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Information for Clients

Limits of the Therapy Relationship: What Clients Should Know

Psychotherapy, psychoeducational assessment, and consultation are professional services I can provide to you. Because of the nature of this work, our relationship has to be different from most relationships. It may differ in how long it lasts, in the topics we discuss, or in the goals of our relationship. It must also be limited to the relationship of therapist and client only. If we were to interact in any other ways, we would then have a “dual relationship,” which would not be right and may not be legal. The different therapy professions have rules against such relationships to protect us both.

I want to explain why having a dual relationship is not a good idea. Dual relationships can set up conflicts between my own (the therapist’s) interests and your (the client’s) best interests, and then your interests might not be put first. In order to offer all my clients the best care, my judgment needs to be unselfish and professional.

Because I am your/your child’s therapist, dual relationships like these are improper:

- I cannot be your supervisor, teacher, or evaluator.
- I cannot be a therapist to my own relatives, friends (or the relatives of friends), people I know socially, or business contacts.
- I cannot provide therapy to people I used to know socially, or to former business contacts.
- I cannot have any other kind of business relationship with you besides the therapy itself. For example, I cannot employ you, lend to or borrow from you, or trade or barter your services (things like tutoring, repairing, child care, etc.) or goods for therapy.
- I cannot give legal, medical, financial, or any other type of professional advice.
- I cannot have any kind of romantic or sexual relationship with a former or current client, or any other people close to a client.

There are important differences between therapy and friendship. As your therapist, I cannot be your friend. Friends may see you only from their personal viewpoints and experiences. Friends may want to find quick and easy solutions to your problems so that they can feel helpful. These short-term solutions may not be in your long-term best interest. Friends do not usually follow up on their advice to see whether it was useful. They may need to have you do what they advise. A therapist offers you choices and helps you choose what is best for you. A therapist helps you learn how to solve problems better and make better decisions. A therapist’s responses to your situation are based on tested theories and methods of change. You should also know that therapists are required to keep the identities of their clients secret. Therefore, I may ignore you when we meet in a public place, and I must decline to attend your family’s gatherings if you invite me. Lastly, when our therapy is completed, I will not be able to be a friend to you like your other friends.

In sum, my duty as therapist is to care for you and my other clients, but only in the professional role of therapist. Please note any questions or concerns on the back of this page so we can discuss them.

Information You Have a Right to Know

When you come for therapy, you are buying a service. Therefore, you need good information to make the best decision. Below is some information about me, my services, and my policies and procedures. Please ask questions if you have them, and I will do my best to clarify.

About the therapist:

I am a psychologist who is licensed by the states of Connecticut and New York to practice privately and provide certain services. My educational background is in school psychology, and during and after my university education I also engaged in extensive supervised clinical work. The advantage of this mix of training and experience is that I can provide services both inside and outside school settings. My training is limited to individuals aged birth to approximately 21, though there is some flexibility in that age range given variations in developmental level of individuals within certain populations. I provide psychoeducational assessment, consultation, and therapy, and deliver workshops and training. I use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Behavioral Therapy, and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), which are the orientations taught to me during my formal schooling, and also incorporate aspects of play therapy, mindfulness training, and Brief Solution-Focused Therapy (BSFT), which I learned during training and clinical experiences. I am always reading and attending workshops to further develop my knowledge so that I can provide effective, research-based strategies in my work.

About the services:

Briefly, my types of therapy work by:

- identifying the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and implementing strategies to change thoughts to support change in emotion and behavior
- identifying the function (or purpose) of behavior and working to modify how the environment encourages or discourages a certain behavior

Possible benefits of therapy include experiencing a relief of distressing symptoms and improvement in the ability to function in daily life. Similarly, consultation and evaluation help to identify strengths on which to build and weaknesses to remediate in order to contribute to increased success at home, in school, or at work. Possible risks during therapy include experiencing pronounced emotional reactions (i.e. anxiety may initially increase during treatment but will shortly subside). Course of treatment will vary depending on the referral concern, age of the client, family and environmental support, and goals of treatment. Once we talk about your specific concerns, I will be able to give you a better estimate of the duration of therapy. Once engaged in therapy, if you feel therapy isn't working (for you or your child), please discuss your concerns with me.

