**ORIENTATION PACKAGE for Both ‘In Person” and “Virtual” Therapy (Adult).**

(I.e. telehealth services) Updated: 29Jan2021

 Welcome to my private practice. Thank you for trusting me to assist you with your personal concerns. There are some things that you should be aware of as you enter counseling/therapy with me:

Risks and Benefits of Treatment: Psychotherapy and counseling involves both benefits and risks. In terms of risk, therapy may involve discussing, or bringing to awareness and attention, unpleasant aspects of your life; as a result you may experience uncomfortable feelings. The changes generated by therapy could create disruption or uncertainty in your life.

 Research has shown that psychotherapy has many benefits. Dr. Scott Miller of the International Centre for Clinical Excellence has found: “We have mountains of evidence that treatment works – the average person in treatment is better off than 80% of those who have not had the benefit of treatment”. Therapy often leads to healthier relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But therapy doesn’t work for everyone and it doesn’t come with guarantees. Success in therapy requires active participation on your part. To maximize the benefits of therapy, you need to identify your treatment goals and work on them both in session and between sessions.

Confidentiality: The information you share in counseling is considered confidential and will not be shared with others. If I want to speak to someone about your situation, I will ask you to sign a consent form identifying what information will be sought/shared and with whom it will be shared.

There are some important exceptions to the rule of confidentiality. If you tell me that you or someone else is at risk of being harmed (for example by suicide or homicide) I am legally obliged to take steps to try to protect the potential victim. This may involve notifying the police or seeking hospitalization for the person who is at risk. If you tell me that a child is at risk of being harmed by a caregiver, I am legally obliged to report this to Child Protective Services. It is also possible for counseling records to be subpoenaed through a court order.

 I reserve the right to report to the police if you share involvement or knowledge of an unsolved crime that resulted in serious injury or death of an individual or animal.

Confidentiality with Couples/Family Counselling: I generally do not provide marital counselling, but if you have requested that I work with both members of a couple; I will require that both sign consent forms allowing me to speak openly with both spouses – this means that anything I learn from you, I will feel free to mention to your spouse.

 If you are a parent, and I am seeing your child; know that the parent will NOT receive all of the information your child shares. You will be advised if I have any concern about your child’s safety or well-being. Otherwise I will share only with the child’s (verbal) consent.

Use of emails/texting/social media: I will respond to non-clinical issues by text or email (i.e. confirming an appointment time). But I will NOT give any clinical feedback or information by these means. If I do send you an email, I will use Hushmail which is an encrypted email program - that means if anyone else "hacks" into your email they won't be able to read it. Know that I will not accept any invitations from you to connect by Facebook or other social media platforms.

Availability of Alternate Services: I work in two locations. Three days a week, I work at the Taber Mental Health Clinic where counselling is offered free of charge. I also have a private practice office, where counseling is offered on a fee-for-service basis. If, based on your symptoms, you are eligible for services at the mental Health clinic I will let you know this and give you the option of seeking counselling there. The contact number is (403)223-7932 and appointments are available Monday – Friday 8:30 – 4:30.

My Training and Experience: I am a Registered Clinical Social Worker with a Master’s Degree in Clinical Social Work. I am a certified EMDR Therapist and an EMDRIA Approved Consultant. I have been providing individual and family counselling for 30 years and have a passionate interest in physical and emotional wellbeing.

Payment of Fees: Payment is made at the end of each session. You can pay by cash, check, e-transfer, or credit card. I have several fee options depending on when you wish to be seen:

* Fee Cost for regular session (50 min). Cost for an EMDR Session (80 min).
* Daytime sessions $140/hr (a typical EMDR session will cost: $210)
* Evening sessions $150/hr (a typical EMDR session will cost: $225)
* Emergency/corporate work: $200 per hour.

What are “emergency sessions”? Sometimes companies hire me to provide trauma therapy for employees affected by a workplace accident. This work is usually commissioned on short notice and is condensed work. I also usually have to wait 1 – 2 weeks to get paid. For these reasons I bill at a higher rate.

Billable Services: I will bill for sessions, phone calls that exceed 15 minutes, and preparing any written reports that you ask for (e.g. if you ask me to write a report for your doctor/specialist).

