

Best Life Therapy

PRACTICE POLICIES

APPOINTMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

Please remember to cancel or reschedule 24 hours in advance. You will be responsible for a \$100 no show/late cancellation fee if cancellation is less than 24 hours. Clients who are 15 minutes or more late for their session are considered a no show and will be charged the missed appointment fee. Therapists should not be expected to wait for more than 15 minutes for clients. Clients who are committed to therapy and consistently demonstrate that by attending scheduled appointments tend to have better treatment outcomes. This policy is in place to help you. When appointments are missed at the last minute, it does take away an opportunity for another client to be seen. Missed appointments also mean that your therapist has lost an hour of pay. Just as clients depend on their income, therapists do as well. There are many expenses associated with running a group practice and applying a no-show fee helps us remain financially stable so we can continue to provide services for you. We hope to never need to apply the no-show/late cancellation policy, and our goal is to help clients remain consistent. If you are running late message your therapist. We can easily move your session to online so you can access it from any location in Michigan. Thank you for understanding this policy.

The standard meeting time for psychotherapy is 53-60 minutes. We find that this session length ensures that we have sufficient time to work with clients when they have multiple symptoms and are falling into the severe range on assessments. Some clients take more time to express their thoughts and feelings, so we allow enough time for that. We don't want you to feel rushed. Requests to change the 53-60-minute session will need to be discussed with the therapist prior to scheduling. Since we may include family and caregivers in sessions from time to time, with client consent, this session length allows us enough time to support the client and the family. To deviate from this session length, the therapist will need notice to adjust the appointment time on their calendar and on the session note. They also may need to adjust the start times of other sessions. Any deviation outside of the standard session should be discussed with your therapist in advance. Keep in mind that the clinical hour minimum is 53 minutes. This end time allows your therapist some time to complete their session note which is required. If a client is 15 minutes or more late, it will be considered a no show, and the late cancellation fee will be applied. Therapists are not expected to wait online or in their office for more than 15 minutes for clients to show up. If you are running late, it is essential that you contact our office or message your therapist in the client portal. If it is after 5:00pm, it is best to contact your therapist directly.

Best Life Therapy requires clients to have a credit card/HSA card on file. The payment method on file will be charged at the time of service if you are a private pay client. Insurance based clients typically pay copays and deductibles at the time of service. When we first begin billing a client and when they are still in the process of paying their deductible, Best Life Therapy will typically send the claim to insurance and apply the charges to the card on file once the claim is processed. Once it comes back from your insurance company, we will know the amount that they require you to pay. At that time, the credit card on file will be charged that amount. Payments are expected at the time of service. We do our best to bill and process payments in a timely manner to avoid unnecessary overdue bills for clients. Clients with unpaid balances that extend beyond two appointments will be asked to postpone scheduling appointments until they pay the entire balance due. Failure to do so in a timely manner could result in you being referred elsewhere.

Cancellations and re-scheduled sessions that take place at the last minute prevent us from being able to use that time to help another client in need. We need time to contact other clients to let them know that we do have a cancellation. Those clients will need time to adjust their plans to come in. Giving us notice of 48 hours or more can help us help their clients because we will have time to fill those time slots. If you late cancel, you will be subject to a full charge if NOT RECEIVED AT LEAST 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE. This is

necessary because a time commitment is made to you and is held exclusively for you. If you are late for a session, you will likely lose some of that session time since we start and end sessions on time.

TELEPHONE ACCESSIBILITY

If you need to contact me between sessions, please message us in the client portal, email or leave a message on my voice mail. If I am often not immediately available; I will attempt to return your call within 24 hours. Please note that Face- to-face sessions are highly preferable to phone sessions so making a note to yourself to discuss something at the next session works best. However, in the event that you are out of town, sick or need additional support, phone sessions are available. Some insurance companies will not pay for a phone session, and some insist that we need to use video and audio. You may need to pay out of pocket for phone sessions. Our full session fees apply. It is best to request a virtual session if you need to move an in-person session to online. Most cell phones will allow you to access your teletherapy session using both the audio and video features. If a true emergency situation arises, please call 911, go to a local emergency room or call 988, the suicide hotline number. Please keep in mind that we are not a crisis clinic, and appointments are provided on a pre-scheduled basis. If there is a CMH near you that offers mental health crisis services, that may be another option if you feel like you need support after hours but do not want to go to a hospital. If you are in Genesee County, you can contact GHS Behavioral Health Urgent Care at 810-496-5500. If you are suicide, call 988, the suicide hotline, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATION

Due to the importance of your confidentiality and the importance of minimizing dual relationships, we do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). Adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites compromises your confidentiality and our respective privacy and we would not do that. It also blurs the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up with your therapist when you meet with them. Best Life Therapy does have a business Facebook page and clients can find additional mental health tips there. Clients can use the search bar to simply find the page. This type of interaction is of a professional nature and assists clients by providing tools and resources. To protect your own confidentiality, as a current client, if you decide to respond to any posts, you are encouraged to do so anonymously. When people do comment to messages on this platform, it does not mean they are a client. Keep in mind that they are often other mental health professionals or advocates for mental health. Simply commenting on a mental health post does not mean someone is a client so be aware of that when following our page. We do have blogs on our website for you as additional resources. Google reviews are another area in which you will want to be aware of privacy concerns. We do not solicit Google Reviews from our clients and find that practice to be unethical. However, some clients want to provide feedback, and we understand there can be value to that for the community. In those cases, remember that feedback can be provided in Google Reviews anonymously. You will need to adjust that in your settings prior to posting anything, however. We care about our clients and encourage you to take steps to protect your own privacy when online.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

