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INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS

Welcome to my practice! I appreciate your giving me the opportunity to be of help to you. This handout is designed to answer some questions clients often ask about my therapy practice. It is important to me that you know how we will work together. I believe our work will be most helpful to you when you have a clear idea of what we are trying to do. This handout will address the following in a general way:

- *Some risks and benefits associated with therapy
- *What the goals of therapy are, and what my methods of treatment are like
- *How long therapy might take
- *How much my services cost, and how I handle money matters
- *Other areas of our relationship, including confidentiality

After you have read this handout, we can discuss, in person, how these issues apply to your own situation. This handout is yours to keep and refer to as needed. Please read all of it and mark any parts that are not clear to you. Write down any questions you think of, and we will discuss them at our next meeting. When you have read and fully understand this handout, I will ask you to sign it. I will sign it as well and make a copy, so we each have one. If you decide not to take a copy, one can always be provided to you at a later date.

About Psychotherapy

Because you will be putting a good deal of time, money, and energy into therapy, you should choose a therapist carefully. The client-therapist relationship is an important contributor to progress, so be sure you feel comfortable and that there are not “personality problems” which interfere with your ability to talk about your goals and concerns. If you feel there is a problem feel free to discuss this with me so that we might explore alternatives. Let me describe how I see therapy.

I think of my approach to helping people primarily as an educational one. My theoretical approach draws from various “schools of thought”, including; cognitive-behavioral, social learning, solution oriented (problem solving), rational emotive and family systems theories. In the treatment I offer, I assume an active role, and encourage the same of my clients.

A central idea in my philosophical approach to promoting change is that our perception of an event or situation powerfully affects our emotional, behavioral, and physiological response to that event/situation. Therefore, I assist people in developing the insight to recognize dysfunctional, distorted or self-defeating belief systems, challenge them and engage in active problem solving to apply different responses. Hopefully this will lead to lasting cognitive, behavioral, emotional and relationship changes that promote a healthy lifestyle. This basic philosophy is applied when working with individuals, couples, or families. The key to a favorable outcome is education, awareness, skill building and hard work. I recognize that developing new responses to life can be challenging, awkward and uncomfortable. Psychotherapy can provide a “springboard” to change by providing encouragement, support, direction, and hope.

Therapy goals are based on individual needs. Specific treatment interventions are applied according to those needs. Ultimately, I want you to be able to use what you learn without me. I may supplement the treatment process with handouts, references to literature, copies of articles, and other materials to support the educational process. I may also refer you to other supportive resources within the community which I believe may assist in promoting the process of change. I frequently take notes during our sessions, and would welcome you to do the same. During our first session, I will gather specific background information related to your identified problem(s), with the goal to formulate a plan for working together. I view therapy as a collaborative process. We will work together to define the problem areas to be addressed and I will utilize my training and knowledge to help you make the changes you want to make. The type of therapy I provide requires your very active involvement. It requires your best efforts to change thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. For example, if I don't ask, I want you to tell me about important experiences, what they mean to you and what strong feelings are involved. This is one of the ways you are an active partner in therapy. It is important to acknowledge that minor, major and multiple problems require different amounts of therapy time, both

in frequency of appointments and duration. An important part of your therapy will be practicing new skills that you will learn in our sessions. I will ask you to practice outside our meetings, and we will work together to set up homework assignments for you. I might ask you to do exercises, to keep records and perhaps to do other tasks to deepen your learning. Change will sometimes be easy and quick, and at other times it may be slow and frustrating. The task is to keep trying.

Most of my clients see me weekly to every two weeks (especially after the informational/planning sessions are completed), for about the first four to six months. After that, we meet less often for several more months. Therapy then usually comes to an end. The process of ending therapy, called “termination”, can be a very valuable part of our work. Stopping therapy should not be done casually, although either of us may decide to end treatment if we believe it is in your best interest. If you wish to stop therapy at any time, I ask that you agree now to meet for at least one session to review our work, prior to discontinuing treatment. Some clients decide to take a break from therapy to try it on their own, and frequently return for “checkups”, to evaluate their progress. Remember, there is no exact right or wrong time frame, other than what is best suited for your needs.

Some of the Benefits and Risks of Therapy

As with any form of intervention, there are some risks as well as many benefits with therapy. You should think about both the benefits and risks when making any treatment decisions. Although it is not possible to list all of the potential risks and benefits, the following are more commonly associated with an individual's experience in therapy. For example, in therapy, there is a risk clients will have, for a time, uncomfortable levels of sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other negative feelings. Clients may recall unpleasant memories. These feelings or memories may bother a client at work or in school. Some people in your community may mistakenly view anyone in therapy as weak, or perhaps as seriously disturbed or even dangerous. Clients in therapy may have problems with people important to them, family secrets may be told. Therapy may disrupt a marital relationship and sometimes may even lead to a divorce. Sometimes, too, a client's problems may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment. Most of these risks are to be expected when people are making any important changes in their lives. Finally, even with our best efforts, there is a risk that therapy may not work out well for you. In therapy, major life decisions are sometimes made, including decisions involving separation within families, development of other types of relationships, changing employment settings and changing life-styles. These decisions are a legitimate outcome of the therapy experience as a result of an individual's calling into question many of their beliefs and values. As your therapist, I will be available to discuss any of your assumptions, problems or possible negative side effects in our work together. Other possibilities to consider are; the symptoms may be intensified; the conflict may not be resolved; the emotional experience may be overwhelming or too intense to deal with at this time; the targeted behaviors may not change; the client may not be any more aware of him/herself than when therapy commenced; new and different symptoms may develop during therapy and the client may have difficulty in terminating therapy.