Direct Billing: I currently will direct bill for employees covered by Lanic Inc., ASEBP and Blue Cross. If you have benefits with these programs you can request that I direct bill. That means I handle all of the paperwork, and you don’t have to pay out of pocket. In order to do this I will need your date of birth and benefit numbers.

Cancellation and No Shows: If you cannot attend a session, please call a minimum of 24 hours in advance to cancel – if you do so, there will be no charge for the session. If you no show or cancel with less than 24 hours’ notice then you will be charged the full session fee.

Consultation: I may occasionally find it helpful to consult with another professional for the purpose of improving service to you. I will be vigilant in maintaining your confidentiality and no identifying information will be released. For example, when working with a client with on medication, I may wish to consult with a pharmacist about dose or side effects. In doing so, I will speak of the client in general terms without using a name or any other identifying information.

 I do clinical supervision with Rebecca Stares MSW, RCSW (of Calgary). When I consult with Rebecca I use only first name - no other identifying information is shared. The purpose of clinical supervision is to help ensure that I am offering the best possible service.

 If I become sick or die suddenly my colleague Karen Lanser (MSW, RSW) has agreed to contact my clients to let them know and to recommend other practitioners from whom they seek counselling care. Karen will only access my daytimer in the event that I am incapacitated and can not act for myself.

File Information: I will keep notes to record what we have worked on in session. These notes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The files will be kept for 10 years after the last clinical contact (this is in accordance with the health professions act). You can request to see your file information.

Complaints: If you are not satisfied with any aspect of our work please discuss your concerns with me. If you believe that I have acted unprofessionally or unethically you can report your concerns to the Alberta College of Social Workers at (780)421-1168 or 1-800-661-3089. If you lodge a complaint with the ACSW know that your file records will be opened as part of the investigation (i.e. the ACSW Complaints Director and his/her staff will be able to see the notes from your counselling sessions).

Duration of Sessions: The first appointments is generally 80 minutes. Follow up appointments are usually 50 minutes. EMDR sessions are booked for 80 minutes.

Office Location: Because my office is located in my home, I do not accept clients who have active addiction issues, anger management issues or unresolved charges before the court. This is to provide safety for myself and my neighbors.

No sessions will be recorded or videotaped unless we both agree (prior to the session). You do NOT have the right to record or video the session or post any such material on Facebook or YouTube.

**Consent for Virtual Therapy or Virtual Consultation:**

 Since CoVid19 Pandemic I have worked very hard to learn how to provide therapy and professional consultation using videoconferencing technology. Video conferencing allows me to provide professional services to you without being in the same location. I have chosen to use "Janeapp” as my service provider because it meets Canadian standards for protecting personal health information including PHIPA (Personal Health Information Protection Act) and PIPEDA (Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act). It is an encrypted service with the highest security settings I could find. But because we are using the internet, I cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept 100% confidential or that other people may not gain access to our commutations. Security also depends on what you do. There are things you can do to help keep our session private and secure:

* Use a private room. - otherwise other people may overhear our conversation and it will not be private. If someone else enters the room while we are working together let me know right away.
* Use a headset if you have one - this improves sound quality and privacy.
* At the beginning of the session I will ask you where you are for this session (i.e. street address and which room you are in). I will also ask you to identify an emergency contact person who I can contact to check on you if I become worried about your safety during the session. This person should be nearby and able to come into the room to be with you should I request this.
* Please use the most secure internet access you have available to you - "plugged in" to the internet (with an ethernet chord) is more secure than using WiFi. If you use Wifi be as close to the source as you can.
* If the technology stops working in the middle of a session, I will phone you by your cell phone. If I cannot reach you right away, I will wait 4 min and then try again. If I cannot reach you the second time and I am worried about you I will call your emergency contact person.
* At the beginning of therapy, we will agree on a safety plan that we will use if, during a session I become concerned that you are not well or are at risk of hurting yourself or someone else.
* Fees and rules of confidentiality are the same for Virtual therapy as they are for "in person".
* Online sessions will never be recorded in any way unless you agree (in advance and in writing) to this - the purpose of the recording will also on the written document.

Last updated: 29Jan2021.