

***Journey Counseling, LLC***  
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## **Welcome**

Welcome to Journey Counseling. It takes courage to reach out for support and we look forward to supporting your healing journey.

This document contains information about Journey Counseling professional counseling services and business policies. Please fill out the full intake form online in addition to reading this document so that we can better assist you. It is important that you review the following information before beginning your first session.

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have about these policies; your Journey Counseling therapist will be happy to discuss them with you.

## **Therapy Services – Risks and Benefits**

The role of a professional counselor is to assist clients with issues regarding relationships, addictions, and issues such as depression, anxiety, grief, and other challenges that impact you emotionally. Counseling often involves discussing difficult aspects of your life. During our work together you may experience uncomfortable feelings such as sadness, guilt, shame, anger, or frustration.

As a result of what comes out of your therapeutic work and the decisions you make, important relationships may be impacted or may end. Your journey in therapy may also lead to healthier relationships. Counseling support often helps an individual find solutions to problems with family and friends, life challenges, as well as a reduction in feelings of distress, anxiety and depression. If you ever have any concerns about your therapy process, we encourage you to discuss this with your therapist during your sessions so that we can collaborate together as you move forward.

## **Termination of Therapy**

You may terminate therapy at any point. When our work comes to a close, we ask that you schedule at least one final session in order to review the work you have done. Occasionally clients return to therapy to process new challenges. If you decide to return in the future, please know that Journey Counseling has an open door policy and welcomes the possibility of working together again. However, it

will be at your therapist's clinical discretion and also dependent upon his or her availability. We are also happy to provide you with referrals to another therapist(s) or clinic(s).

### **Length of Therapy**

Therapy is a process that is unique to each client and the challenges they are presenting with. Some presenting issues can be worked on very effectively in a fairly short period of time (10-20 sessions). Other challenges may take much longer. It can be difficult to predict exactly how long therapy will last and this is best discussed in your sessions. You and your therapist will periodically discuss goals that you will be working toward.

### **Dual Therapy**

It is unethical for two different therapists to provide counseling for the same client at the same time. Unless there is a compelling clinical reason, a crisis, or a specialized therapy treatment plan that we will be working on, the therapists at Journey Counseling do not work with clients who are under the care of another therapist. If you are working with another therapist, please disclose this so that we can discuss next steps. If your therapist has referred you to Journey Counseling for specialized treatment (i.e. sex addiction recovery for example), we will need to have a release on file from you in order to coordinate care with your primary therapist and collaborate on a clinical plan that best supports your process.

### **Confidentiality**

Therapy is best experienced in an atmosphere of trust. Thus, all therapy services are strictly confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission. There are exceptions to confidentiality where disclosure is required by law (see below). There may be occasions where your therapist may consult with adjunct therapists in order to discuss aspects of your sessions to best support your process. When doing so, please understand that your name will not be used and your therapist will change significant identifying details in order to protect your confidentiality. Your confidentiality is very important to us. Should you request that your therapist speak with another professional or person (i.e. doctors, former therapists, teachers, family, friends or anyone else outside the therapy room), you must first provide your signed written consent in order to do so and only after your therapist determines if this is in the best interest of supporting your therapeutic process and progress.

### **Confidential Electronic Data Storage and Email Transmission**

Your confidentiality as a client is of utmost importance. To support and secure your clinical information, Journey Counseling has set up a system as part of our therapeutic services in order to securely store and protect your information in a confidential and protected capacity. Thus, Journey Counseling will be utilizing Google Inc. and the following applications: Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Drive and Google Apps Vaults as well as Therapy Notes ® to electronically save and store client information and data and to confidentially communicate with clients in various capacities via the Internet. Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Drive and Google Apps vaults and all client protected health information are covered under the Health Insurance and Portability Act of 1996 and in particular 45 C.F.R, Part 164, Subpart C under HIPPA.

### **Legal Exceptions to Confidentiality**

The therapists at Journey Counseling take confidentiality very seriously. Your information is confidential, with the exception of information relating to child abuse, or suspected child abuse, elder abuse, dependent adult abuse, or intent to harm self or others, or unless mandated by a court of law. Legally, therapists are mandated reporters of abuse or intent to harm another. If you are suicidal or homicidal, your therapist with Journey Counseling will take all reasonable steps to prevent harm to you or another. Legal exceptions to confidentiality are in place to protect your safety and the safety of others. This includes: when there is a reasonable suspicion of child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect), or adult dependent care abuse, elder abuse/neglect; and where a client threatens to harm or kill other(s) (homicide), or threatens to damage another person's property. If you are homicidal and make a serious threat to hurt another person(s), your therapist will contact 911 and make every attempt to warn the intended victim or victims. Additionally, if a court issues an order to release records (for example a divorce hearing or custody hearing), your therapist must abide by the court order and may be compelled by court order to testify under oath and thus must answer all questions honestly.

