

PROFESSIONAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

All adult persons (17+) must read, initial each section and sign on the back if you plan to be present in therapy.

Welcome to my practice. I am glad you are here and I am committed to providing you with quality care. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies as well as privacy practices mandated by HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.) The HIPAA Privacy Rules are federal laws that seek to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of your health information.

What is a Counseling Relationship?

The counseling relationship between the client and therapist is one of mutual responsibility. Counseling is a process in which the client and therapist work together as a team to define the issues, cope with the problems, explore the feelings, work toward goals, and resolve the conflicts that the client faces. The task of setting goals for therapy is a conjoint effort of the client and therapist. However, the ultimate responsibility is with the client to decide what the goals will be. The therapist helps the client make sure the goals are both challenging and realistic. While professionalism will be maintained at all times, the client/therapist relationship is also warm and personable with the context of mutual confidence, trust and regard.

How Does the Counseling Process Work?

The process that I generally use for counseling involves four stages.

1. **Exploration Stage**. This is a time for exploring the presenting issues, client's background, and possible causes. This stage is for the purpose of gaining as complete an understanding of the problem as possible.

2. **Goal Setting Stage**. The client and therapist work together to come up with realistic, desirable, measurable, and mutually agreeable goals for therapy.

3. **Working Stage**. Client and therapist, often using homework, work together toward achieving the goals set in the preceding stage.

4. **Conclusion and Termination**. When it is apparent that the goals have been satisfactorily accomplished and/or the client is able to function on his/her own, the therapist will help the client with plans for personal maintenance and begin scheduling sessions further apart. When the client(s) are satisfied that therapy is no longer needed then we will mutually terminate the therapeutic process.

What are the Risks and Benefits of Therapy?

While the benefits of therapy can be tremendous, there are some risks of which the client should be aware. Counseling can open up levels of awareness, which can cause pain and anxiety. Personal changes often mean changes in relationships. Clients should be aware that those, to whom they closely relate, sometimes do not respond positively to their changes, and it may become necessary to deal with the relational adjustment. Therapy requires much effort, pain, and struggle, but marks a season of growth, progress and healing in a person's life. It must be left to the client to decide if the pain is worth the potential gain.

_____ **Initial here if you understand and agree**

When Your Protected Health Information May be Disclosed

Your communications in therapy are completely confidential, as required by professional standards and HIPPA Privacy Rules. However, there are some exceptions to make note of: communications to a qualified law/medical personnel if a client threatens serious mental/emotional/physical harm to self; if a client reports abusing an elderly, handicapped or disabled person, or child/teen; if a psychological issue related to a child's therapy arises in a custody battle; if a client uses therapy to evade arrest for a crime; if a client discloses therapy information related to the client's condition as a part of a claim or defense regarding such; in a court-ordered examination; to a governmental agency or official legislative inquiry as required by law; to insurance personnel as necessary to obtain more sessions or process any insurance EAP/HMO/PPO claims for psychotherapy services rendered; in a civil or criminal action as allowed by law or ordered by a judge; when proceedings are brought by a client against a therapist; and/or when a client waives confidentiality of therapy records in writing.

Select information may also be shared with administrative staff affiliated with me in order to verify benefit information, schedule sessions, take messages, process requests for more sessions, and/or to obtain payment for services rendered. All mental health staff/professionals are bound by the confidentiality rules. All staff members have been given training regarding privacy/confidentiality issues and have agreed to not disclose any information outside the psychotherapy practice without permission of the client. A contract has been made with the answering service in which the personnel has committed to maintain confidentiality of client information, except as specifically allowed by the contract. If you wish, I can provide you with the name of the answering service.