

psychotherapy has also been shown to have many benefits. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, we will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with us. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about our procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, we will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

INTAKE PROCEDURES ** SESSIONS ** POLICY REGARDING MISSED APPOINTMENTS

We normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 1 to 3 sessions. During this time, we can both decide if we are the best people to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. As part of the initial evaluation, you will be asked to complete and sign an Intake Form, and within the first few sessions, you will be asked to complete either the entire Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2), the first 370 items of the MMPI-2, or the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (Millon-III). The frequency and duration of our sessions will be determined by you and us, depending on your issues and circumstances. When psychotherapy starts, we will usually schedule one 50-minute session (one appointment segment of 50 minutes duration) to begin with, although in the case of our couple intensives, this session length may be up to 12 segments in length (12 x 50 minutes = 600 minutes). Individual, group, and couple sessions may vary in length depending on the therapist and the situation.

Once an appointment is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation, by calling our office at 775/337-0299. We will keep a recording of your telephone message with its date and time stamp if we deem it necessary. In the case of sessions longer than a 50-minute segment, this notice time will increase as follows: 48 hours for a 2-segment session, 72 hours for a 3-segment session, 96 hours for a 4-segment session, and 10 days for a weekend couple intensive of 8-12 segments. A non-refundable deposit may also be required in the case of these longer intensives. There are very few reasons for missing an appointment that will not fall under this rule, and we must both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control. “Forgetting” does not meet this criterion. It is important to note that insurance companies do not provide reimbursement for cancelled sessions. Please also note that if you miss your scheduled appointment, it may take up to 2-3 weeks to get in to see us again.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

Our hourly fee for **individual, couple, or family therapy** is **\$160** our fee for **group therapy** is **\$60**, and the fee for the MMPI-2 or Millon-III is **\$50**. There is a **\$25** charged for any checks returned N.S.F. In addition to weekly appointments, we charge **\$160** per hour for other professional services you may need, though we will break down the hourly cost if we work for periods of less than one hour. Other services include report writing, **telephone conversations lasting longer than 5 minutes**, consulting with other professionals with your permission, preparation of records or treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other

service you may request of us. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require our participation, you will be expected to pay for all of our professional time, including preparation and transportation costs, even if we are called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, we charge **\$300 per hour** for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding. **We do psychotherapy. If you believe that you will need a psychologist to do legal work for you, please let us know in the beginning, and we will try to find another professional with whom you can work.**

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested.

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, which will require me to disclose otherwise confidential information. In most collection situations, the only information I release regarding a patient's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim.

Assignment of Benefits/Overpayments: Should there be an unpaid balance due on my account, you hereby authorize your insurance carrier to assign benefits to the provider, Friel Associates—that is, to pay them directly rather than paying you. Should there be an overpayment on your account, a refund will be promptly sent to you.

INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT

I am not on any insurance panels, I do not file insurance forms, and I do not guarantee insurance coverage. I will not code your claim for couple therapy as individual therapy, which would be considered insurance fraud. If I am seeing you as an individual client and ask you to bring in your significant other for a session or two, as an adjunct to your individual therapy, then it will still be coded as individual therapy. I will send you a statement at the end of each month with the appropriate procedure code and diagnosis code, which you can then submit to your insurance carrier if you would like. As noted elsewhere, I expect payment at the time of service, which can be made by check, cash, VISA, or MasterCard. Individual insurance policies, even within companies, vary widely. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers. I am a Licensed Psychologist, and the work you do with me is either outpatient individual or group psychotherapy.

You should also be aware that your contract with your health insurance company requires that I provide it with information relevant to the services that I provide to you. I am required to provide a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes I am required to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of your entire Clinical Record. In such situations, I will make every effort to release only the minimum information about you that is necessary for the purpose requested. This information will become part of the insurance company files and will probably be stored in a computer. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, I have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. In

some cases, they may share the information with a national medical information databank. I will provide you with a copy of any report we submit, if you request it. By signing this Agreement, you agree that I can provide requested information to your carrier.

CONTACTING ME

I am often not immediately available by telephone. My telephone is answered by voice mail that I monitor frequently. I will make every effort to return your call within 24 hours, but please remember that unless you are in a life-threatening crisis, it is part of therapy to learn to handle personal difficulties until your next scheduled appointment. 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 your call, contact your family physician or the nearest hospital emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call, or dial 911. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

LIMITS ON CONFIDENTIALITY

The law protects the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist. In most situations, I can only release information about your treatment to others if you sign a written **Authorization Form** that meets certain legal requirements imposed by HIPAA. There are other situations that require only that you provide written, advance consent. Your signature on this Agreement provides consent for those activities, as follows:

- I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other health and mental health professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my patient. The other professionals are 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. I will note all consultations in your Clinical Record (which is called "PHI" in my Notice of Psychologist's Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information).
- You should be aware that I employ a part-time administrative staff. In most cases, I need to share protected information with these individuals for both clinical and administrative purposes, such as scheduling, billing and quality assurance. All of the mental health professionals are bound by the same rules of confidentiality. All staff members have been given training about protecting your privacy and have agreed not to release any information outside of the practice without the permission of a professional staff member.
- Disclosures required by health insurers or to collect overdue fees are discussed elsewhere in this Agreement.