About other kinds of therapy and help:

There are many other interventions and therapies available, some of which have been researched and others of which have not. Please discuss any other treatment options with me before you engage in another service on behalf of your child, so that I may share my knowledge of such service and provide you with available literature about the extent of its research support and possible benefits and risks. To date, cognitive behavioral therapy and behavioral therapy have significant research support in addressing concerns including mood challenges and behavioral symptoms of autism spectrum disorders.

About appointments:

As part of the treatment, assessment, or consultation planning process, we will decide together how often we will meet, and if possible, how many sessions we will have. Appointments can be arranged face-to-face in session, or by calling (203) 505-4564. A typical "therapy hour" involves 50 minutes of face-to-face time and 10 minutes for the therapist to make notes at the end of the session after the client leaves. Assessments are typically longer than one hour, and will vary depending on the assessment battery.

If for any reason you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment, please call (203) 505-4564. 24-hour

advanced notice of cancellations is expected. You will be charged for appointments cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice. I reserve the right to waive this charge at my discretion, or in the event of emergency or exceptional circumstances.

In the event of inclement weather, I follow the Ridgefield Public Schools' delay and cancellation decisions. In the event of school cancellation, all appointments will be cancelled. In the event of a two-hour delay, appointments beginning prior to 11:00am will be cancelled. (If you have an all-day appointment for an assessment, the assessment will begin at 11:00am).

About confidentiality:

I must keep records of your demographic information, methods of payment, attendance history at sessions, and progress notes from our meetings. I must also keep all assessment protocols and any reports generated during assessment. No one has access to these records besides the therapist, without your written consent.

I will treat what you tell me about yourself and your child with great care. My professional ethics (that is, my profession's rules about values and moral matters) and the laws of this state prevent me from telling anyone else what you tell me unless you give me written permission. These rules and laws are the ways our society recognizes and supports the privacy of what we talk about—in other words, the “confidentiality” of therapy. But I cannot promise that everything you tell me will never be revealed to someone else. There are some times when the law requires me to tell things to others. There are also some other limits on our confidentiality. We need to discuss these, because I want you to understand clearly what I can and cannot keep confidential. You need to know about these rules now, so that you don't tell me something as a “secret” that I cannot keep secret.

1. When you/your child or other persons are in physical danger, the law requires me to tell others about it. Specifically:

a. If I come to believe that you or your child are threatening serious harm to another person, I am required to try to protect that person. I may have to tell the person and the police.

b. If you or your child seriously threaten or act in a way that is very likely to harm yourself, I may have to seek a hospital for you, or to call on your family members or others who can help protect you. If such a situation does come up, I will fully discuss the situation with you before I do anything, unless there is a very strong reason not to.

c. In an emergency where your or your child's life or health is in danger, and I cannot get your consent, I may give another professional some information to protect your life. I will try to get your permission first, and I will discuss this with you as soon as possible afterwards.

d. If I believe or suspect that you or your child are abusing a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person I must file a report with a state agency. To “abuse” means to neglect, hurt, or sexually molest another person. I do not have any legal power to investigate the situation to find out all the facts. The state agency will investigate.

In any of these situations, I would reveal only the information that is needed to protect you, your child, or the other person. I would not tell everything you have told me.

2. There are a few other things you must know about confidentiality and your/your child's treatment:

a. I may sometimes consult (talk) with another professional about your/your child's treatment. This other person is also required by professional ethics to keep your information confidential. Likewise, when I am out of town or unavailable, another therapist will be available to help my clients. I must give him or her some information about my clients.

b. I am required to keep records of your/your child's treatment, such as the notes I take when we meet. You have a right to review these records with me.

