

Office Policies & General Information Agreement for Psychotherapy Services

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All information disclosed within sessions and the written records pertaining to those sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your (the client's) written permission, except where disclosure is required or allowed by law.

When Disclosure Is Required By Law: Some of the circumstances where disclosure is required by the law are:

- There is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent or elder abuse or neglect, or
- A client presents a danger to self, to others, to property or is gravely disabled, or
- When client's family members communicate to me that the client presents a danger to others
- A federal law known as The Patriot Act of 2001 requires therapists (and others) in certain circumstances, to provide FBI agents with books, records, papers and documents and other items and prohibits the therapist from disclosing to the client that the FBI sought or obtained the items under the Act.

When Disclosure May Be Required: Disclosure may be required pursuant to a legal proceeding by or against you. If you place your mental status at issue in litigation, the defendant may have the right to obtain the psychotherapy records and/or testimony by me.

With Family or Marriage/Relationship Therapy: If you participate in marital, couple, relationship, or family therapy, I will not disclose confidential information about your treatment unless all adult person(s) who participated in the treatment with you provide their written authorization to release such information. **I use a "no-secrets" policy when conducting family or marital/couples/relationship therapy.** This means that if you participate in family, and/or marital/couples/family therapy, I am permitted to use information obtained in an individual session that you may have had with me, when working with other members of your family. Please feel free to ask me about my "no-secrets" policy and how it may apply to you.

Group Therapy: In group therapy, it is of utmost importance that all members maintain confidentiality and disclose neither the content of sessions nor the identity of fellow group members. It is highly recommended that any meaningful exchange outside the group also be discussed in the group. In group therapy, the other members of the group are not therapists. The same ethics and laws that bind me do not regulate them. The limits of confidentiality and the reporting laws have been outlined earlier in this document. While the expectation is that all group members will maintain confidentiality, you cannot be certain that they will always keep what you say in the group confidential. You are ultimately responsible for what you say and what you think, feel, or do with the feedback you receive in the group.

Minors and Confidentiality: Communications between therapists and clients who are minors (under the age of 18) are confidential. However, parents and other guardians who provide authorization for their child's treatment are often involved in their treatment. Consequently, I, in the exercise of my professional judgment, may discuss the treatment progress of a minor patient with the parent or caretaker. Patients who are minors and their parents are urged to discuss any questions or concerns that they have on this topic with me.

Emergencies: If there is an emergency during our work together, or in the future after termination where I become concerned about your personal safety, the possibility of you injuring someone else, or about you receiving proper psychiatric care, I will do whatever I can, within the limits of the law, to prevent you from injuring yourself or others and to ensure that you receive the proper medical care. For this purpose, I may also contact the person whose name you have provided on the biographical sheet.

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Health Insurance & Confidentiality of Records: Disclosure of confidential information may be required by your health insurance carrier or HMO/PPO/MCO/EAP to process the claims. If you instruct me to do so, I will communicate only the minimum necessary information to the carrier. I have no control or knowledge over what insurance companies do with the information submitted or who has access to this information. Note that I am an out-of-network provider for any insurance.

Litigation Limitation: Due to the nature of the therapeutic process and the fact that it often involves making a full disclosure with regard to many matters which may be of a confidential nature, it is agreed that should there be legal proceedings (such as, but not limited to divorce and custody disputes, injuries, lawsuits, etc.), neither you (client), nor your attorney, nor anyone else acting on your behalf will call on me to testify in court or at any other proceeding, nor will a disclosure of the psychotherapy records be requested unless otherwise agreed upon.

Consultation: I consult regularly with other professionals regarding my clients; however, the client's identity remains completely anonymous, and confidentiality is fully maintained.

In my Absence: At times, I may also need to reveal your name and phone number to therapists covering my practice in my absence.

Emails, Cell Phones, Computers and Faxes:

Computers, email, and cell phone communication can be accessed by unauthorized people and, hence, can compromise the privacy and confidentiality of such communication. Cell phone communications are vulnerable to such access because a third party with certain electronic equipment can intercept the transmitted signal. Emails and text messages are vulnerable to such access since they are temporarily stored on servers where their privacy cannot be guaranteed. Although I will not do regular email with clients, I will do encrypted email with a special encrypted email such as Hushmail.com. I will do texting with clients but would like to restrict it to setting up appointments. My computers are password protected. I do not use social media with clients.