There are some situations where I am permitted or required to disclose information without either your consent or Authorization:

- If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning your diagnosis and treatment, such information is protected by the psychologist-patient privilege law. I cannot provide any information without your (or your legal representative's) written authorization, or a **court order**. **If you are involved in or contemplating litigation,**

you should consult with your attorney to determine whether a court would be likely to order me to disclose information.

- If a government agency is requesting the information for health oversight activities, I may be required to provide it.
- If a patient files a complaint or lawsuit against me, I may disclose relevant information regarding that patient in order to defend myself.
- If a patient files a worker's compensation claim, I must, upon appropriate request, disclose relevant information to the insurer or a third party administrator.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take actions, which I believe are necessary to attempt to protect others from harm and I may have to reveal some information about a patient's treatment. These situations are unusual in my practice.

- If I know or have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected, the law requires that I file a report with the appropriate governmental agency, usually the nearest child welfare agency. Once such a report is filed, I may be required to provide additional information.
- If I know or have reasonable cause to believe that an older person has been abused, neglected, exploited or isolated the law requires that I make a report to the appropriate governmental agency, usually the local office of the Department of Human Resources Division of Aging Services. Once such a report is filed, I may be required to provide additional information.
- If I believe that a patient presents a risk of imminent serious harm to another person, I may be required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, and/or seeking hospitalization for the patient.
- If a patient presents an imminent risk of harm to himself/herself, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her, or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

If such a situation arises, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action and I will limit my disclosure to what is necessary.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have now or in the future. The laws governing confidentiality can be quite complex, and I am not an attorney. In situations where specific advice is required, formal legal advice may be needed.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

You should be aware that, pursuant to HIPAA, I keep Protected Health Information about you in two sets of professional records. One set constitutes your **Clinical Record**. It includes information about your reasons for seeking therapy, a description of the ways in which your problem impacts on your life, your diagnosis, the goals that we set for treatment, your progress towards those goals, your medical and social history, your treatment history, any past treatment records that I receive from other providers, reports of any professional consultations, your billing records, and any reports that have been sent to anyone, including reports to your insurance carrier. Except in unusual circumstances that involve danger to yourself and others, you may examine and/or receive a copy of your Clinical Record, if you request it in writing. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, I recommend that you initially review them in my presence, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional so you can discuss the contents. [I am sometimes willing to conduct this review meeting without charge.] I am allowed to charge you a copying fee of 60 cents per page (and for certain other expenses). The exceptions to this policy are contained in the attached Notice Form. If I refuse your request for access to your Clinical Record, you have a right of review, which I will discuss with you upon request.

In addition, I also keep a set of **Psychotherapy Notes**. These Notes are for my own use and are designed to assist me in providing you with the best treatment. While the contents of Psychotherapy Notes vary from client to client, they can include the contents of our conversations, my analysis of those conversations, and how they impact on your therapy. They also contain particularly sensitive information that you may reveal to me that is not required to be included in your Clinical Record. These Psychotherapy Notes are kept separate from your Clinical Record. While insurance companies can request and receive a copy of your Clinical Record, they cannot receive a copy of your Psychotherapy Notes without your signed, written Authorization. **Insurance companies cannot require your Authorization as a condition of coverage nor penalize you in any way for your refusal to authorize release of your Psychotherapy Notes.** You may examine and/or receive a copy of your Psychotherapy Notes unless I believe it will cause you mental or emotional harm.

PATIENT RIGHTS

HIPAA provides you with several new or expanded rights with regard to your Clinical Records and disclosures of protected health information. These rights include requesting that I amend your record; requesting restrictions on what information from your Clinical Records is disclosed to others; requesting an accounting of most disclosures of protected health information that you have neither consented to nor authorized; determining the location to which protected information disclosures are sent; having any complaints you make about my policies and procedures recorded in your records; and the right to a paper copy of this Agreement, the attached Notice form, and my privacy policies and procedures. I am happy to discuss any of these rights with you.