### **Mandated Reporting of Incidents Involving Minors**

A minor is defined as any person who is legally under the age of 18.

The therapists of Journey Counseling are mandated reporters of any sexual acts involving minors. This means that if any of the therapists or staff at Journey Counseling learns of any incident involving minors and illegal sexual activity or abuse, we are legally required to report this to the proper authorities.

### **Suicide Policy**

If you are suicidal, your therapist will take all reasonable steps to prevent harm to yourself. This may include breaking confidentiality if you pose a serious risk of self-harm to yourself.

### **Support Sessions**

On occasion, and only if it benefits the client's therapy goals, your therapist may ask that a family member or significant other join you for a therapy session. It is important to note that this is done only on occasion and at the therapist's discretion when it best serves the client. If a family member or significant other agrees to meet for a session, it will be for the client's benefit. If the person joining the session is your significant other, this does not constitute couples therapy, rather it is as a support to your work, and/or a check-in session. Additionally, the third party (friend or significant other) is not joining the session for his or her own therapy, nor will your therapist at Journey Counseling work with them as a therapist. If we decide that this would be beneficial, you will need to sign a written release of information for this type of support session.

### **Sobriety Policy**

We ask that all clients, couples, families, and group members arrive to therapy sober and not under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. If your therapist notices that you are intoxicated (such as slurred speech, rapid speech, smelling of alcohol, behavior that indicates intoxication with cocaine, prescription drug abuse, marijuana, or other substances) the therapy session will be immediately terminated. We will also assist you in finding a safe ride home (via friend, family member or taxi) as driving while under the influence constitutes a risk to others and is a reportable offense. Once you are safely home, your therapist will reschedule the therapy session where this occurrence will be processed. You will be charged your full fee for the session if you arrive intoxicated.

### **Therapy Sessions**

Therapy sessions are generally weekly, every other week, or monthly and are scheduled in advance. Standard sessions are 60-minutes in length and begin and end on time. Note: The last 5 minutes are reserved for completing notes and treatment planning. Therapy can be conducted in office or via teletherapy (phone) if you are away on business or ill. The fee is the same for in-office or teletherapy as the same amount of time must be blocked out for teletherapy sessions.

It is understandable that occasionally you may be late. If you are late to your session, please understand that the session will not extend past your 55 minutes,

nor will the time be made up at future sessions, as this will impact other clients. Longer sessions are available by request and upon availability of your therapists schedule at a prorated fee. At the start of therapy, your therapist may extend your first few sessions past the 55 minutes, however, unless your therapist chooses to extend this time, we ask that you please respect your 55-minute session time.

## Therapeutic Approach & Style

Our goal as therapists is to help people navigate through difficulties in their life and relationships while providing a safe place to heal, explore, develop insight, practice healthy coping tools, and take responsibility for their changes. We facilitate a process where the client is able to move toward healing, self-acceptance, and to ultimately grow and thrive in a supportive environment. While we will meet you each step of the way in your therapy process with accountability, compassion and empathy, a therapist is not a cure-all, a parent, a friend, or a miracle worker.

The style of the therapists at Journey Counseling is collaborative, honest, challenging, and direct with solid boundaries and empathy. We reflect, assist, encourage, and point out incongruent patterns around actions and words. We will not work harder than our clients or accept responsibility for your choices or consequences. We respect our client's decisions, and do not advise or direct our clients, as we believe that you are the expert in your own life and are fully capable of creating the life that you want with support and tools.

Your therapist formulates the therapeutic plan collaboratively with his or her clients based on each client's needs, their presenting problems, and the goals they wish to achieve. We use a combination of cognitive behavioral, existential, and client centered therapy with most clients.

Cognitive Behavioral (CBT) Therapy stresses the role of thinking patterns in how we feel and what we do. It is based on the belief that our thoughts, rather than people or events, cause our negative feelings. The therapist assists the client in identifying, testing the reality of, and correcting dysfunctional beliefs underlying his or her thinking – uncovering the 'root to the fruit' so to speak. The therapist then helps the client modify those thoughts and the behaviors that flow from them.