Records and Your Right to Review Them:

Both the law and the standards of my profession require that I keep appropriate treatment records. As a client, you have the right to review or receive a summary of your records at any time, except in limited legal or emergency circumstances or I assess that releasing such information might be harmful in any way. In such a case, I will provide the records to an appropriate and legitimate mental health professional of your choice. Considering all of the above exclusions, if it is still appropriate, upon your request, I will release information to any agency/person you specify unless I assess that releasing such information might be harmful in any way.

Responsibility to Protect:

If I believe that you are at risk of killing yourself, then from both a therapeutic and a human perspective, my most important treatment goal is going to be to keep you safe and alive. With severe childhood trauma, it is not unusual for parts of you to come up in a flashback/trance state in which they think they are back then in the middle of the original trauma scene, and who might feel hopeless and suicidal – i.e., they might feel like their only way to get free is to commit suicide. At these times it can be difficult to distinguish that this is a part of you that feels this way and not all of you. The probability of suicidal parts coming up increases the more we get into the therapy, because it appears that the more difficult traumas tend to come up later. Therapeutically it is our job to help these parts become safe and to move them into a secure attachment. The suicidality then disappears for that part once they feel safe in a secure attachment. I will also encourage you to let significant others (family and friends) support you at times like this. And to help protect you, I may contact your family and friends to ask them to support you and to help to keep you safe.

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This is a vulnerable time for you, the client, when these parts come up in a suicidal state. In preparation for these times, I will be working with you to build support, especially with a new loving mom and dad, from other parts who are safe, and from significant others. Nonetheless, at times it may be necessary for you to voluntarily hospitalize yourself to ensure your safety and to keep you alive during these vulnerable suicidal periods. **If it is unacceptable to you to voluntarily hospitalize yourself at times like this, then we probably need to find you another therapist.**

Therapist Availability & Emergency Procedures:

Telephone consultations between office visits are welcome. However, I will attempt to keep those contacts brief due to my belief that important issues are better addressed within regularly scheduled sessions. If you need to contact me, leave a message on my confidential voice mail at (415) 686-3445. If you wish me to return your call, be sure to ask me to call you back and to leave your name and phone number(s), good times to call, and a brief message concerning the nature of your call. If you have an urgent need to speak with me, please indicate that in your message. I will typically return your call within 48 hours. On weekends and holidays, I check my messages less frequently and may respond only to urgent calls. **Please no calls after 5:00 PM, unless urgent.**

I take vacations and do trainings that take me away from the office. I will give you advance notice.

In the event of a medical emergency or an emergency involving a threat to your safety or the safety of others, please call 911 to request emergency assistance.

The following resources that are available in the local community to assist individuals who are in crisis:

Service	Marin County	Sonoma County
Psychiatric Emergency Services 24-hour crisis line	(415) 473-6666 Crisis Stabilization Unit (415) 473-6392 Mobile Crisis Response Team	(707) 576-8181 (800) 746-8181 Emergency Mental Health Hotline
Suicide Hotline (800) 273-8255 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	(415) 499-1100 or (855) 587-6373 Buckelew Suicide Prevention Hotline	(855) 587-6373 Buckelew Suicide Prevention Hotline
Child Protective Services Emergency Line	(415) 499-7153	(707) 565-4304
Adult Protective Services Hotline	(415) 507-2774	(707) 565-5940 or 1-800-667-0404
Women's Domestic Violence Hotline	(415) 924-6616 Center for Domestic Peace	(707) 546-1234 YWCA Women's Shelter
Men's Hotline – for violent men who want to stop	(415) 457-6760 ManKind program	(707) 528-2636 Men Evolving Non-violently
Women's Hotline – for violent women who want to stop	(415) 457-6760 WomanKind program	
Rape Crisis Hotline	(800) 670-7273 Community Violence Solutions	(707) 545-7273 Verity

Payments & Insurance Reimbursement:

The fee for service for individual and conjoint (marital/family/relationship) is \$4.00/minute. I typically do 75-minute sessions, which would then be \$300 – trauma work typically requires a 75-minute session. For teletherapy sessions, I prefer payment via Zelle to my phone number 415-686-3445. I periodically evaluate my rates. I will give you advance notice in the event of any change in your fee schedule. Telephone conversations, site visits, report writing and reading, consultation with other professionals, release of information, reading records, longer sessions, travel time, etc., will be charged at the same rate, unless otherwise indicated and agreed upon. Please notify me if any problems arise during therapy regarding your ability to make timely payments. Clients who carry insurance should remember that professional services are rendered and charged to the client and not to the insurance company. Not all issues/conditions/problems dealt with in psychotherapy are reimbursed by insurance companies. It is your responsibility to verify and understand the limits of your insurance coverage.

The Process of Therapy/Evaluation and Scope of Practice:

Participation in therapy can result in several benefits to you, including improving interpersonal relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to seek therapy. Working toward these benefits, however, requires effort on your part. Psychotherapy requires your very active involvement, honesty, and openness to change your thoughts, feelings and/or behavior. I will ask for your feedback and views on your therapy, its progress and other aspects of the therapy.

Sometimes more than one approach can be helpful in dealing with a certain situation. During evaluation or therapy, remembering or talking about unpleasant events, feelings or thoughts can result in you experiencing considerable discomfort or strong feelings of anger, sadness, worry, fear, etc., or experiencing anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc. I may challenge some of your assumptions or perceptions or propose different ways of looking at, thinking about, or handling situations. This can cause you to feel very upset, angry, depressed, challenged, or disappointed. Attempting to resolve issues that brought you to therapy in the first place, such as personal or interpersonal relationships, may result in changes that were not originally intended. Psychotherapy may result in decisions about changing behaviors, employment, substance use, schooling, housing, or relationships. Sometimes, another family member views a decision quite negatively that is positive for one family member. Change will sometimes be easy and swift, but more often it will be slow and even frustrating. There is no guarantee that psychotherapy will yield positive or intended results.

During the course of therapy, I am likely to draw on various psychological approaches according to the problem that is being treated and my assessment of what will best benefit you. These approaches include, but are not limited to attachment-based, trauma-based, body-oriented, neurofeedback, transpersonal, humanistic, system/family, psychodynamic or cognitive-behavioral therapeutic methods. I provide neither custody evaluation recommendations nor medication or prescription recommendations nor legal or financial advice, as these activities do not fall within my scope of practice.

Somatic Psychotherapy: Our bodies are a great resource to us, a resource that is generally overlooked by most traditional psychotherapies. If we listen to our bodies, we can derive valuable information that may not otherwise be consciously available to us. In the body-mind model of therapy or body-oriented psychotherapy, we pay attention to the sensations and feelings that are experienced in the body. This type of psychotherapy recognizes the relationship and interconnectedness between what is going on in our minds with what is going on in our bodies.

Success with trauma resolution therapy depends on our using the language of the limbic system. That's because trauma memories are held there, in the unconscious part of the brain. Therefore, regular talk therapy is not a viable option for trauma resolution. In contrast, through body-oriented therapy we can use the language of the limbic system -- the sensory system -- and succeed with re-writing the unsafe memories with safe ones. We know we are successful in doing this re-writing when the specific trigger resolves.

There are different ways of working with the body in body-oriented psychotherapy. Many of them make use of awareness -- focusing your awareness on and paying attention to sensations and emotions in your body, posture, movements, and gestures. Another dimension of working with the body includes the use of touch. There are a variety of schools that recognize and work with the mind-body interface through touch. The type of touch used is very respectful. It is non-invasive. It is always done only with your permission and cooperation.

If you are so interested, we can incorporate this form of touch into your therapy. It is an option, and your therapy can proceed without it. Please feel free, at any time, to ask any questions you might have.

Neurofeedback: I may also recommend EEG neurofeedback. I have found it very useful for reducing the fear level of intense terror places that can occur with flashbacks, thus making it easier to work with these states. Also, we can use EEG neurofeedback to work with drug/anesthesia states, near-death

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states or other depressed states, as well as to encourage the brain to move to more stable states and to communicate in ways to overcome deficiencies.

