

General Policies

The decision to begin psychotherapy is an important step towards a transformational journey that will make a meaningful difference in your life.

Often there are questions about the process and policies regarding psychotherapy. The following information is provided to assist you in understanding and clarifying the therapist's policies. In addition to reading this, please be sure to ask any questions you might have with your therapist.

APPOINTMENTS

Initial Appointment

- **Couples:** Initial appointment is a 90-minute session. During that time, there will be history taking, discussion of marital issues/frustrations, the positive aspects of the relationship, level of commitment to the relationship, an opportunity to experience “intentional dialogue” and planning for future sessions. Sometimes, after this initial session, it is necessary to meet with each individual member of the relationship to assess what it's like to be “you” in this relationship and to further explore issues that came up in the initial visit. Other times, we can go right into the couples' therapy. These options are discussed in the first visit, and the format for ongoing therapy is arrived at by mutual discussion.
- **Individual:** Initial session is for one hour. During that time, there will be history taking, goal setting, and discussion about the best format for continuing the therapy.

In these initial sessions, feel free to ask questions about my approach, training, and philosophy. All the research shows that if you feel there is a good “fit” with the therapist and you experience the therapist as competent and concerned, regardless of the therapist's treatment approach, there is a strong likelihood of therapeutic success.

Cancellation of Appointments

Once you decide to begin therapy, the appointments that you and your therapist make together are reserved for you and will not be offered to another person. Therefore, if you need to cancel an appointment, you are requested to give 48 hours advance notice. If you cancel with less than 48 hours notice or do not show, you will be charged for one half the session fee. This fee cannot be billed to insurance.

If you have an emergency and are unable to make contact, the fee will be waived. However, true emergencies are rare, and if this happens more than once, there will be a charge for the missed session.

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FEES AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Patients are requested to pay at the time services are rendered. A statement will be provided which can be included with claim forms for insurance reimbursement. I do not bill the insurance company directly, but will fill out whatever treatment plan forms are necessary for reimbursement. Patients are strongly encouraged to contact their insurance company beforehand to find out what their plans require for reimbursement.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Communications between you and your therapist are treated confidentially and are protected by state law. However, some insurance plans require treatment reports in order to reimburse. Be aware that if you have such a plan, there is no guarantee of patient confidentiality. You may wish to check with your insurance company regarding their policy.

No record of your treatment will be released to anyone without written permission from you.

You should know that there are some unusual circumstances under which your therapist may need to release treatment information without your authorization. These situations are:

- (1) An emergency involving imminent danger or harm to yourself or another. Therapists are required by law to report to the appropriate authorities any immediate suicidal or homicidal intentions.
- (2) Court ordered subpoena for case records.
- (3) Physical or sexual abuse of a minor. Clinical social workers are required by Maryland law to report child or elder abuse or neglect situations to Protective Services.

PATIENTS RIGHTS

Persons in individual or couples psychotherapy have certain rights as listed below:

- (1) The right to be informed of the methods of treatment.
- (2) The right to confidentiality as described above.
- (3) The right to humane care and protection from harm and exploitation.
- (4) The right to make informed decisions whether to accept or refuse treatment.

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TERMINATION OF THERAPY

Therapy has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Throughout the therapy, goals and progress will be reviewed. The most successful outcomes involve mutual decisions by therapist and patient. If you believe the therapy is not going well, please discuss these concerns with the therapist and consider this “grist for the mill.” If you decide to leave therapy, after discussion, the therapist will support your leaving in the most constructive way. Referrals for alternative treatment will be offered when appropriate.

Sometimes, it is the therapist’s decision that, for the good of the patient, therapy should be terminated. This situation will always be discussed prior to the therapist’s termination.

I have read and understand the above policies and agree to enter therapy on these terms:

Signature Date _____

Signature Date _____