While you consider these risks, you should know that the benefits of therapy have been shown by scientists in hundreds of well-designed research studies. People who are depressed may find their mood lifting. Others may no longer feel afraid, angry or anxious. In therapy, people have a chance to talk things out fully, and engage in an active plan to change their lives for the better. Relationships and coping skills may improve greatly. They may get more satisfaction out of social and family relationships. Their personal goals and values may become clearer. They may grow in many directions, as persons, in their close relationships, in their work or schooling and in the ability to enjoy their lives. I do not take on clients I do not think I can help. Therefore, I will enter our relationship with optimism about your ability to progress.

In considering risks and benefits, you should understand that no promises can be made to you about the results of treatment, the effectiveness of the procedures used or the number of sessions necessary for therapy to be effective.

Consultations

If you wish for another professional's opinion at any time, or wish to talk with another therapist, I will be willing to help you find a qualified person and will provide that person with the information needed to continue with treatment (only with your consent). Based on what I learn about your problems, I may make referrals (only with your consent) to other providers. If I recommend such referrals, I will fully discuss my reasons with you, so that you can decide what is best. If for some reason your treatment with me is not going well, I might suggest you see another therapist or another professional in addition to me. As a responsible person and ethical therapist, I cannot continue to treat you if my treatment is not working for you. I at times consult with colleagues and specialists about ongoing work with my clients. This pursuit of quality assurance never involves your name or any specifics through which you might be identified.

My Background

I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (Nevada). I received my Master's Degree in Education (Counseling and Guidance) in 1978 from Seattle University. I have been practicing in the Reno area since 1987. I have provided therapy within a

medical clinic setting, have been a therapist for a residential center for children and adolescents, and have managed a full-time private practice. I am a clinical member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. I have provided direct clinical services to children, adolescents, adults, couples and families and consulted with various programs, agencies and hospitals in the region.

About Our Appointments

The first time we meet will be devoted to gathering specific information needed to help me understand and evaluate your treatment needs. The length for all sessions is generally forty-five minutes, unless we have negotiated another time frame. Typically, the early stages of treatment occur approximately once every week to once every other week, depending on your needs. This time frame is negotiable. Clients who typically complete the treatment process with me may spend four to six months in regularly scheduled sessions, then move to monthly or follow-up appointments. Remember, each person's needs are individual and unique. What works for one, may not work for another. My office hours are usually Monday through Wednesday, 10AM to 4PM. Appointments after three o'clock are the most in demand, and therefore not always as available. I will make every effort to develop times that work for your schedule. I do my own scheduling. You can reach me by calling 827-7502. Generally, you will get my voice mail, which only I check. The reason for voice mail is that I am usually in sessions with clients and prefer not to have those sessions interrupted. Also, not having to speak with a receptionist eliminates the number of people you need to talk with about services you are seeking. I will make every reasonable attempt to return your call as quickly as possible. Usually, I do not return calls after 5PM or on Fridays or weekends.

An appointment is a commitment to our work. We agree to meet here and to be on time. If I am ever unable to start on time, I ask your understanding. Typically this is due to unanticipated lengthened sessions with a client. If my tardiness limits your time with me, we will pro-rate your appointment time. I will always offer the full-time, in the event of my tardiness, however, you may have another appointment to get to. In the event you are late, we will probably be unable to meet for the full time scheduled. I typically have appointments scheduled after yours. A canceled appointment may delay our work. I will consider our meetings very important and ask you do the same. Please try not to miss sessions if you can help it. When you must cancel, please give me two days notice. Your session time is reserved for you. I am rarely able to fill a canceled session unless I know a couple days in advance. If you start to miss sessions, I will charge you for the lost time unless I am able to fill the time. Your insurance will probably not cover missed appointments. **PLEASE PROVIDE 48 HOURS NOTICE OF A CANCELLATION!** Twenty-four hour notice of cancellation is required to avoid being charged.

When you arrive at my office, please be seated in the waiting area. I do not provide a receptionist to greet you. I will know you have arrived as our office is equipped with an alert system, that informs me when someone has entered the waiting room. My office building is shared with other practitioners, and therefore you may encounter other people in the waiting area. If you are uncomfortable with this, please let me know.

I request that you not bring children with you if they are not directly involved in treatment and are of the age that they would require someone to watch them (if it can be helped). I can provide reading materials in my waiting room for older children.

Other Points

Although I share this office building with other therapists, each of us works independently, and each alone is responsible for the quality of the care he or she provides.

If you ever become involved in a divorce or custody dispute, I want you to understand and agree that I will not provide evaluations or expert testimony in court. You should hire a different mental health professional for any evaluations or testimony you require. This is based on two reasons: 1) My statements will be seen as biased in your favor because we have a therapy relationship; and 2) the testimony might affect our therapy relationship, and I must put this relationship first. Should you choose to include me in your legal process by subpoena or direct request be advised that my fee for this professional service is \$1000.00 for each day (minimum), not including meals, travel and lodging. This fee must be paid in advance.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. If you have questions about what you have read, please bring them up in your next session, or call before your first appointment. I believe therapy is an educational process, and the more you know to expect, the better prepared you may be for the experience. **Please read the following pages on CONFIDENTIALITY, and FEE POLICY. There is a signature page you will be asked to fill in and sign which indicates you have read these handouts or web information.**

Thank you again for taking the time to read all of this. Now, let's get started!