

CHAITANYA COUNSELING SERVICES, P.A.

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Information for My Clients

Office Policies, Confidentiality and Agreement for Services

Welcome to our practice! I appreciate the opportunity to be of service to you. This document was written to acquaint you with important aspects of our practice. Please read it and bring up any questions or reactions that you would like to discuss during our next session. If you agree with the contents, please sign and return the Agreement for Services page to me at our next meeting.

I. The "Process"

I view health as something achieved through active involvement on the part of each individual in respecting, honoring and taking responsibility for his/her physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs. "Illness" is often a sign of needs that aren't being heard. I bring my training, experience and caring and creativity to the process. You bring your will, your knowledge of yourself, and an inner wisdom. I call this inner wisdom your "truth compass". It is that part of you that really knows when something feels "right". Together we discover understandings and techniques you can use to actively create the changes that are necessary for rebalancing and empowering yourself. Although I will be dedicated to helping you in this process, I cannot do the changing for you. Your own inner commitment is necessary for change to occur.

Generally people seek out therapy when they are in crisis, which often forces them to squarely face and deal with troubling issues/feelings/relationships that have been compromising their lives for years. This makes it an optimal time for growth. Crisis often forces us to break through barriers, and in so doing, provides opportunities for actively creating a more joyous and fulfilling life for ourselves. I feel privileged to be a part of this process in your life.

During our first meetings, I will assess whether I can be of benefit to you. I do not take on clients who, in my professional opinion, I cannot help using the techniques, knowledge and experience I have available. I will, therefore, enter our relationship with an optimistic and open attitude and an eagerness to work with you. If I do not feel that I can be of assistance to you, I will refer you to others who work well with your particular issue.

2. Meetings/Cancellations

Individual sessions are 45 minutes in duration. We will schedule our meetings cooperatively for our mutual convenience. If I am planning on being out of town, I will let you know in advance.

When we schedule an appointment, that time is reserved for you. If you find you need to cancel or reschedule your appointment, I require a minimum of 24hours notice. With enough notice, I

am able to offer the cancelled appointment to any clients who are waiting for an opening. Your full appointment fee will be charged for sessions missed without 24 hours' notice. Please be aware that most insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions. Please let me know as soon as you become aware that you cannot keep your scheduled appointment.

3. Billing and Insurance

Sessions are generally covered through out-of-network insurance benefits. Insurance companies generally reimburse 60% to 80% of the cost of sessions, after the yearly deductible is met. If you would like, my office manager, Michele, can help guide you through the insurance process and determine your out-of-network reimbursement benefits. She can be reached by leaving a message with your return phone number at 201-659-3060, extension 10. She will assist you in understanding your insurance coverage and coordinating insurance payments.

I have chosen not to be in-network with insurance companies for several reasons. In-network providers must submit detailed paperwork that is time-consuming and often requires the release of confidential client information. Often therapists who are in-network for various insurance companies are recent graduates or are just starting a private practice. The practice of psychotherapy is similar to other professions, like medicine and dentistry, where skills develop and grow through years of treating clients. Most insurance companies reimburse therapists the same amount regardless of the level of training or experience they have. That approach is not fair nor appropriate for therapists with significant levels of experience and training. In-network therapists agree to accept a lower reimbursement rate (40% to 60% of standard/normal rate) in exchange for receiving a large number of patient referrals. As a result, in-network therapists often work long hours and see many clients. Self-care is a necessity for providing optimal therapeutic services, and requires that I limit the number of clients I see each week.

As one of my clients, you will generally pay at the time of service by check, cash or credit card. We then bill your insurance company on your behalf for you to be reimbursed. I increase my fee \$5 every January to stay in line with the average fees charged by psychologists in New Jersey.

In any professional relationship, payment for services is an important issue. This is even more true in therapy, where clarifying of relationships and responsibilities is one goal of treatment. If there is ever any problem with my charges, billing, or your insurance reimbursement, please bring it to my attention and I will do the same with you. Such problems can interfere greatly with our work and must be resolved openly and without delay.

4. Contacting me

I cannot always be reached by phone immediately. I do not take calls when I am in session with a client. Generally, messages will be picked up and calls returned daily except weekends and holidays. In a dire emergency, if you cannot reach me, call 911, or go the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychiatrist, psychiatric resident or house officer on call.

I have found, in most cases, that between session telephone counseling is ineffective. If you need more than five minutes to resolve an issue, it is better to make an appointment.

5. Confidentiality

As a psychotherapy client, you have privileged communication. This means that your relationship with me as your client, all information disclosed in our sessions, and the written records of those sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission, except where law requires disclosure.

Disclosure is required when there is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent or elder abuse or neglect or when a client presents a danger to self or others.

Disclosure may be required in a legal proceeding. If you place your mental status at issue in litigation that you initiate, the defendant may have the right to obtain your psychotherapy records and/or my testimony.

In couple or relationship therapy, or when different family members are seen individually, confidentiality and privilege do not apply between the couple or among family members. I will use my clinical judgment when revealing such information.

If there is an emergency during our work together or after termination in which I become concerned about your personal safety, the possibility of you injuring someone else, or about you receiving psychiatric care, I will do whatever I can within the limits of the law to prevent you from injuring yourself or another, and to ensure that you receive appropriate medical care. For this purpose I may contact the person whose name you have provided as a contact person.

E-mail, voice mail, and fax communication can be easily accessed by unauthorized people, compromising the privacy and confidentiality of such communication. Please notify me at the beginning of treatment if you would like to avoid or limit in any way the use of any or all of these communication devices. Please do not contact me via e-mail or fax or text for emergencies.

6. Health Insurance and Confidentiality of Records:

Your health insurance carrier may require disclosure of confidential information in order to process claims. Only the minimum necessary information will be communicated to your insurance carrier, including diagnosis, the date and length of our appointments, and what services were provided. Often the billing statement and your company's claim form are sufficient. Sometimes treatment summaries or progress toward goals are also required. Unless explicitly authorized by you, Psychotherapy Notes will not be disclosed to your insurance carrier. While insurance companies claim to keep this information confidential, I have no control over the information once it leaves my office. Please be aware that submitting a mental health invoice for reimbursement carries some risk to confidentiality, privacy, or future eligibility to obtain health or life insurance.

7. Termination

Termination is inevitable. It should not be done casually, as it can be made a most valuable part of our work together. Either of us may terminate our work if we believe it is in your best interest. I ask that we meet for at least one session after you wish to terminate to review our work together, our goals and accomplishments, any future work to be done, and our options.