

Information for Clients

Welcome to our practice. We appreciate the opportunity to be of help to you. This document answers some questions clients sometimes ask about our practice. Please read it and ask your clinician any questions you may have. You will be asked to sign a form indicating you received this.

About Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy requires your very active involvement, as it is a partnership between you and your clinician. It is typical to be asked many questions at the beginning of treatment. Sometimes you may be asked to fill out questionnaires. You may be asked to practice new skills, to do exercises, to keep records, and perhaps to do other tasks, outside of your sessions. Change will take time and effort.

Most clients attend therapy on a weekly basis, in the beginning of treatment. After improvement, sessions may be reduced in frequency. The process of ending therapy is called "termination." Stopping therapy should not be done casually, although either you or your clinician may decide to end it in your best interest. If you wish to stop therapy at any time, it is recommended that you meet with your clinician for at least one session to review your work together.

The Benefits and Risks of Therapy

As with any powerful 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, clients will sometimes experience uncomfortable levels of sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other negative feelings. Clients may recall unpleasant memories. 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 any important changes in their lives. Finally, even with our best efforts, there is a risk that therapy may not work out well for you.

While you consider these risks, you should know also that scientists in hundreds of well-designed research studies have showed the benefits of therapy. 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.

Consultations

If you wish for another professional's opinion at any time, or wish to talk with another therapist, we will help you find a qualified person and will provide him or her with the information needed. If another professional treats you, we will coordinate services with them and with your own medical doctor, with your permission.

If for some reason treatment is not going well, your clinician might suggest you see another therapist or another professional. Responsible and ethical clinicians cannot continue to treat you if treatment is not working.

What to Expect from the Therapeutic Relationship

Professionals use their best knowledge and skills to help you. This includes following the rules and standards of the American Psychological Association, or APA. In your best interests, the APA puts limits on the relationship between a therapist and a client. Please understand these limits, as they are not personal responses to you.

First, psychologists are licensed and trained to practice psychology—not law, medicine, or any other profession, and are therefore, unable to give you good advice from these other professional viewpoints.

Second, state laws and the rules of the APA require psychologists to keep what you tell them confidential (that is, private), except in certain limited situations, explained in the "About Confidentiality" section of this document. If you see your clinician outside of the office, they may not say hello or talk to you very much, as a way to maintain the confidentiality of your relationship. They will not attend your family gatherings, such as parties or weddings. Your therapist will not give you gifts, always recall your birthday, or receive your gifts eagerly.

Third, following the APA's standards, your therapist cannot have any other role in your life, such as friend or business associate, for example.

About Confidentiality

Psychological services are best provided in an atmosphere of trust. You can expect your therapist to be honest with you about your problems and progress. You are expected to be honest about your expectations for services, your compliance with medication, and any other barriers to treatment.

It is your legal right that sessions and records about you be kept private. You will be asked to sign a "release-of-records" form before we can talk about you or send records about you to anyone else. Without your signature, we will not even reveal that you are receiving treatment from our practice, except to your other treatment providers.

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

1. If you were sent to our practice by a court for evaluation or treatment, the court expects a report. If this is your situation, please talk with your therapist before saying anything you do not want the court to know. You have a right to share only what you are comfortable with telling.
2. Are you suing someone or being sued? Are you being charged with a crime? If so, and you tell the court that you are in treatment, your therapist may then be ordered to show the court your records. Please consult your lawyer about these issues.
3. If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or another person, the law requires your therapist to try to protect you or that other person. This usually means telling others about the threat.
4. If your therapist believes a child who has been seen in our practice has been or will be abused or neglected, they are legally required to report this to the authorities.

When your therapist is away from the office for a few days, they will have a trusted fellow therapist "cover" for them. This therapist will be available to you in emergencies. Therefore, he or she needs to know about you. Generally, your therapist will tell this therapist only what he or she would need to know for an emergency. Of course, this therapist is bound by the same laws and rules to protect your confidentiality.

