

OFFICE POLICY INFORMATION

Welcome to my practice. I appreciate your giving me the opportunity to be of help to you. This brochure answers questions that clients often ask about the logistical/business aspect of my practice. This brochure is yours to keep. Please mark any parts that are not clear to you. Write down any questions you have, and we will discuss them at our next meeting.

What to Expect from Our Relationship: As a professional, I will use my best knowledge and skills to help you. This includes following the standards of the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, or the CA BBS. In your best interests, the BBS puts limits on the relationship between a therapist and a client, and I will abide by these. Let me explain these limits, so you will not think they are personal responses to you.

First, I am licensed and trained to practice psychotherapy—not law, medicine, finance, or any other profession. I am not able to give you good advice from these other professional viewpoints.

Second, state laws and the rules of the BBS require me to keep what you tell me confidential (that is, just between us). You can trust me not to tell anyone else what you tell me, except in certain limited situations. I explain what those are in the confidentiality form. Here I want to explain that I try not to reveal who my clients are.

This is part of my effort to maintain your privacy. If we meet on the street or socially, I may not say hello or talk to you very much. My behavior will not be a personal reaction to you, but a way to maintain the confidentiality of our relationship.

Third, in your best interest, and following the BBS's standards, I can only be your therapist. I cannot have any other role in your life. I cannot, now or ever, be a close friend to or socialize with any of my clients. I cannot be a therapist to someone who is already a friend. I can never have a sexual or romantic relationship with any client during, or after, the course of therapy. I cannot have a business relationship with any of my clients, other than the therapy relationship.

If you ever become involved in a divorce or custody dispute, I want you to understand and agree that I will not provide evaluations or expert testimony in court. You should hire a different mental health professional for any evaluations or testimony you require. This position is based on two reasons: (1) My statements will be seen as biased in your favor because we have a therapy relationship; and (2) the testimony might affect our therapy relationship, and I must put this relationship first.

Even though you might invite me, I will not attend your family gatherings, such as parties or weddings.

As your therapist, I will not celebrate holidays or give you gifts; I may not notice or recall your birthday. By law, I cannot accept any gifts from you.

Although therapy does involve a personal relationship (and I care very much about my clients!), it is different from a friendship in a number of important ways. One of those differences is that, unlike a friendship, therapy is not expected to last indefinitely. There will come a time when you have either completed your therapy goals, or have done as much work as you are ready to do for now. You may notice yourself feeling restless with therapy, or simply feeling like you have nothing in particular to work on. This may be a sign that you are ready to decrease the

frequency of your sessions or end therapy for now. Please do not hesitate to discuss this with me, or be afraid of hurting my feelings. This is a normal part of the process, and it is often a sign that we have succeeded in meeting some or all of your goals. When you or I notice that you may have reached this point, we can discuss options for either decreasing how often you come in, or do a "closure session" for your current therapy and move you to a "will call" basis (meaning that you can call in the future if something new comes up that you'd like to work on, or if you just want to come in occasionally for a "tune-up" session).

If it becomes clear during the course of our work that you would be better served by a form of therapy that is not in my area of expertise, I have an ethical obligation to refer you to a therapist who can better meet your needs. If that happens, we would discuss your options and help you your choices about what to do with that information.

About Our Appointments: The very first time I meet with you, we will need to give each other basic information. For this reason, I usually schedule 75-80 minutes for this first meeting. Following this, we will usually meet for a 50-minute session once a week, then less often. We can schedule meetings for both your and my convenience, and with respect for you budget and time commitments. I will tell you at least two weeks in advance of my vacations or any other times we cannot meet. In the event that I become ill and am unable to work on your appointment day, I will notify you by voicemail and email as soon as possible. Please let me know in advance if you are planning a vacation or any other significant time away so that I can arrange my schedule accordingly. If you must cancel, please give me at least 24 hours notice. The only exception to this is in the case of emergency or sudden illness. I am rarely able to fill a cancelled session unless I know in advance. If you cancel a session with less than 24 hour notice other than for an illness or emergency, I will have to charge you for the lost time unless I am able to fill it. Your insurance will not cover this charge.