Your Rights as a Client: Your safety and comfort are my foremost concern. It is therefore important that boundaries are clear and honored in both bodywork and psychotherapy. The methods of touch in which I have been trained are done consciously, non-sexually, and always with your consent. However, if you ever feel uncomfortable in any way, it is important that you communicate that to me. You always have the right to stop or change any procedure at any time for any reason. You always have the right to know, beforehand, what methods will be employed. You always have the right to ask, at any time, any questions that arise for you.

Termination:

After the first couple of meetings, I will assess if I can be of benefit to you. My professional ethics do not allow me to accept clients who, in my opinion, I cannot help. In such a case, I will give you several referrals, whom you can contact. If at any point during psychotherapy, I assess that I am not effective in helping you reach the therapeutic goals, I am obligated to discuss it with you and determine if you would be better served by another therapist. In such a case, I would give you several referrals that may be of help to you. If you request it and authorize it in writing, I will talk to the psychotherapist of your choice to help with the transition. If at any time you want another professional's opinion or wish to consult with another therapist, I will assist you in finding someone qualified; and, if I have your written consent, I will provide her or him with the essential information needed. You have the right to terminate therapy at any time. If you choose to do so, I will offer to provide you with names of other qualified professionals whose services you might prefer. Often the desire to leave therapy can arise from feelings of discomfort or fear or the feeling that nothing is happening, when, in fact, these feelings often precede an important breakthrough. I therefore suggest that termination include a final session.

Dual Relationships:

Not all dual relationships are unethical or avoidable. Therapy never involves sexual or any other dual relationship that impairs my objectivity, my clinical judgment, therapeutic effectiveness, or exploitation. I will carefully assess before entering into non-sexual and non-exploitative dual relationships with clients. Many clients know each other and me from the community. Consequently, you may bump into someone you know in the waiting room or me out in the community. I will never acknowledge working with anyone without his/her written permission. I will discuss with you, my client/s, the often-existing complexities, potential benefits, and difficulties that may be involved in such relationships. Dual or multiple relationships can enhance therapeutic effectiveness but can also detract from it, and often it is impossible to know that ahead of time. It is your, the client's, responsibility to communicate to me if the dual relationship becomes uncomfortable for you in any way. I will always listen carefully and respond accordingly to your feedback and will discontinue the dual relationship if you find it interfering with the effectiveness of the therapy or with your welfare, and of course you may do the same at any time.

Sole Proprietorship:

I am in a sole proprietorship in business for myself and not in a partnership, a nonprofit organization, a professional counseling corporation, or any other joint business entity even when I am in shared office space. Sometimes I do shared advertising with colleagues.

Scent Free Environment:

Due to an increasing number of people who are sensitive to fragrances, we ask that you not wear perfumes or strongly scented aftershaves and lotions when coming for office therapy.

Children:

Children under 12 may not be left unattended in the waiting room.

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Cancellation:

Sessions are typically scheduled to occur one time per week at the same time and day if possible. I may suggest a different amount of therapy depending on the nature and severity of your concerns. Your consistent attendance greatly contributes to a successful outcome. Since the scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, **a minimum of 48 hours notice is required** for re-scheduling or canceling an appointment. The full fee will be charged for sessions missed without such notification. I usually make exceptions in the case of emergencies or sickness. Most insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions. **Call me if you are going to arrive more than 20 minutes late**; otherwise, I may consider you a no-show and not be available for the session.

NOTICE TO CLIENTS:

The Board of Behavioral Sciences receives and responds to complaints regarding services provided within the scope of practice of (marriage and family therapists, licensed educational psychologists, clinical social workers, or professional clinical counselors). You may contact the board online at www.bbs.ca.gov, or by calling (916) 574-7830.

Your signature indicates that you have read this agreement for services carefully and understand its contents. Please ask me to address any questions or concerns that you have about this information before you sign.

Client name (print)	Date	Signature
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Parent's name if client is a minor (print)	Date	Signature
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Parent's name if client is a minor (print)	Date	Signature
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Psychotherapist (print)	Date	Signature
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