

## WELCOME TO MY PRACTICE

(I use the terms “therapy” and “counseling” interchangeably)

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to get to know you in a very deep way. I understand and respect the vulnerability that is required for personal growth. Sometimes this work is emotionally painful and in working with me, you are trusting that I will be present for you as you work through your painful feelings. I feel honored by your trust in me.

If, after meeting with me for a session or two, it doesn't feel like a good fit for you to work with me as your counselor, don't hesitate to tell me this. It won't hurt my feelings, as I don't expect that every person who walks through my door will connect with me. I will assist you with finding other counselors that you can contact.

It is important for you to know that YOU will be doing much of the talking during our sessions, so in the hours before we meet for an appointment, you will need to give some thought to what you want to talk about.

It will be helpful for you to use some of the tools that I will offer as we work together. It will benefit you to do some work on your own between our sessions. Our time together is limited to an hour once per week or every other week, so it is important for you to complement our time together by using some of the things we practice in sessions, in your everyday life.

It can be very helpful to keep a journal of your thoughts and feelings while you are in therapy. It is a place where you can

process what happened in our counseling session that you might want to revisit. A journal can help you get in touch with feelings that you may have a hard time expressing. It might be helpful for you to bring your journal to your sessions if you have a desire to jot down notes for yourself. It might help you remember the topics you want to address in our next session. I encourage clients to write in their journal using long hand on paper, as opposed to keeping it on a computer, as it is a very different process.

From time to time, I might encourage you to read a book, watch a TED talk, practice a learned coping skill, or attend a support group. It is helpful for you to report feedback to me on anything you do outside of our sessions that increases your understanding and insight. Practicing things such as mindfulness, meditation, breathing exercises and yoga, can enhance your progress.

It is important for us to establish some clear goals for your therapy so that we both know what you are working towards.

**Here are some samples of possible therapy goals:**

- Decrease my symptoms of anxiety or depression.
- Improve my communication with my significant other.
- Learn how to express my anger without acting out.
- Learn how to set boundaries with others in my life. Learn how to stop saying “yes” when you really want to say, “no.”
- Learn to have a full range of emotion and be able to express them in the moment.

- Increase my social engagement with others. Meet and make friends. Develop a support system for myself.
- Improve my parenting. Learn better discipline techniques.
- Deal with my childhood abuse
- Explore my feelings.
- Safely express my grief/loss
- Explore my sexual orientation
- Process my traumatic event

Traumatic events that we have experienced throughout our life, are stored in the physical body. When we experience a trauma, our instinctual response is to, fight, flee, or freeze. These responses affect our Central Nervous System, and our ability to connect in relationship with others.

Throughout our work together, I will be paying attention to your physical body, and I will be asking you to check inside to notice, and then report, any sensations you may have in your body while we are talking in session. Learning to track your internal experience, or sensations, such as, tightness in your throat, or heaviness in your chest, or a tingling sensation, or sensations of heat or cold, may take some practice, but the results are worth the effort.

These sensations provide information about how the Central Nervous System is trying to reset, or heal from the original trauma. We can't separate our mind from our body, and sometimes our body helps tell our story!

How do you know when you are done in therapy? That's a question that you and I will explore as your therapy progresses. In my professional opinion, counseling is a process that involves you and I developing a trusting, working relationship, so that takes a little time. I would encourage you to give yourself at least 8 to 12 weeks of weekly or bi weekly sessions and see how you feel then. Sometimes depending on the issues you are addressing in therapy, you may want to see a counselor for six months to a year. If you have a significant issue like childhood sexual abuse, or you have a limited support system, you may benefit greatly from seeing a counselor for a number of years. Remember, you are making an investment in yourself.

If you find counseling with me, helpful, then you can return for counseling any time throughout your life, knowing that I am already familiar with you and your history. I give scheduling priority to my previous clients before taking on new ones!

So, when you and I decide you are ready to take a break from counseling, it is important to have a "termination session" so that we can review your progress, acknowledge your achievements, and celebrate your growth. It is important for both of us to have closure.

Thank you again for the opportunity to support you through your process of personal growth.