Your therapist may sometimes consult other therapists or other professionals about clients to help ensure quality treatment. These persons are also required to keep your information private. Your name 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 described above, the staff of this practice will always maintain your privacy. We ask you not to disclose the name or identity of any other client being seen in this office.

If your records need to be seen by another professional, or anyone else, your therapist will discuss it with you. If you agree to share these records, you will need to sign a release 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.

If you are participating in family or couples therapy (where there is more than one client), and you want to have records of this therapy sent to anyone, all of the adults present in therapy will have to sign a release.

You can review your own records at any time. You may add to them or correct them, and you can have copies of them. You may not examine records created by anyone else and sent to the practice, as you must contact them. Your case records are kept in a safe place.

In some very rare situations, your therapist may temporarily remove parts of your records before you see them, if they believe that the information will be harmful to you.

About Your Appointments

At the beginning of treatment, basic information will be exchanged. It is typical to meet for a 45-minute session once or twice a week, then less often. To help you secure times that are convenient, you are encouraged to schedule your appointments well in advance.

An appointment is a mutual commitment. If your therapist is unable to start on time, we ask your understanding and assure you that you will receive the full time agreed to. If you are late, you will probably be unable to meet for the full time.

Though they are sometimes unavoidable, cancelled appointments delay your work. Please try not to miss sessions if you can possibly help it. When you must cancel, please give as much notice as possible, but at least 24 hours notice. Your

session time is reserved for you. Appointments cancelled with less than 24 hours notice will be charged at the full fee. Our answering system notes the date and time of your call. Feel free to leave a message as soon as you know you cannot keep an appointment.

We request that you do not bring children with you if they are young and need babysitting or supervision, which cannot be provided.

Fees, Payments, and Billing

Payment for services is important in any professional relationship, particularly in therapy, as it demonstrates a commitment to your treatment. You are responsible for paying for services at the time of your appointments. This allows us to keep my fees as low as possible, because it cuts down on bookkeeping costs.

The following is an example of typical fees charged. You will be given advance notice if fees should change.

Regular therapy services: For a session of 45 minutes, the fee is range is \$150-\$175. Other payment or fee arrangements must be worked out before the end of your first meeting.

Telephone consultations: \$ 50.00 per 15 minutes, rounded up to the next 15-minute increment. In general, therapists prefer to speak to clients during their sessions. However, if arrangements are made or it is therapeutically necessary, phone consultations will be charged at this rate. If long telephone conferences with other professionals are needed, as part of your treatment, you will be billed for these at the same rate as for regular therapy services. Of course, there is no charge for calls about appointments or similar business, which should be directed to our Office Manager. Please keep in mind that email is often an option.

Extended sessions: Sometimes it may be better to go on with a session, rather than stop or postpone work on a particular issue. When this extension is more than 10 minutes, your clinician will discuss it with you, because sessions that are extended beyond 10 minutes will be charged on a prorated basis.

Psychological testing services: Psychological testing fees include the time spent with you, the time needed for scoring and studying the test results, and the time needed to write a report on the findings. The amount of time involved depends on the tests used and the questions the testing is intended to answer. These fees will be discussed during your initial consultation.

Reports: You will not be billed for extremely brief forms you may need filled out for insurance purposes. However, you will be charged for any extra-long or complex reports the company might require. The company usually will not cover this fee.

Other services: Charges for other services, such as hospital visits, consultations with other therapists, home visits, or any court-related services (such as consultations with lawyers, depositions, or attendance at courtroom proceedings) will be based on the time involved in providing the service at the regular fee schedule. Some services may require payment in advance.

The practice will assume you are honoring your commitment to pay for scheduled sessions unless you notify the office via phone, letter or email that you are cancelling your future appointments. Keep in mind that you will be charged for sessions cancelled with less than 24 hours notice. You have a responsibility to pay for any services you receive before you end your relationship with the practice.

