

## Office Policies and Agreement for Psychotherapy Services

Welcome to my practice. Your first visit to a new therapist is very important, and you may have many questions. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. As a client in psychotherapy, you have certain rights that are important to know about because this is your therapy, whose goal is your well-being. There are also certain limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. As a psychologist, I have corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections. Please take time to read this document carefully and let me know if you have any questions or need more information. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

### Qualifications

I received my Master's Degree in 2000 from Loma Linda University and became a fully registered psychologist in 2005. I work from a collaborative perspective and rely on a wide variety of techniques including narrative, cognitive-behavioral, positive psychology and mindfulness interventions. I regard the therapy process as a process of sharing expertise ... I bring expertise about therapy processes while you bring expertise about your life experiences. I enjoy working with a diverse range of individuals, couples, and groups in supporting people to live satisfying and meaningful lives.

### The Process of Therapy

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and client, and the particular issues you bring forward. Therapy calls for a very active effort on your part. You will decide what you want to address and the goals you want to achieve in therapy sessions. I will make suggestions on how to reach your goals, but you will decide where you want to go. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will need to work on things we discuss outside of sessions.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. Progress may not happen as quickly as you would like. Clients can sometimes make improvements only to go backwards after a time. There are no guarantees that therapy will yield positive or intended results. On the other hand, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for people who engage in it. Therapy often leads to a significant reduction in feelings of distress, greater personal awareness and insight, increased skills for managing stress and resolutions to specific problems, and improved satisfaction in interpersonal relationships. We will work together to achieve the best possible results for you.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. 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 about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion. Further, if I do not believe that I can be helpful to you I will refer you to others who work well with your particular concerns.

### Confidentiality and Limits of Confidentiality

All information disclosed in our sessions and the written records of these sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission. Confidentiality belongs to you; it is up to you to decide what will or will not be shared and to whom. However, there are some exceptions:

Duty to warn and protect: when a client discloses intentions or plans to harm another person, I am required by law to warn the intended victim and report this information to legal authorities. In situations in which you disclose or imply a plan for suicide, I am required to notify legal authorities and make reasonable attempts to notify your family.

Abuse of children and vulnerable adults: if you state or suggest that you are abusing a child (or vulnerable adult, which includes senior citizens) or have recently abused a child or vulnerable adult, or a child or vulnerable adult is in danger of abuse, I am required to report this information to the appropriate social service and/or legal authorities.

Required by law: In very rare circumstances (often involving child custody proceedings) I am required to disclose client information if ordered by the courts to do so or authorized by law.

Please note these situations have rarely occurred in my practice. If a similar situation occurs, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

In order to provide the best possible therapy services I may consult with professional colleagues. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my client. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I feel that it is important to our work together.

### Cancellations and Lateness

Missed and cancelled sessions pose some issues for both of us. Therapy is sometimes challenging and when we reach a difficult place together, it can feel easier to avoid coming in for therapy sessions. I would prefer that we talk about this rather than you cancelling sessions. The time scheduled for your session is assigned to you and you alone. It is extremely difficult for me to fill a last minute cancelled session on short notice. If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I ask that you provide me with

**24 hours notice.** If you miss a session without cancelling, or cancel with less than 24 hours notice, my policy is to charge for the full session (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control).

If you are running late for your appointment, please phone me as soon as you can to let me know. If you are late for your session, we will still end at our regular time so that I have time to prepare for my next client and be on time for them.

### Termination

Deciding when to stop our work together is meant to be a mutual process. Having a positive closure experience is important for both of us. Before we conclude therapy, we will discuss how you will know if or when to come back or whether a regularly scheduled “check in” might work best for you.

Not complying with recommendations that I have made to you may necessitate early termination of services. If you have any concerns or reservations about my treatment recommendations, I strongly encourage you to express them so that we can resolve any possible differences or misunderstandings. Similarly, if you are unhappy with what is happening in our therapy sessions, please talk to me so that I can respond to your concerns. Your comments will be taken seriously and handled with care and respect. You may also request that I refer you to another therapist, and you are free to end therapy at any time.

If during our work together I determine that I am not effective in helping you reach your therapeutic goals, I am ethically obliged to discuss this with you and, if appropriate, terminate therapy sessions and provide you with referrals that might be of help to you. I may talk to the new psychotherapist in order to help with the transition only if you request it and authorize it in writing.

If you verbally or physically threaten or harass me, the office, or my family, I reserve the right to terminate your treatment unilaterally and immediately, and to take necessary actions to address this.

### Professional Fees

The fee per session is \$190.00 for a 60 minute individual session. You are responsible for paying at the time of your session. Payment must be made by e-transfer, cheque, or cash; I am not able to process debit or credit card charges as payment. Any cheques returned to me are subject to an additional fee of \$25.00 to cover the bank fee that I incur. If you refuse to pay your debt, I reserve the right to use an attorney or collection agency to secure payment.

I will charge on a pro-rated basis (I will break down the hourly cost) for other professional services that you may require such as report writing, telephone conversations that last longer than 15 minutes, attendance at meetings or consultations you have requested. If you anticipate becoming involved in a court case, I recommend that we discuss this fully before you waive your right to confidentiality.

### Contacting Me

I am often not immediately available by telephone. I do not answer my phone when I am with clients or otherwise unavailable. At these times, you may leave a message on my confidential voice mail and I

will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you feel that you cannot wait for a return call or it is an emergency situation, please contact your family physician, the nearest emergency room, or call 911. I will make every attempt to inform you in advance of planned absences, and provide you with the name and phone number of the colleague covering my practice.

I prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments. I generally receive and return these emails within 24 hours with the exception of weekends and holidays. Please do not email me any content related to your therapy sessions as email is not completely secure or confidential. You should be aware that any emails exchanged between us can become part of a legal record.

### Social Media

Please note that I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). I believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites could potentially compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. Please feel free to discuss this with me if you have any questions about this.

- I have read this statement, had sufficient time to be sure that I considered it carefully, asked any questions that I needed to, and understand it.
- I understand the limits to confidentiality required by law.
- I agree to pay the fee of \$190.00 per session and that payment will be made by e-transfer, cheque or cash. If I need to cancel or reschedule a session I agree to provide Danielle Forth with 24 hours' notice. If I miss a session without cancelling, or cancel with less than 24 hours' notice I will be required to pay for the full session (unless we both agree that I was unable to attend due to circumstances beyond my control).
- I understand my rights and responsibilities as a client and my therapist's responsibilities to me.
- I understand that I can end therapy at any time I wish and I can refuse any requests or suggestions made by Danielle Forth.
- I agree to undertake therapy with Danielle Forth.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_