3. Here is what you need to know about confidentiality in regard to filing for insurance reimbursement and money matters:

a. I will usually give you my bill (sometimes called a “superbill”) that will state the service provided and fee. Also required is a code that describes what kind of service was provided, and a diagnostic code, which is used to describe the condition for which you or your child are being treated. If you elect to submit this proof of payment to your insurance company for reimbursement, your insurance company will know the above information about our

work together. It is against the law for insurers to release information about our office visits to anyone without your written permission.

b. If your account with me is unpaid and we have not arranged a payment plan, I can use legal means to get paid. The only information I will give to the court, a collection agency, or a lawyer will be your name and address, the dates we met for professional services, and the amount due to me.

4. **Children and families create some special confidentiality questions.**

a. When I treat children under the age of about 12, I must tell their parents or guardians whatever they ask me, though it is usually in the best interest of the child's treatment to reveal as little unnecessary information as possible, as this practice helps foster a therapeutic alliance (i.e. your child will be more willing to talk to me if he/she knows I won't be telling you everything). As children grow more able to understand and choose, they assume legal rights. For those between the ages of 12 and 18, most of the details in things they tell me will be treated as confidential. However, parents or guardians do have the right to general information, including how therapy is going. They need to be able to make well-informed decisions about therapy. I may also have to tell parents or guardians some information about other family members that I am told, especially if these others' actions put them or others in any danger.

b. In cases where I treat several members of a family (parents and children or other relatives), the confidentiality situation can become very complicated. I may have different duties toward different family members. At the start of our treatment, we must all have a clear understanding of our purposes and my role. Then we can be clear about any limits on confidentiality that may exist.

c. If you tell me something your spouse does not know, and not knowing this could harm him or her, I cannot promise to keep it confidential. I will work with you to decide on the best long-term way to handle situations like this.

d. If you and your spouse have a custody dispute I will need to know about it. My professional ethics prevent me from doing both therapy and custody evaluations.

e. At the start of treatment or evaluation, we must also specify which members of the family must sign a release form for the common record I create in the therapy or therapies. (See point 6b, below.)

6. Finally, here are a few other points:

a. I will not record our therapy sessions on audiotape or videotape without your written permission.

b. If you want me to send information about our therapy to someone else, you must sign a "release-of-records" form. I have copies you can see, so you will know what is involved.

c. Any information that you tell me and also share outside of therapy, willingly and publicly, will not be considered protected or confidential by a court.

The laws and rules on confidentiality are complicated. Please bear in mind that I am not able to give you legal advice. If you have special or unusual concerns, and so need special advice, I strongly suggest that you talk to a lawyer to protect your interests legally and to act in your best interests.

About payment:

Payment is expected at the time of service. For evaluations, 50% will be due when work begins and the remaining balance will be due immediately following the feedback session. Therapy and consultation services are provided at an hourly rate of \$175. Cash, check, and credit cards (Visa, Mastercard, Discover, and American Express) are accepted. Assessment batteries and readiness screening have a set fee, which we will discuss prior to your acceptance of such services. Telephone calls, emails, letters, and consultations with other service providers on your behalf will be billed directly to you if they exceed 15 minutes.

Client Bill of Rights

You have the right to:

- Get respectful treatment that will be helpful to you.
- Have a safe treatment setting.

- Report immoral or illegal behavior by a therapist.
- Ask for and get information about the therapist's qualifications, including his or her license, education, training, experience, membership in professional groups, special areas of practice, and limits of practice.
- Have written information, before entering therapy, about fees, method of payment, insurance coverage, number of sessions the therapist thinks will be needed, substitute therapists (in case of vacation and emergencies) and cancellation policies.
- Refuse audio or video recording of sessions (but you may ask for it if you wish).
- Refuse to answer any question or give any information you choose not to answer or give.
- Know if your therapist will discuss your case with others (for insurance, supervisors, consultants, or students).
- Ask that the therapist inform you of your progress.

The signatures here show that we each have read, discussed, understand, and agree to abide by the points presented above.

Signature of client (or person acting for client)

Date

Printed name

Signature of therapist

Date