Because payment is expected at the time of your session, we usually do not send bills. However, if we have agreed that we will bill you, we ask that the bill be paid within 5 days of when you get it.

If you think you may have trouble paying fees, please discuss this with your clinician. Patients who owe money and fail to make arrangements to pay may be referred to a collection agency. If there is any problem with our charges, billing, your insurance, or any other money-related point, please bring it to the attention of your clinician or the office manager. We will do the same with you. Such problems can interfere greatly with your work, and therefore, must be worked out openly and quickly.

Health Insurance Coverage and Payments

When seeing a licensed psychologist, many health insurance plans will help you pay for therapy and other services. These plans include Blue Shield and most Major Medical plans. Because many different companies write health insurance, we

cannot tell you what your plan covers. Please read your plan's booklet under coverage for "Outpatient Psychotherapy" or under "Treatment of Mental and Nervous Conditions." Or call your insurer's office to find out what you need to know.

Please, keep two things in mind:

1. Your employer decided which, if any, services will be covered and how much they will pay. You are responsible for checking your insurance coverage, deductibles, payment rates, copayments, and so forth. Your insurance contract is between you and your company; it is not between the practice and the insurance company.
2. You—not your insurance company or any other person or company—are responsible for paying the fees agreed upon.
3. To seek payment from your insurance company, you must first obtain a claim form from your employer's benefits office or call your insurance company. Complete the claim form. Then attach your detailed receipts to the claim form and mail it to your insurance company.

If You Need to Contact Us

Clinicians at the practice will not be available at all times and usually do not take phone calls when with a client. You may always leave a message with the office manager or on voicemail. Further, you may email your clinician using the practice email (centeremail@comcast.net) or using their personal email.

If you have an emergency or crisis and cannot reach your clinician immediately by telephone, you and your family members should call the community emergency service at 1-800-499-7455, call 911, or go to the Doylestown Hospital emergency department.

If We Need to Contact Someone about You

If there is an emergency during your session, or your clinician becomes concerned about your personal safety, we are required by law and by the rules of the profession to contact someone close to you—a relative, spouse, or close friend. Your clinician is also required to contact this person, or the authorities, if they become concerned about your harming someone else. Please provide the name and information of your chosen contact person to your clinician or our office manager.

Other Points

- Although many therapists share the office space, each works independently, and each alone is responsible for the quality of the care he or she provides.
- If you ever become involved in a divorce or custody dispute, you should understand and agree that your therapist will not provide evaluations or expert testimony in court. You should hire a different mental health professional for any evaluations or testimony you require. This position is based on two reasons: (1) Your therapist's statements will be seen as biased in your favor because of the therapeutic relationship; and (2) the testimony might affect the therapeutic relationship, which must be our first priority.
- If, as part of your therapy, you create and provide records, notes, artworks, or any other documents or materials, we will return the originals to you at your written request but will retain copies.

Statement of Principles and Complaint Procedures

The psychologists at the practice fully abide by all the rules of the American Psychological Association (APA) and by those of their state license. (The APA's rules include its Ethical Principles, its Standards for Providers of Psychological Services, and its Guidelines for Delivery of Specialty Services by Clinical Psychologists.)

Problems can arise in your relationship with your clinician, just as in any other relationship. If you are not satisfied with any area of our work, please raise your concerns with your clinician at once. Your work will be slower and harder if your concerns are not worked out. We will make every effort to hear any complaints you have and to seek solutions to them. If you feel that any therapist has treated you unfairly or has even broken a professional rule, please tell your clinician or one of the practice directors. You can also contact the state or local psychological association 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. You may also contact the state board of psychologist examiners, the organization that licenses those of us in the independent practice of psychology.

At the practice, we do not discriminate against clients because of any of these Factors: age, sex, marital/family status, race, color, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, place of residence, veteran status, physical disability, health status, sexual orientation, or criminal record unrelated to present dangerousness. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please bring this matter to our attention immediately.