We cannot ensure the confidentiality of any form of communication through electronic media, including text messages. If you prefer to communicate via email or text messaging for issues regarding scheduling or cancellations, we can do so. While we will try to return messages in a timely manner, we cannot guarantee an immediate response and request that you do not use these methods of communication to discuss therapeutic content and/or request assistance for emergencies. The phone and email service we use are HIPAA compliant. While we do take precautions to protect your privacy, we also realize that face to face communicating during sessions will be the most secure way to communicate. We do have a secure messaging feature in our electronic medical record, Sessions Health. Clients are encouraged to use this to communicate with your therapist.

Services by electronic means, including but not limited to telephone communication, the Internet, facsimile machines, and e-mail is considered telemedicine. Telemedicine is broadly defined as the use of information technology to deliver medical services and information from one location to another. If you and your therapist chose to use information technology for some or all of your treatment, you need to understand that:

- (1) You retain the option to withhold or withdraw consent at any time without affecting the right to future care or treatment or risking the loss or withdrawal of any program benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.
- (2) All existing confidentiality protections are equally applicable.
- (3) Your access to all medical information transmitted during a telemedicine consultation is guaranteed, and copies of this information are available for a reasonable fee.
- (4) Dissemination of any of your identifiable images or information from the telemedicine interaction to researchers or other entities shall not occur without your consent.
- (5) There are potential risks, consequences, and benefits of telemedicine. Potential benefits include, but are not limited to improved communication capabilities, providing convenient access to up-to-date information, consultations, support, reduced costs, improved quality, change in the conditions of practice, improved access to therapy, better continuity of care, and reduction of lost work time and travel costs. Effective therapy is often facilitated when the therapist gathers within a session or a series of sessions, a multitude of observations, information, and experiences about the client. Therapists may make clinical assessments, diagnosis, and interventions based not only on direct verbal or auditory communications, written reports, and third person consultations, but also from direct visual and olfactory observations, information, and experiences. When using information technology in therapy services, potential risks include, but are not limited to the therapist's inability to make visual and olfactory observations of clinically or therapeutically potentially relevant issues such as: your physical condition including deformities, apparent height and weight, body type, attractiveness relative to social and cultural norms or standards, gait and motor coordination, posture, work speed, any noteworthy mannerism or gestures, physical or medical conditions including bruises or injuries, basic grooming and hygiene including appropriateness of dress, eye contact (including any changes in the previously listed issues), sex, chronological and apparent age, ethnicity, facial and body language, and congruence of language and facial or bodily expression. Potential consequences thus include the therapist not being aware of what he or she would consider important information, that you may not recognize as significant to present verbally the therapist.

MINORS

If you are a minor, your parents may be legally entitled to some information about your therapy. Your therapist will discuss with you and your parents' what information is appropriate for them to receive, and which issues are more appropriately kept confidential. We value the trust of our minor clients and encourage parents to be sensitive to that if they feel one on one communication is needed with the therapist. When minors are aware of a therapist meeting with the parent alone, it can create some trust issues between the therapist and the client. This is particularly true with our adolescent and teen clients. This does not mean parents can't schedule a session with the therapist without the minor rather it is something to consider when making decisions about that.

TERMINATION

Ending relationships can be difficult. Therefore, it is important to have a termination process in order to achieve some closure. The appropriate length of the termination depends on the length and intensity of the treatment. We may terminate treatment after appropriate discussion with a client. A termination process could take place if it is determined that the psychotherapy is not being effectively used, if you are in default on payment and if you have a repeated pattern of showing up late for session and cancelling scheduled appointments. It is important that clients are as committed to the session as the therapist is in helping you. That commitment leads to more successful outcomes. We will not terminate the therapeutic relationship without first discussing and exploring the reasons and purpose of terminating. If there are obstacles preventing you from making progress, it can help to discuss these things during therapy. If therapy is

terminated for any reason or you request another therapist, you will be provided with a list of qualified psychotherapists to treat you. You may also choose someone on your own or from another referral source.

Should you fail to schedule an appointment for four consecutive weeks, we will assume you are no longer interested in treatment unless other arrangements have been made in advance. For legal and ethical reasons, we must consider the professional relationship discontinued. If that happens, your case will be closed. Most clients are welcome back at any time if they are willing to demonstrate a commitment to therapy at a later date. We encourage you to have some conversation with your therapist about terminating. If you feel you are no longer in need of therapy, discuss that with the therapist and they will plan that termination process with you.

I AM AGREEING THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREE TO THE ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.

Signature

Date