

# Psychotherapy Office of Jessica Cliff, M.S., LMFT

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*Serving teens, adults and couples*

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## PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICE CONTRACT

### PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychotherapy calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings and emotions. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have numerous benefits for people. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress.

Our first session will involve an assessment of your needs. By the end of this assessment, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. Therapy involves a commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be comfortable about the therapist you select. If you have questions about my procedures, please let me know so we can discuss them whenever they arise during session. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

### MEETINGS

If psychotherapy is begun, I will usually schedule one 50-minute session (one appointment hour of 50 minutes duration) per week at a time we agree on. **Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for the sessions unless you provide 24 hours notice of cancellation** (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control). If it is possible, I will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.

## **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

At this point, your psychotherapy fee has been discussed and agreed on in prior communications. In addition to weekly appointments, I charge this amount for other professional services you may need, though I will break down the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other services often include telephone session's, extensive e-mail exchanges, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other service you may request of me. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for my legal involvement. I do not charge for my mileage to and from legal proceedings in addition to my hourly rate.

## **BILLING AND PAYMENTS**

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise. I can accept cash, checks and credit and various online payment services. Credit card payments include a convenience fee. I do not accept insurance coverage at this time, yet I will be happy to provide monthly receipts and a "Good Faith" Estimate for you to give to your insurance carrier for possible reimbursement.

If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, I have the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, its cost will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information I release regarding a clients treatment is his/her name, the nature of the services provided, and the amount due. Details of your treatment remain confidential.

## **CONTACTING ME**

I am often not immediately available by telephone or e-mail. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by an answering machine that I monitor daily. I will make every effort to return your call at my earliest availability, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If I am going to be out of the office for a length of time, I will leave this information on my machine. If you are difficult to reach, please inform me of some times when you will be available. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you can't wait for me to return you call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room. **If you have a mental health emergency you can also call the Contra Costa Crisis Center at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).**

## **MINORS**

If you are under eighteen years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents the rights to examine your records. It is my policy to request an agreement from parents that they agree to give up access to your records. If they agree, I will provide them only general information about our work together, unless I feel there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or someone else. In this case, I will notify them of my concern. I will also provide them with a summary of your treatment when it is complete. Before giving them ANY information, I will discuss the matter with you, if possible and do my best to handle any objections you may have with what I am prepared to discuss.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In general, the privacy of all communication between a client and a therapist is protected by law, but I can release information about our work to others with your written permission. HERE ARE A FEW EXCEPTIONS:

- In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent me from providing any information about your treatment. In some proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may order my testimony if he/she determines that the issues demands it.
- There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if I have to reveal some information about a client's treatment. For example, if I believe that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused, I must file a report with the appropriate state agency.
- If I believe that a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another person, I am required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police or seeking hospitalization for the client. If the client threatened to harm himself/herself, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or other who can help provide protection.

These situations have rarely occurred in my practice. If a similar situation occurs, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my client. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I feel that it is important to our work together.

**CONFIDENTIALITY OF E-MAIL, CELL PHONES AND FAXES:**

It's important to be aware that e-mail and cell phone communication can be accessed by unauthorized people and hence, the privacy and confidentiality of such communication can be compromised. Please let me know at the beginning of your treatment if you'd like to avoid using any or all of the above-mentioned communication. **PLEASE ONLY USE E-MAIL AND TEXTING FOR SCHEDULING PURPOSES.**

**VIDEOTAPING:**

On occasion I use treatment modalities that include videotaping during session. If I decide to use recording devices during our work together, I will let you know. If you DO NOT wish to be recorded, kindly let me know.

**Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide to its terms and our professional relationship.**

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Client's signature

Date

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Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

I look forward to assisting you on your road to self-discovery.

*Jessica Cliff*

Jessica Cliff, M.S. LMFT  
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist-MFC 45576