Existential psychotherapy is based on the belief that human beings are fully equipped to create one's own meaning, and to exercise one's freedom to choose. The existential therapist encourages clients to face life's anxieties and to start making his or her own decisions while reflecting on consequences and moving away from fear-based thinking. The therapist will emphasize that along with

having the freedom to carve out meaning comes the need to take full responsibility for the consequences of one's decisions.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

We respect each person's right to choose his or her own belief system. The therapists at Journey Counseling work well with both the Christian client and the atheist client, as well as clients from many religions and beliefs. If a client would like to work from a faith-based approach, your therapist will be happy to discuss this with you and support your process. Additionally, the therapists at Journey Counseling respect each person's right to their choices in terms of sexual orientation, and provide a safe place for both straight, gay and transgender clients. The therapists at Journey Counseling believe in supporting people of all ethnicities, cultures and physical challenges.

If you have any questions regarding our therapeutic approach and style, or our non-discrimination policies, please feel free to discuss this with your therapist now and/or in the future.

### **Court Reports or Letters**

The therapists of Journey Counseling do not write legal letters or court reports on behalf of clients involving divorce, custody or other legal matters or lawsuits. We do not write letters pertaining to legal matters to any outside person (i.e. doctor, school, attorney, etc.) or agency regarding your treatment. If a special circumstance arrives where a letter is required by court order, it will require your written consent and will be billed to you at \$25.00 per page and in addition to our hourly fee.

We reserve the right to refuse to write letters on your behalf (unless court mandated) if we do not feel this would be in your best interest, if it places us in a dual relationship, or will compromise our therapeutic relationship. We will not write letters on your behalf if you are involved in a lawsuit for any aspect of your personal or professional life, as this places us in a dual relationship as both your therapist and court advocate, thus crossing therapeutic boundaries.

If you are involved in a lawsuit, please understand that entering your mental health into a court hearing may not always be in your best interest as it may compromise your confidentiality, your clinical files may be requested and your therapist must speak honestly if under oath. Your therapist will not be your advocate in a court hearing or speak on your behalf as that is not the nature of the therapist/client relationship.

## Court Fees

If you become involved in legal proceedings that require your therapist's mandated participation, you will be expected to pay for all of your therapist's professional time, including preparation and transportation time and costs, even if called to testify by another party. Because of the time involved and the interruption to our clinical work, you will be charged \$250 per hour for time out of practice, time for preparation, travel time, and attendance at any legal proceeding on your behalf that you will be responsible for. Additionally, if other client sessions must be cancelled, these must be covered at the rate of those sessions and will be billed to you.

## Insurance

We do not accept any insurances but are glad to provide a "superbill" receipt or statement that you may submit to your insurance company if you wish to try for a possible out of network reimbursement.

Additionally, it is important that you understand that there is no guarantee that your insurance carrier will cover your therapy sessions. We ask that clients carefully consider this before we begin our work together. If you choose to work with a Journey Counseling therapist, our policy is a fee-for-service as described in the following section.

## Fees

The fee for therapists at Journey Counseling is \$150 per 60-minute session, which includes 5 minutes for notes and treatment planning. This fee is the same for in office, teletherapy (phone sessions), or couples therapy. On occasion clients will ask for an extended session for 90 minutes. The fee is \$225.00 for a 90 min session. Therapy is an investment in self-care, and is a process that takes time.

## Session Payments

Therapy sessions are paid via check, cash, Visa, MasterCard or debit card. A small service fee is applied to all credit card or debit card transactions. If paying cash, please bring the exact cash amount for your session fee, as we usually do not have change. Charges for unpaid services may be turned over to a collection agency.

## Fee Increases

Fees are reviewed each year, and may increase periodically. Every consideration to a client's current finances will be made. The increase will be discussed with the client, and a 30-day notice will be given prior to the increase. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have about this fee agreement. Please understand that you have the right to terminate therapy at any point.

### **Appointments/Cancellations**

If you are trying to reach your therapist on the same day of your session, please contact your therapist via the phone number you have been given vs. an email. Please note that cell phones cannot be guaranteed as confidential. We make every effort to return calls and emails within 24 hours.

We understand that occasionally circumstances beyond your control may arise which would prevent you from keeping your appointment. If your therapist is unable to attend your therapy session (outside of scheduled vacations) due to an unexpected emergency or illness, every attempt will be made to contact you 24 hours in advance on the phone numbers and/or email you have provided.

If you are sick or experiencing any symptoms of illness, we ask that you conduct your session via the phone. If your therapist is ill, he or she will extend the same consideration.

### **Client Cancellation Procedures and Fees**

#### Short-Notice Cancellation:

Appointment cancellations made less than 48 hours before the scheduled appointment will be charged the full fee for the session, unless you had an emergency.