If I am ever unable to start on time, I ask your understanding. I also assure you that you will receive the full time agreed to. If you are late, we may be unable to meet for the full time, because it is likely that I will have another appointment after yours.

Fees, Payments, and Billing: I am no longer accepting new insurance clients. My current private pay fee is \$120.00 per 50 Minute Session. You will be given advance notice if my fees should change.

Occasionally it makes sense to schedule a longer than usual session. In those cases, the fee for the additional time will be prorated based on your usual hourly fee. If we schedule more time than you actually use, you will be charged only for the time that you use (in 15 minute increments).

I accept cash and checks. Please pay for each session at the beginning. If you are paying by check, I suggest you make out your check before each session begins, so that our time will be used best. Some people find it more convenient to pay for several sessions in advance. That is fine, as long as we make sure to note it on my calendar so that it's clear how many sessions in advance you are paid for. Other payment or fee arrangements must be worked out before the end of our first meeting.

Telephone consultations: I believe that telephone consultations may be suitable or even needed at times in our therapy. If so, I will charge you our regular fee, prorated over the time needed. If I need to have long telephone conferences with other professionals as part of your treatment, this will be discussed with you in advance and you will be billed for these at the same rate as for regular therapy services. If you are concerned about all this, please be sure to discuss it with me in advance so we can set a policy that is comfortable for both of us. Of course, there is no charge for calls about appointments or similar business.

Extended sessions: Occasionally it may be better to go on with a session, rather than stop or postpone work on a particular issue. When this extension is more than 10 minutes, I will tell you, because sessions that are extended beyond 10 minutes will be charged on a prorated basis.

Reports: I will not charge you for my time spent making routine reports to your insurance company. However, I will have to bill you for any extra-long or complex reports that you may require. If you request such a report, the estimated time it would take and fee would be discussed with you ahead of time.

Other services: If you would like a record of your expenses for tax or insurance purposes, I can give you a statement. The statement can be used for health insurance claims, as described in the next section. It will show all of our meetings, the charges for each, how much has been paid. Depending on your financial circumstances and total medical costs for any year, psychotherapy may be a deductible expense; consult your tax advisor. Cost of transportation to and from appointments and fees paid may be deductible from the client's personal income taxes as medical expenses.

If there is any problem with my charges, my billing, your insurance, or any other money-related point, please bring it to my attention. I will do the same with you. Such problems can interfere with our work. They must be worked out openly and quickly.

If You Need to Contact Me: I cannot promise that I will be available at all times. If your situation is such that you may require emergency contacts, please work with me during one of our first two sessions to create an emergency contact list that you can use. You can always leave a message on my voicemail or email me, and I will return your call / email as soon as I can. Generally, I will return messages within one business day.

Statement of Principles and Complaint Procedures:

It is my intention to fully abide by all the rules of the California Board of Behavioral Sciences.

Problems can arise in our relationship, just as in any other relationship. If you are not satisfied with any area of our work, please raise your concerns with me at once. Our work together will be slower and harder if your concerns with me are not worked out. I will make every effort to hear any complaints you have and to seek solutions to them. If you feel that I (or any other therapist) have treated you unfairly or have even broken a professional rule, please tell me. You can also contact the California Board of Behavioral Sciences, the organization that licenses those of us in the independent practice of psychology.

In my practice as a therapist, I do not discriminate against clients because of any of these factors: age, sex, marital/family status, race, color, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, place of residence, veteran status, physical disability, health status, sexual orientation, or criminal record unrelated to present dangerousness. This is a personal commitment, as well as being required by federal, state, and local laws and regulations. I will always take steps to advance and support the values of equal opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic/ cultural diversity. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please bring this matter to my attention immediately.

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have about these policies. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Troy Pafenberg, LCSW