

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT IN COUNSELING

Counseling is like a private tutor in managing your mind. While you were taught lots of things in your life, like how to spell and add and recite state capitols, you probably never got lessons in how your mind and emotions work. As a result, they might show up in ways you don't even recognize, and you feel like you lose control. Often this means acting in ways you don't like, such as eating more than you want or drinking more than you'd planned.

In our therapy, you'll learn new ways to deal with challenging thoughts and feelings. The process can sometimes be uncomfortable, so if you begin to feel angry or upset, that may mean our work together is having results!

Sessions run about 50 minutes long. They are sometimes quite structured, and at other times will feel more free form. Because I am trained in a number of therapeutic approaches, I am able to use the approach best suited to your concern. For example, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a well known approach to managing depression, so for clients struggling with depression, I would lean heavily into my CBT training to support their recovery. In those sorts of sessions, you can expect a fair amount of structure and some work between sessions as well.

On the other hand, sometimes it's best for you, the client, to have total freedom with no structure at all. Often in such sessions, something organically shows up as an important issue for you to work through, and I will be there to help make sense of your thoughts and feelings.

At times, I will assign you homework, because I will be teaching you skills that need practice. Some types of homework might be practicing mindfulness techniques, journaling, or practicing a new way to talk with your family. There is no such thing as being a "good" or "bad" client, however, so don't worry if you can't get your work done. We can always talk through it and assess the challenges you experienced.

Therapy really is so different for every client, so there's no way for me to predict how long the process will take. However, it's important that our sessions remain fruitful. To that end, we will review your counseling goals and progress every 12 sessions at least. Since sessions are usually weekly, that gives us three months to establish core change in your life. In that amount of time, you can expect to see significant progress.

Within that time, you might experience a slump. That is totally normal and expected. It does NOT mean that you're not making progress. In fact, experiencing uncomfortable feelings in the midst of therapy likely means you're getting more

deeply in touch with what's going on for you. And that is a major step forward! We will work through it together so that you can get to the other side.

You can also expect that even after you 'graduate,' you'll want to come back for another round of sessions after some time has passed. This is completely up to you. My door will be open so you never have to feel like you're completely alone.

Treatment Planning and Referrals

Therapy generally works best when we have a plan. We will work together to create a treatment plan that meets your needs and addresses your life goals. We can return to this plan whenever necessary in order to make sure we are staying on track, and to make any changes as your circumstances evolve. I make a point to revisit these goals at least every 12 weeks.

I can approximate length of treatment and probable results; however, as response differs on an individual basis, guarantees cannot be made as to treatment outcome.

If it becomes apparent that I cannot provide the services you need, I will offer you referral information to the best of my ability.

Confidentiality

Your health information is personal and confidential. I am committed to protecting health information about you. I create a record of the care and services you receive from me using a secure software called Simple Practice. I need this record to provide you with quality care and to comply with certain legal requirements. All records are kept confidential, with the exceptions outlined below.

There are certain situations in which I may disclose your health information. The most common are listed here, and if others come up we will discuss them before I take any action.

- If you threaten to harm yourself or another person and I am convinced that you mean to follow through with your plan, I will contact the appropriate authorities.
- If I receive a subpoena for a court case, I may have to turn over records to the court.
- If the payer for your services (most likely your health insurance) requests your records, I will turn them over for purposes of payment and continued services.

- If disclosure is required for care coordination purposes, I will maintain as much confidentiality as possible while prioritizing quality of care. The only time I would disclose to other providers without your written prior approval is in the case of an emergency. For example, if you are hospitalized suddenly, I may disclose information relevant to your health to the hospital doctors without prior consent.
- I have a clinical consultant with whom I discuss cases. I may discuss some of the content of our sessions, while always keeping your identity confidential. Keeping the services of a consultant helps to ensure that I am providing you with the most effective treatment.

Communication

I use phone calls and e-mail to communicate with clients. You can also expect to receive appointment reminders and billing communications through my electronic health record, Simple Practice.

I also send out periodic newsletters, which you are welcome to opt out of at any time. These are different from our individual communications. They will include general information and tips that I hope will be helpful to you, but will not necessarily match your specific needs. You are also welcome to share these with anyone else to whom you think they could be helpful.

Additionally, I find it helpful to check in with you about 3 months after termination. This is a good opportunity to check in and explore how life has been going. If you would prefer I not to do so, please let me know. There will be no pressure to return to therapy or continue our work together, it's simply a courtesy I extend to my clients.