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Information For Those Engaging In Psychotherapy

The following information is designed to answer questions that typically arise when entering psychotherapy. My practice policies and procedures are outlined along with legal and ethical issues about below, please raise those with me early in our work.

Training and Background: I received both my masters and doctorate in school psychology from Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I completed my formal education in 1989. After completing an internship approved by the American Psychological Association in 1990, I was licensed as a psychologist in Pennsylvania.

It is my fundamental belief that we are all multifaceted, dynamic and complex beings. My approach to therapy is a response to that belief. I have trained in Psychological assessment, individual and couple psychotherapy and art. Having been trained in these three areas allows me to see the people I work with as a whole and three dimensional. My background in assessment allows me to see people from a more objective perspective. My background in individual and couple therapy offers a relational and contextual perspective while my background in art has taught me to appreciate the nuances and abstracts aspects of life. Within these three perspectives, I am committed to embracing the ways we are all alike while respecting the very important ways we are all unique. Not matter what our life story, we are all normal—we all want to experience love, acceptance, the ability to control our lives and a sense of belonging. And, no matter what our life story, we are all completely unique—no one has experienced life exactly as you have. My work aims to respect both of these aspects of life.

Confidentiality: A critical, foundational dimension of the practice of psychotherapy is the development of a trusting relationship between therapist and client. Such trust requires, of course, the privacy and confidentiality of all information you share with me. Be assured that I will do my utmost to respect, protect, and guard the confidential nature of our conversations. This means, for example, I will make every effort to safeguard your records and that I will disclose confidential information only with your written consent. There are, however, certain situations that require me to report information revealed during the course of therapy to other persons or agencies without your written consent. These situations are outlined below.

- If you reveal information about physical or sexual abuse or neglect of a child, a disabled person or an elderly person, I am required by law to report this to the appropriate authority.
- If you threaten suicide I am required by law to report this to appropriate authorities and, if possible, to notify persons close to you.
- If you threaten bodily harm or death to another person, I am required by law to warn the intended victim(s) and notify the appropriate law enforcement agencies.
- If a court of law issues a legitimate subpoena, I may be required by law (i.e., court order) to provide the information specifically described in the subpoena. (Note: If you choose to use confidential information on your behalf in a court proceeding, such as a custody or divorce proceeding, the opposing attorney also has a right to your records.)
- If you are using health insurance for reimbursement you may have already signed a "consent for release of information" form. This means the insurance company can request information from me, including diagnosis, type of therapy, dates of treatment, fees charged, and treatment progress or outcome.

Limitation on Confidentiality in Couple and Family Therapy: When I agree to work with a couple or a family, I consider that couple or family (the treatment unit) to be the patient. For instance, if there is a request for the treatment records of the couple or family, I will seek the authorization of all members of the treatment unit before I release confidential information to third parties.

During the course of my work with a couple or a family, I may see a smaller part of the treatment unit (e.g., an individual) for one or more sessions. These sessions should be seen as a part of the work that I am doing with the family or the couple, unless otherwise indicated. If you are involved in one or more of such sessions with me, please understand that generally these sessions are confidential in the sense that I will not release any confidential information to third parties.

However, I may need to share information learned in an individual session with the entire treatment unit—that is, the family or the couple, if I am to effectively serve the unit being treated. I will use my best judgement as to whether, when, and to what extent I will make disclosures to the treatment unit, and will also, if appropriate, first give the individual or the smaller part of the treatment unit, being seen, and the opportunity to make the disclosure. Thus, if you feel it necessary to talk about matters that you absolutely want to be shared with no one, you might want to consult with an individual therapist who can treat you individually.

This policy is intended to allow me to continue to treat the patient (the couple or family) by preventing, to the extent possible, a conflict of interest to arise where an individual's interests may not be consistent with the interests of the unit being treated. For instance, information gathered in the course of an individual session may be relevant or even essential to the proper treatment of the couple or family. If I am not free to exercise my clinical judgement regarding the need to bring information to the family or couple during their therapy, I might be placed in a situation where I will be unable to further the therapy goals agreed upon at the onset of our work.

Therapy and Physical Symptoms: Physical symptoms are sometimes the result of emotional stress and can be the focus of psychotherapeutic work. It is important, however, that an appropriate medical specialist review your current situation to assess the degree to which the symptoms have a physical base. I will, therefore, request that you undergo a medical examination whenever a physical symptom is a primary concern. When appropriate, I will work closely with your medical specialist to coordinate treatment and services.

Medications and Psychotherapy: In the event a consideration for psychological distress seems warranted, I will then assist you in obtaining a medical evaluation, preferably with a psychiatrist. Please inform me of any and all prescribed medications and of any changes made in prescriptions.

Fees for Service: Although I am flexible in my fee schedule, I normally charge \$150.00 per session for individual, marital or family therapy and \$45.00 per session for group therapy. The insurance companies I currently work with are Blue Cross, Blue Shield. If you are using insurance to cover the cost of our visits, please be prepared to pay your co-pay at the end of each session. I will do my best to work with you and your health insurance company to acquire the benefits you deserve. *We will be more efficient in our sessions if you have your check written before you come in.* In addition, I accept the major credit cards. Should you have trouble meeting the cost of therapy, please do not hesitate to discuss your situation with me.

A fee is charged for telephone and email consultations of a therapeutic nature.

Missed Appointments and Cancellations: Your appointments represent a contract for my services. Therefore, it is my policy to charge full fee for appointments missed with less than 24 hours' notice. If however, you miss an appointment without 24 hours' notice for a reason totally beyond your control, discuss this with me and I will, of course, waive the fee. Please note that insurance companies cannot be billed for missed appointments.

Telephone Accessibility and Emergency Calls: Since I do not have a receptionist, my phone is equipped with a telephone-answering device. You may leave a message there at any time of the day or night. I check my messages frequently and will make every effort to return your call within 24 hours of receiving your message. *I am not in a position to offer emergency service.* If you have an emergency and are unable to reach me please contact your local crisis intervention center or dial 911. The telephone number for crisis intervention from anywhere is **866-350-HELP**

Vacation Policy: I will be away from my office periodically throughout the year. Whenever this occurs I will notify you well in advance of my leaving and will provide you with either a number where you can reach me or the number of a colleague who can be of assistance to you should you need it.