you or your child who is in therapy with me is ill and contagious I ask that you call to reschedule. It is important that you know to take good physical care of yourself as well as emotional care.

In general, appointments for children are 40-50 minutes based on their need and tolerance. Adult sessions are generally 50 minutes, though we will use the full hour or more when needed.

Fees, Payments, and Billing

Payment for services is important in any professional relationship. This is even more true in therapy; one treatment goal is to make relationships and the duties they involve clear. You are responsible for seeing that my services are paid for. Meeting this responsibility shows your commitment.

My current regular fees are as follows. You will be given advance notice if my fees should change.

Please pay for each session or your co-pay for the session at its end. I have found that this arrangement helps us stay focused on our goals.

Initial session: \$200 for 60-80 minute initial session. Please pay for each session or your co-pay for the session at its end.

Regular therapy services: For a session of 40-50 minutes, the fee is \$120. For a sessions of 60-80 minutes, the fee is \$160.

Telephone consultations: \$60 per hour, prorated for the time needed. (For example, if we talk on the phone for 30 minutes, you will be charged \$30.) I believe that telephone consultations may be suitable or even needed at times in our therapy. However, I believe that face-to-face sessions are most productive and I will generally request that we meet in the office whenever possible. Please note that most insurance companies do not reimburse for phone consultations. Of course, there is no charge for calls about appointments or similar business.

Group Therapy: \$35 per group therapy session.

Family Therapy: \$160 for a family therapy session with the client present and \$140 for a family therapy session without the client present (this is typically a session with the parent of a child client).

Other services: Charges for other services, such as hospital visits, consultations with other therapists, home visits will be based on the time involved in providing the service at my regular fee schedule. Court-related services (such as consultations with lawyers, depositions, or attendance at courtroom proceedings) are generally billed at time and half to provide for preparation and transportation time. Some services may require payment in advance.

Because I expect all payment at the time of each session, I generally do not send bills. I will provide a receipt at the end of each session. I am a provider for most, but not all, insurance companies. You are responsible for any deductibles, co-pays and/or co-insurances. You are also responsible for any pre-authorization you may need to do for your insurance. Please call your insurance company to verify this information.

If you think you will have trouble paying your bill on time, please discuss this with me. If your balance remains unpaid for over a month and we have not come to another agreement I may turn the account over to a collection service.

If you are using insurance, you-not your insurance company or any other person or company-are responsible for paying the fees we agree upon.

If you are sharing the cost of therapy with another adult you are responsible for paying the fees we agree upon. I am not able to bill both parties or come up with an agreement on how you will share costs.

There is a fee of \$25.00 for any returned checks or credit card transactions that are unable to be processed due to unavailable funds in the account.

If You Need to Contact Me

Because I do outpatient evaluation and therapy, I cannot promise that I will be available at all times. I usually do not take phone calls when I am with a client. You can always leave a message on my voice mail, and I will return your call as soon as I can. Generally, I will return messages daily when I am in the office. I find that telephone consultations are not as effective as face-to-face sessions. If you need to speak with me at length prior to your scheduled appointment I ask that you consider scheduling an appointment earlier so that we can best address the issue.

If you have an emergency or crisis, follow the directions and prompts on our phone system. There is an option to reach someone if it is an emergency. Please note that if you are re-directed back to my voicemail you may leave a message and I will be paged. If you have a life-threatening emergency please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

If I am scheduled to be out of town or unavailable I will let you know in advance. If I am unavailable you may receive a return call from another therapist who covers for me at times. He or she will share this information with me as soon as possible.

If I Need to Contact Someone about You

If there is an emergency during our work together, or I become concerned about your personal safety, I am required by law and by the rules of my profession to contact someone close to you-perhaps a relative, spouse, or close friend. This information is requested on the "Client Information" form you fill out at the beginning of treatment.

Statement of Principles and Complaint Procedures

I fully abide by all the rules of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and by those of my state license.

Problems can arise in our relationship, just as in any other relationship. If you are not satisfied with any area of our work, please raise your concerns with me at once. Our work together will be slower and harder if your concerns with me are not worked out. I will make every effort to hear any complaints you have and to seek solutions to them. If you feel that I, or any other therapist, has treated you unfairly or has broken a professional rule, please tell me. You can also contact the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services or the local NASW and speak to the chairperson of the ethics committee. He or she can help clarify your concerns or tell you how to file a complaint.

In my practice as a therapist, I do not discriminate against clients because of any of these factors: age, sex, marital/family status, race, culture, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, place of residence, veteran status, physical disability, health status, sexual orientation, or criminal record unrelated to present dangerousness. This is a personal commitment, as well as being required by federal, state, and local laws and regulations. I will always take steps to advance and support the values of equal opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic/cultural diversity. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please bring this matter to my attention immediately.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you in the therapy process. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about the above information or any other aspect of the therapy process.