#### No-Show:

If you do not show up for a scheduled appointment (that you have not called to cancel 48 hours in advance) you will be charged the full fee for the session. If you tend to forget appointments please let us know – we will be happy to email you in advance to confirm your sessions. However, you are responsible for keeping track of and attending your sessions.

#### Group Therapy:

Group therapy runs in 4-12 week modules. Group is closed at 7-8 members per module. Each client is responsible for their commitment to the group for the full

module. Payment is due at the start of each month for the number of groups within that month. Every group session within the module is to be paid whether or not the client attends as the spot in group is saved for that particular client. A client may be asked to leave group if more than 2 sessions are missed per module, as it will impact the group flow and bonding. Some group therapy is longer term and in such cases, group members commit to 3 months at the outset and month by month after that time.

NOTE: While group therapy can be very helpful, it is not for everyone. Group therapy is available as space becomes open in group and at the discretion of your therapist.

#### Ongoing Cancellations/Multiple No-Shows:

It is understandable that occasionally an appointment will be cancelled or missed due to illness or emergency. However, your regular session day/time has been reserved for you. Our current client schedule and wait does not allow for a great deal of flexibility with respect to continual cancellations, rescheduled appointments, or no shows. If you find that your schedule is no longer able to accommodate the session time reserved for you, please discuss this with your therapist. He or she will do their very best to find an alternative solution, such as phone sessions, so that we can continue our work together. However, please note that should ongoing cancellations, frequent reschedules (even those within the same week), missed appointments, late payments/nonpayment become an issue, your therapist will discuss this with you. If after discussing other options with you your attendance has not changed, we will need to open up your reserved time for other clients. We can also provide you with other therapy referrals.

#### **Therapist Availability between Sessions**

Your therapist is available to take a brief 5-minute phone call or to answer a short 1 paragraph email regarding your therapy appointment times or therapy homework one time between sessions and no more than 1 time per month without the client incurring a fee. We will not process therapy issues via email unless you have been specifically asked by your therapist to check in as part of your treatment. If the client feels that more contact is needed between sessions due to crisis, your therapist is willing to discuss the possibility of increasing the weekly sessions or scheduling a phone appointment temporarily if he or she feels that it supports the client's therapy. If frequent non-crisis contact continues between sessions, it will be important to talk about charging for that support time, and/or referring out for a higher level of care than a once a week therapy session can offer.

## **Therapist Time off Policy**

We take time off periodically throughout the year for ongoing education, professional conferences, and for personal time. We will give you at least one week's notice before our time away. If you require a higher level of care at this time, please take this into consideration. During our out of office time, we will not be available for any sessions in person or via email, text or phone. If you are a threat to yourself or another when we are away, please call 911 immediately. On occasion we may provide the phone number and contact information of a therapist colleague who may fill in during our time away for emergency situations. We ask that clients respect our time away and unless there is a critical emergency, they wait until the next session to discuss.

## **Holiday, Weekend and Evening Contact**

Your therapist will make every effort to return a call, email or text message of a non-emergency client message within 24 hours during a scheduled work week. If this call, text or email arrives during a holiday, weekend or evening, your therapist will return the non-emergency client contact during the first working day following the holiday, weekend or evening. For emergency only clients (emergency constitutes imminent danger to self or others) your therapist will make every effort to return the call, text or email as soon as possible and ask that if the client is facing a life threatening emergency that they call 911 immediately. There will be a regular session fee or partial session fee for emergency phone calls and sessions that are in excess of 5 minutes, or more than 1 time per month.

## **Explanation of Dual Relationships**

While a therapeutic relationship can feel psychologically close, it is one that is professional in nature with important boundaries. It is unethical for a therapist to invite you into a business venture, ask you for personal favors, start a social relationship with you, etc. These examples are called "dual relationships" and can negatively impact clinical boundaries. Although our sessions may be intimate psychologically, it is important to acknowledge that we have a strictly professional relationship. On the rare occasion that your therapist sees a client outside of the office (when we may accidentally run into each other in public), your therapist will be highly discreet and will maintain your confidentiality. He or she will do their best to follow your lead, and thus it is your choice to acknowledge the encounter and your therapist. If you do not choose to acknowledge the encounter, your therapist will respect this and will follow your lead.

## **Policy Regarding Internet, Professional, and/or Social Networking Sites**

On the topic of Social Media and Internet Sites, our primary concern is your privacy. If you follow your Journey Counseling therapist on a site like Twitter for example, please note that your Journey Counseling therapist will not follow you back.. Our reasoning is that casual viewing of clients' online content outside of the therapy session can create confusion in regard to whether it is being done as a part of your treatment. In addition, viewing your online activities without our explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially have a negative influence on our working relationship. If there are things from your online life that you wish to share with your Journey Counseling therapist, please bring them into your sessions where we can view and explore them together, during the therapy hour.

