

## WHAT TO EXPECT ON YOUR FIRST VISIT

Your first visit will consist of an interview between you and your Therapist in which the two of you will determine if the Therapist is a good fit for your counseling needs. If you and the Therapist agree that the Therapist is not right for you, the Therapist will refer you to another Therapist.

Fees and times may not seem important as the therapy itself, but, if your schedule is constantly changing, you will find that it is difficult to get any work done in therapy, and you will likely find yourself with feelings of discomfort. If, however, things remain the same, you will find therapy to be a helpful, healing experience.

**SCHEDULE and TIME:** The usual appointment schedule is once a week, though you and your Therapist may decide to meet every other week. At your first session, you and the Therapist should agree on a regular day and time for your appointment. Therapy sessions are typically 45 or 50 minutes. To maintain the secure frame, your Therapist will hold you to that time. If you arrive late, you still must stop at the agreed time. If, on the other hand, the Therapist is late, he/she should give you the full appointment time.

Your absences and lateness, as well as persistent silence, wanting to leave therapy, forgetting to pay or delaying payment, are often symptoms of "resistance", or fighting therapy. These may (or may not) reflect outside issues, and should be discussed with your Therapist. In most cases, you will be responsible for paying for any regularly scheduled sessions that you miss or cancel; you are not responsible for paying for sessions cancelled by the Therapist.

**FEES:** At your first session, the Therapist will inform you of the counseling fee. Fees vary *enormously* with the geographical area, the Therapist's qualifications, and the setting. Your health insurance may pay a portion of the fee. For your own mental health, you should keep your account current and paid up to date.

**UNATTENDED CHILDREN:** Due to the nature of the therapeutic process, a quiet, peaceful and private atmosphere is necessary. We have found that children left in the waiting area while parents are in session may be disruptive to other waiting clients as well as other clients in session, and may also be a distraction to our office staff. Therefore it is our policy that no children be left unattended in our offices at any time. If you must bring your child(ren) with you to an appointment, please bring another adult (over age 18) to stay with them during your session. If you are unable to do so, please reschedule your appointment at a time when arrangements can be made for the care of your child(ren). Also, if your child is the client, the Therapist may wish to have a private consultation with you during the appointment time. In this instance, your Therapist will advise you in advance so that you may bring another adult with you to that appointment to wait with your child during the consultation.

**CELL PHONE USE:** To protect the privacy and therapeutic process of our clients and maintain the appropriate clinical atmosphere, we ask that you turn off your cell phone while in our offices. Should you need to make a call, you may either step outside the building to make the call, or use one of our office telephones. However, it is best if you can postpone any telephone calls until your appointment is concluded.

**PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:** It should go without saying that you can expect absolute privacy and confidentiality. Under no circumstances may your Therapist ever reveal, without your permission, even the fact that you are a client, let alone any information at all about you or your case, to anyone. There may be instances when you choose to allow information to be released; in that case, your Therapist should obtain a signed consent form from you. If your therapy is provided as an employment benefit, there should be no requirement for the Therapist to report back to an employer about your progress. Managed health care programs sometimes does require information before they will make payment.

**TERMINATION:** In most cases, you will be the one to decide when it is time to stop therapy, unless you have been referred by Children's Protective Services or court-ordered to attend therapy. This decision should be discussed in great depth with your Therapist to make sure you are not terminating prematurely as an unconscious reflection of some important issue in your life. If, however, you both agree that problems have been resolved and termination is appropriate, set a specific date for termination and stick to it. The frame should remain absolutely intact right to the end. After terminating, you have no further contact with your Therapist unless you experience some new emotional disturbance, in which case you can arrange another course of therapy.