



## CONFIDENTIALITY

Everything that we discuss in your therapy session is confidential. This means that you must give your written permission before any information about you or your therapy is released to, or obtained from, a third party. There are, however, some important exceptions to this rule that you should know about. The five main exceptions are listed below.

### *DANGER TO SELF*

If I believe that a client is in danger of committing suicide or otherwise harming him/ or herself, I have the ethical responsibility of breaking confidentiality to notify appropriate people or agencies (for example, a person's relatives or the police) in order to protect them.

### *DANGER TO OTHERS*

If I believe there is a danger that a client will cause serious physical harm to a reasonably identifiable other, I am legally required to report this information both to the person in danger and to an appropriate agency (such as the police).

### *CHILD ENDANGERMENT*

If I suspect that a child has been physically, sexually or emotionally abused, or endangered through neglect, I am legally required to report this information to an appropriate agency, such as the police or Child Protective Services.

### *ELDER OR DEPENDENT ADULT ENDANGERMENT*

If I suspect that an elder (someone over the age of 65) or a "dependent adult" (a physically or developmentally disabled person under the age of 65) has been physically abused, financially victimized, or neglected, I am legally required to report this information to an appropriate agency, such as the police or Adult Protective Services.

### *INSURANCE/THIRD PARTY PAYMENT/COLLECTIONS*

If an insurance company or another third party (for example, a county or state agency) is paying for all or part of your therapy, they often make it a condition of payment that you agree that I can release certain information about the therapy to them. Generally PPO Insurance plans require minimal information such as diagnosis and treatment codes for billing. HMO plans often require more information because "Care Managers" employed by them are making decisions about whether or not to authorize additional sessions based on their notion of your relative level of "need" for therapy. If I need to refer your account to a collection agency due to non-payment of your bill, I will need to provide them with your name, address, phone, and billing information.

## GENERAL OFFICE POLICIES

### *CANCELLATIONS*

When you schedule an appointment with me, I set aside an hour of my time for you. Because I need to manage my time effectively, my policy is to require a minimum of 24 hours notice when canceling a session. If you cancel with less notice than this, or don't show up for a scheduled session, I will charge your regular fee for the missed session. The only exception to this is a serious emergency (not including minor illness, car problems, traffic jams, being detained at work, etc.). Insurance or other third parties cannot be billed for missed sessions, so you will be liable for this charge even if you are covered by insurance. In some instances I may, as a courtesy, be able to reschedule your appointment within the same week. Depending on the situation, I may decide to terminate therapy with clients who miss two or more sessions without giving the minimum notice.

### *INSURANCE PAYMENTS*

I am on several insurance panels and able to accept payment directly from these companies. There is usually a co-payment which will be payable at the time of service. With certain insurance companies I may need to request that you pay for your services up front and get reimbursed when the company actually pays me.

### *PUNCTUALITY*

Your punctuality is important to getting as much benefit as possible from our work together. However, delays do sometimes occur. If you are going to be 10 or more minutes late, I would appreciate a phone call. If you do not call or arrive after 30 minutes, I will assume you are not coming and make other use of my time. If I am late for our session I will do my best to make up as much of your missed time as possible. In the event that I am delayed in arriving at the office, I ask that you extend at least 20 minutes to me before you decide to leave.

### *PHONE CALLS*

If you need to reach me, you may leave a message on my voice mail. I check messages several times a day Monday through Thursday and generally return phone calls within 24 hours or less. I am available to discuss urgent concerns on the phone when necessary. However, after 10 minutes, I will begin charging for my time on a pro-rata basis. If you are in crisis and cannot reach me by phone, you can call Sonoma County Psychiatric Emergency Services at 576-8181 for immediate assistance.

### *REPORTS AND LETTERS*

If you need me to write a report or letter for you, I will charge you my regular hourly rate for the time it takes me to write, edit and distribute the documents you require.

### *CELL PHONES*

To facilitate concentration on the issues being discussed, I ask that you turn off cell phones and pagers during all therapy sessions.

### *VACATIONS*

I would appreciate 2 weeks notice of any vacations of two weeks or more that you take. I will give you the same notice when I take a vacation.

### *ENDING THERAPY*

The length of time you remain in therapy will vary depending on the nature of your issues and goals. People leave therapy for a variety of reasons, and it is ultimately up to you when you feel finished. If you are considering ending therapy, please let me know a few sessions in advance, because it is important to devote one or more sessions to closure.