Please do not use messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact Journey Counseling therapists. These sites are not secure and messages may not be read in a timely fashion. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with Journey Counseling therapists publicly online if we have an already established client/therapist relationship. Engaging this way could compromise your confidentiality. It may also create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your legal medical record and will need to be documented and archived in your chart. If you need to contact your therapist between sessions, please do so directly via email or voice mail. See the email section below for more information regarding email interactions.

### Email Policy

The therapists at Journey Counseling prefer using email or voice mail to arrange or modify appointments. Texts are not reliable and sometimes missed. Please do not email content related to your therapy sessions, letters to read, blogs, videos, as email is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and the Journey Counseling Internet service providers. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of Internet service providers. You should also know that any emails received from you and any responses that are sent to you become a part of your legal and medical record.

### "Friending"

It is the Journey Counseling policy to not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). We believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can

compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship.

## **Physical Contact**

Sexual contact is never acceptable in the therapeutic relationship. Romantic or sexual talk, flirting, or sexual innuendos and sexual jokes are also unacceptable in the therapeutic relationship. If you should express a sexual comment or joke while in session directed to your therapist, we will explore this comment professionally and in a non-shaming way within a therapeutic non-sexual relationship.

Hugging is an expression of affection, a greeting or a goodbye within many cultures. However, in some cases hugging can be misconstrued as sexual, and can be triggering for some clients, or may interfere with the therapeutic relationship. Occasionally a client may spontaneously hug his or her therapist while they exit the office, may ask for a hug after a particularly difficult or emotional session, or may feel quite comfortable with a hug at the end of sessions or when ending therapy. Some clients are huggers, some are not, and so it is important for your therapist to understand your stance and to maintain appropriate professional boundaries. If your therapist believes after discussing the request that a non-sexual brief hug is appropriate and supports your therapy, hugs will be allowed on occasion. Please understand, if your therapist chooses not to hug you, it is not an expression of judgment, dislike or dismissal, rather it would be denied in the best interest of your clinical care based on a therapeutic decision.

## **Illness Policy**

When a private practice therapist is consistently exposed to cold and flu viruses in the office and becomes ill as a result, the office closes down, sessions and groups are cancelled, and everyone suffers. In order to maintain good health and create a safe and relatively germ free environment so that Journey Counseling can support all of our clients, we ask that clients who are experiencing any stage of illnesses to respect safety boundaries and to conduct their sessions via phone until they are recovered completely and are not experiencing any signs of illness, fever, rash or cough or contagious symptoms at any stage. Stage of illness includes: starting to feel flu symptoms, suspect they may be coming down with the flu, dealing with a current cold, head cold, or flu or flu-like symptoms, or are at the end of a flu cycle, currently have the flu, a cough, a cold, pink eye, contagious rashes, scabies, lice, chicken pox (or a child with chicken pox), or any other potentially contagious illnesses no matter how mild. Your therapist will extend the same respect and consideration if we are ill.

## Referrals of Friends, Family, Co-workers

The greatest compliment a therapist can receive are referrals from current or former clients. There are times when clients wish to introduce their therapist so they can make a recommendation as a referral, which is ethical and acceptable. Please understand that your confidentiality is extremely important to Journey Counseling. If another client that we see referred you to us, or if you refer a friend, co-worker or family member to Journey Counseling, legally and ethically your therapist is not able to acknowledge that other person's attendance to you if they should begin seeing us in therapy or if they are currently in therapy with us.

If you choose to share that your Journey Counseling therapist is also your therapist that is a decision that you must make if you choose to reveal you are in therapy with Journey Counseling. Please be assured that the therapists at Journey Counseling will not acknowledge you as a client to anyone outside of Journey Counseling without your written consent, or unless mandated by a court of law. Occasionally we may discover through something you share in a session that we have seen/are seeing someone that you know in therapy. If this is the case, your Journey Counseling therapist must maintain that person's confidentiality as well, and will hold this information just as he or she would uphold your confidentiality.

On occasion a client may say, "My friend Jane/John Doe mentioned that she/he started seeing you and is enjoying the work you are doing with him/her." This is an example of our standard response which is stated in a kind tone: "I appreciate any referrals clients make, however, I cannot reveal who I see in therapy, and thus I cannot remark on who I see clinically at this time." Because this may sound rather official to clients, and because Journey Counseling will not acknowledge who is seen in therapy, including you, we thank our clients here on this page one time in advance for any referrals they may make: Thank you for the referral; We are honored by your trust and confidence.