

Client Rights

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You have the right to:

- Get respectful treatment that will be helpful to you.
- Have a safe treatment setting, free from sexual, physical, and emotional abuse.
- Report immoral and illegal behavior by a therapist.
- Ask for and get information about the therapist's qualifications, including his or her license, education, training, experience, membership in professional groups, special areas of practice, and limits on practice.
- Have written information, before entering therapy, about fees, method of payment, insurance coverage, number of sessions the therapist thinks will be needed, substitute therapists (in cases of vacation and emergencies), and cancellation policies.
- Refuse audio or video recording of sessions (but you may ask for it if you wish).
- Refuse to answer any question or give any information you choose not to answer or give.
- Know if your therapist will discuss your case with others (for instance, supervisors, consultants, or students).
- Ask that the therapist inform you of your progress.

Limits of the Therapy Relationship:

Psychotherapy is a professional service I can provide to you. Because of the nature of therapy, our relationship has to be different from most relationships. It may differ in how long it lasts, in the topics we discuss, or in the goals of our relationship. It must also be limited to the relationship of therapist and client only. If we were to interact in any other ways, we would then have a "dual relationship," which would not be right and may not be legal. The different therapy professions have rules against such relationships to protect us both.

I want to explain why having a dual relationship is not a good idea. Dual relationships can set up conflicts between my own (the therapist's) interests and your (the client's) best interests, and then your interests might not be put first. In order to offer all my clients the best care, my judgment needs to be unselfish and professional. Because I am your therapist, dual relationships like these are improper:

- I cannot be your supervisor, teacher, or evaluator.
- I cannot be a therapist to my own relatives, friends (or the relatives of friends), people I know socially, or business contacts.

- I cannot provide therapy to people I used to know socially, or to former business contacts.
- I cannot have any other kind of business relationship with you besides the therapy itself. For example, I cannot employ you, lend to or borrow from you, or trade or barter your services (things like tutoring, repairing, child care, etc.) or goods for therapy.
- I cannot give legal, medical, financial, or any other type of professional advice.
- I cannot have any kind of romantic or sexual relationship with a former or current client, or any other people close to a client.

There are important differences between therapy and friendship. As your therapist, I cannot be your friend. Friends may see you only from their personal viewpoints and experiences. Friends may want to find quick and easy solutions to your problems so that they can feel helpful. These short-term solutions may not be in your long-term best interest. Friends do not usually follow up on their advice to see whether it was useful. They may need to have you do what they advise. A therapist offers you choices and helps you choose what is best for you. A therapist helps you learn how to solve problems better and make better decisions. A therapist's responses to your situation are based on tested theories and methods of change.

You should also know that therapists are required to keep the identity of their clients confidential. Therefore, if we meet in a public place I will follow your lead. I will not acknowledge you or say hello unless you acknowledge me or say hello first. I will do this in order to protect your privacy. I will never introduce ourselves as your therapist. If you would like to introduce me as your therapist, it is up to you.

You may discontinue or terminate therapy at any time. Though this is not required when you discontinue therapy, I do ask that we have a final session to ensure appropriate closure. I may discontinue therapy if the financial conditions noted in the Professional Therapy Agreement are not met, or if a transfer to another therapist is recommended.

Lastly, when our therapy is completed, we will not be able to be a friend to you like your other friends, and we will continue to protect your privacy if we happen to meet outside the therapy office may this happen. But I cannot promise that everything you tell me will never be revealed to someone else (see Confidentiality Policy).

Remember that you have the right to stop therapy whenever you choose. At the same time, if you wish to make some type of complaint against the therapist who has acted improperly, here are the addresses of some of the organizations that you can contact:

American Counseling Association

5999 Stevenson Avenue Alexandria, VA 22304 (800) 422-2648

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201 (877) 696-6775