

## OFFICE POLICIES

### CONFIDENTIALITY

All information disclosed within sessions and the written records pertaining to those sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your permission, except where disclosure is required by law, such as:

- a. Reasonable suspicion of abuse to child or elder
- b. A client presents a danger to self or others.

Confidentiality of e-mail, cell phone and fax communications: It is important to be aware that e-mail and cell phones can be easily accessed by unauthorized people. Your privacy and confidentiality of such communications can be easily compromised. Please indicate if you wish to avoid any such communication.

### THE PROCESS OF THERAPY

Therapy is a relationship of trust and confidence in which the person seeking help learns to explore oneself and his or her own abilities to cope with life more effectively. The fundamental belief in counseling is that individuals have worth, dignity, and the capacity to solve their own problems when they understand themselves and their alternatives. In addition, counseling can do more than help people solve problems. One may use it to help in his or her own personal growth and development, better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there can be no guarantees of what you will experience.

Your first few sessions will focus on an evaluation of your strengths, needs and presenting problems. By the end of your first couple of sessions, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what your work will include and a treatment plan to follow if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. Therapy often involves a significant commitment of time, money and energy, so you should carefully consider the therapist you select. The length of time needed to help reach your goals and your progress will depend primarily upon the nature of your issues and the efforts you put into their solution.

### RISKS, BENEFITS AND ALTERNATIVES

**Risks:** Therapy is very safe but there are some risks. Perhaps the biggest risk is the result of change. People you know may not like it if you change. Another risk is emotional pain or anxiety. For therapy to work people need to talk about what is important to them; sometimes these emotionally charged discussions are painful. There may be times you feel worse after a session than before.

**Benefits:** The goal of counseling is change. During therapy we learn new ways of doing things. We learn more about our relationships and ourselves. Often the changes we make result in the reduction of problems and symptoms. You can set the goals for counseling.

**About your Counselor:** My degree is in Marriage and Family Therapy which considers each person to be part of a system, and is not independent of influences that affect one's behavior. Your therapy will follow systems theories that will allow you to be more aware of outside influences that are affecting your

emotionally. As you review this form with your counselor I will explain to you how I counsel. This should include my qualifications, my style of therapy and any personal issues that may affect you. If you have any questions, now or later, feel free to ask.

**Alternatives:** There are alternatives to therapy. Medication, enlisting social supports and lifestyle changes are a few. There are also other types (styles) of therapy. If you do not think your counselor is helping you, you can ask for a referral.

**Guarantee:** There is no guarantee that counseling will produce the results you want. The potential for growth and healing is enormous. You are the single most important factor in how much counseling will help. The more you put into it the more you will get out of it.

**LITIGATION LIMITATION:** Because therapy requires full disclosure of many confidential matters, it is agreed that should there be legal proceedings neither you nor your representative will call on Andrew Lyon to testify in court or at other proceedings, nor will her records be requested for any legal reason. The only exemption for this would be legal mandatory reporting of abuse or threat to harm. In the event that my records are requested for this purpose, I will write a summary of my notes. A more detailed summary will be charged at my regular fee of \$85 per hour that is spent on compiling the information. My fee for court appearance will be \$600.

**DISABILITY QUALIFICATION:** My training was not for the purpose of determining the health status for someone seeking mental disability. Counseling for that purpose will be a referral to a professional who routinely assesses clients for that purpose. Signing of receiving my office policies acknowledges that Andrew Lyon will not be contacted by any legal representative for that purpose.

**APPOINTMENT CANCELATIONS:** At least 24 hours notice for appointment cancellation is requested. After the second missed appointment without notification, a fee of \$25 will be required before another appointment can be made.

**CLOSURE OF THERAPY:** Therapy will be considered terminated if two appointments are missed without 24 hour notice or as soon as reason for cancellation occurs or after absence of sessions for a period of 3 consecutive months.

**EMERGENCY SESSIONS:** If you need to contact Andrew Lyon between sessions in an emergency, please call my office number, and I will return your call as soon as possible. Please be aware that there will be times when I may not immediately respond to your call but will contact you in a timely manner. If I cannot be reached and you have an extreme emergency and feel you might hurt yourself or someone else, **you can find help at your local emergency room or law enforcement office by calling 911 or call Vanderbilt crisis assessment and admission 24/7 at 615) 327-7000 or (800) 365-2270t which has special unit for teen and young adults or the Highland Rim Crisis Team at 1-800-681-7444**

**YOUR SIGNATURE ON THE PATIENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM SIGNIFIES THAT YOU ACCEPT AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE CONTENTS OF THIS AGREEMENT.**

*Andrew C. Lyon, LMFT*

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