



CLIENT - THERAPIST AGREEMENT

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies.

Although this document is long, it is very important that you read it carefully. We can discuss any questions you have about the procedures. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC AND COUNSELLING SERVICES

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personality of both the therapist and the client and the particular problems that the client brings. There are many different methods I may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like a GP visit; it calls for an active effort on the part of the client. Psychotherapy can aid you in discovering tools and techniques that can be utilized to improve the quality of your life and your relationships. Psychotherapy involves change, which may feel threatening not only to you but also to those people close to you. The prospect of giving up old habits, no matter how destructive or painful, can often make you feel very vulnerable. The process can include experiencing feelings like sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, and fear and making changes that you did not originally intend. Like any professional service, therapy may not work, and for a relatively small number of people, problems may get worse. Even so, many people find that therapy is worth the discomfort they feel. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. There are no guarantees of what you will experience.

As the client involved in this process, you have the right to ask me about my professional experience, background, and theoretical orientation. As the therapist, I am offering the following information regarding the therapeutic relationship in response to frequently asked questions.

THE THERAPY PROCESS

Initially, we will meet to evaluate the problems that bring you to therapy and I will give you some initial impressions of the kind of treatment that would be helpful to you. During the first few sessions, you should be thinking about whether you feel comfortable working with me. Because therapy may involve a substantial commitment of time, money, and energy, it is important that you feel comfortable with the therapist you choose. If you decide that you are not comfortable working with me, I would be happy to help you find another therapist. If you do decide to work with me, we will develop goals together.

Once psychotherapy is initiated, we will decide on a regular schedule of meetings; usually at least one session a week. You may discontinue therapy at any time, though I strongly encourage you to discuss it with me first. I can provide you with referrals to other therapists if that seems needed.

F E E S

My fees for a psychotherapy session will change depending upon the work we are doing, how we are doing it, and the length of time. Please see the appointments page on the Healing Moments site for current rates. Payment must be made by cash, credit card, or EFT at the time services are rendered, unless we agree otherwise. Periodically my fees increase due to inflation and cost of living

increases. Services provided outside of regularly scheduled appointments such as report writing, preparation of records or treatment summaries, extended phone consultations, and the time spent performing any other service you may request of me are prorated. In the unusual circumstance that you are involved in a legal proceeding that requires my participation, you will be expected to pay for all of my professional time, including preparation and transportation costs, even if I am called to testify by another party. Because of the complexity and difficulty of legal involvement I charge a separate legal fee.

MISSED OR CANCELLED APPOINTMENTS

Please notify me 24 hours in advance if you need to cancel or reschedule your appointment. Unless you give me 24 hours' notice, and without exception, missed or cancelled appointments will incur the usual charge for the session.

TELEPHONE CALLS

Your messages are picked up on my confidential voice mail. I check my messages periodically throughout the day and return calls at my earliest convenience. It helps to leave me your phone number (even though I have it) and to let me know until what time at night I can get back to you. If your situation is an emergency, please make that clear on your message and I will return your call as soon as possible. In an immediate crisis, call 000 or Lifeline (13 11 14) or Beyond Blue (1300 22 4636).

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your therapy will include talking over very private things with me. To some extent my ability to help you will depend on how open you can be about yourself – your

ideas, feelings, and actions. So that you can feel free to talk openly, it is my ethical duty to keep client information confidential. This means that, with some very limited exceptions (some noted below), I cannot reveal information about you to anyone else or send out information about you without your permission. If we become involved in family or couple's therapy (where there is more than one client), and you want to have my records of this therapy sent to someone, all of the adults' present will have to sign a release.

If you ever want me to share information with someone else (for example, your GP), I ask that you sign a written Authorization form. We will talk about this before you sign the consent. There are other situations that require only that you provide written, advance consent. Your signature on this Agreement provides consent for those activities, as follows:

EXCEPTIONS TO CONFIDENTIALITY

There are exceptions to confidentiality that you should know about. Please note that while most of these situations are rare, they are important for you to understand. Exceptions to confidentiality include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. If you threaten to harm someone else, I am required under the law to take steps to inform the intended victim and appropriate law enforcement agencies.
2. If you threaten to cause severe harm to yourself, I am permitted to reveal information to others if I believe it is necessary to prevent the threatened harm.
3. If you reveal or I have reasonable suspicion that any child, elderly person, or incompetent person is being abused or neglected, the law requires that I report this to the appropriate government agency.

4. If a court of law orders me to release information, I am required to provide that specific information to the court.
5. If you have been referred to me by a court of law for therapy or testing, the results of the treatment or tests ordered may have to be revealed to the court.
6. If you are or become involved in any kind of lawsuit or administrative procedure (such as worker's compensation), where the issue of your mental health is involved, you may not be able to keep your records or therapy private in court.
7. If you see me in couples, group, or family therapy, I ask that each member of the therapy promise to keep whatever happens in treatment confidential. However, I cannot guarantee that others will keep this agreement.
8. In order to provide you the best treatment I can, there will be times when I may seek consultation from another licensed mental health professional. In these consultations, I make every effort to avoid revealing your identity. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential, although the exceptions to confidentiality apply to them as well.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any of your questions or concerns as soon as possible.