MINORS & PARENTS

Patients under 18 years of age who are not emancipated and their parents should be aware that the law usually allows parents to examine their child's treatment records unless I decide that such access is likely to injure the child. The only exception is when the psychologist believes disclosure would jeopardize treatment necessary to the minor's life or necessary to avoid a serious and

immediate threat to the minor's health, or unless we agree otherwise. Because privacy in psychotherapy is often crucial to successful progress, particularly with teenagers, it is sometimes my policy to request an agreement from parents that they consent to give up their access to their child's records. If they agree, during treatment, I will provide them only with general information about the progress of the child's treatment, and his/her attendance at scheduled sessions. I will also provide parents with a summary of their child's treatment when it is complete. Any other communication will require the child's Authorization, unless I feel that the child is in danger or is a danger to someone else, in which case, I will notify the parents of my concern. Before giving parents any information, I will discuss the matter with the child, if possible, and do my best to handle any objections he/she may have.

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for purposes outside of treatment, payment and health care operations, I will obtain an authorization from you before releasing this information. I will also need to obtain an authorization before releasing your psychotherapy notes. “*Psychotherapy notes*” are notes I have made about our conversation during a private, group, joint, or family counseling session, which I have kept separate from the rest of your medical record. These notes are given a greater degree of protection than PHI.

You may revoke all such authorizations (of PHI or psychotherapy notes) at any time, provided each revocation is in writing. You may not revoke an authorization to the extent that (1) I have relied on that authorization; or (2) if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage, and the law provides the insurer the right to contest the claim under the policy.

III. Uses and Disclosures with Neither Consent nor Authorization

I may use or disclose PHI without your consent or authorization in the following circumstances:

- **Child Abuse:** If I have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected, I must report this and relevant information, within 24 hours, to the Division of Child and Family Services, the county agency which provides child welfare services or a law enforcement agency.
- **Adult and Domestic Abuse:** If I have reasonable cause to believe that an older person has been abused, neglected, exploited or isolated, I must make a report to the local office of the Nevada Department of Human Resources Division of Aging Services, the police department or sheriff's office, or other appropriate agency within 24 hours after becoming aware of this information.
- **Health Oversight:** If I receive a request from the Nevada Board of Psychological Examiners with respect to an inquiry or complaint about my professional conduct, I must make available any record relevant to such inquiry.
- **Judicial or Administrative Proceedings:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your diagnosis and treatment and the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and I will not release this information without written authorization from you or your legally-appointed representative, or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court-ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.
- **Serious Threat to Health or Safety:** I may disclose confidential information from your records if I believe such disclosure is necessary to protect you or another person from a clear and substantial risk of imminent, serious harm. I may only disclose such information and to such persons as are consistent with the standards of my profession in addressing such problems.
- **Worker's Compensation:** If you file a worker's compensation claim, and if I provide treatment to you relevant to that claim, then I must submit to your employer's insurer or a third party administrator, a report on services rendered.

IV. Patient's Rights and Psychologist's Duties

Patient's Rights:

- *Right to Request Restrictions* – You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information about you. However, I am not required to agree to a restriction you request.
- *Right to Receive Confidential Communications by Alternative Means and at Alternative Locations* – You have the right to request and receive confidential communications of PHI by alternative means and at alternative locations. (For example, you may not want a family member to know that you are seeing me. Upon your request, I will send your bills to another address.)
- *Right to Inspect and Copy* – You have the right to inspect or obtain a copy (or both) of PHI in my mental health and billing records used to make decisions about you for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your access to PHI under certain circumstances, but in some cases, you may have this decision reviewed. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the request and denial process.
- *Right to Amend* – You have the right to request an amendment of PHI for as long as the PHI is maintained in the record. I may deny your request. On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the amendment process.
- *Right to an Accounting* – You generally have the right to receive an accounting of disclosures of PHI for which you have neither provided consent nor authorization (as described in Section III of this Notice). On your request, I will discuss with you the details of the accounting process.
- *Right to a Paper Copy* – You have the right to obtain a paper copy of the notice from me upon request, even if you have agreed to receive the notice electronically.

Psychologist's Duties:

- I am required by law to maintain the privacy of PHI and to provide you with a notice of my legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI.
- I reserve the right to change the privacy policies and practices described in this notice. Unless I notify you of such changes, however, I am required to abide by the terms currently in effect.
- If I revise my policies and procedures, I will notify you in writing by U.S. Mail, by e-mail, or by giving you the revision in person.

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V. Complaints

If you are concerned that I have violated your privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision I made about access to your records, you may contact the Nevada Board of Psychological Examiners, PO Box 2286, Reno, NV 89505-2286, (775) 688-1268.

You may also send a written complaint to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The person listed above can provide you with the appropriate address upon request.

VI. Effective Date, Restrictions and Changes to Privacy Policy

This notice will go into effect on April 14, 2003.

- I reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all PHI that I maintain. I will provide you with a revised notice by U.S. Mail, by e-mail, or by giving you the revision in person.