



LYNN GUTKNECHT  
COUNSELING

## OFFICE POLICIES & AGREEMENT FOR COUNSELING SERVICES

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and office policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting.

### COUNSELING SERVICES

Counseling is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the counselor and client, and the particular problems you hope to address. There are many different methods I may use to deal with those problems. Counseling also calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for counseling to be successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Counseling can have benefits and risks. Because it often involves discussing difficult aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, counseling has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Counseling often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees as to what you will experience.

Our first sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the first or second session, I will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what our work will include, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions about whether you feel comfortable working with me.

Therapy involves a serious commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about my interventions or style, we should discuss them *whenever* they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you locate another practitioner who might be better suited to help you.

### ABOUT OUR MEETINGS

The very first time we meet, we will need to give each other a lot of basic information. For this reason, I usually schedule 80 minutes for this first meeting. Following this, we will meet for 60-minute sessions, at a frequency we agree on—usually more frequent during the initial stages of counseling then less frequent as your problems improve. I will tell you at least a month in advance of my vacations or any other times we cannot meet.

If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I ask that you give me 24-hours notice if at all possible. If you are late for a session, we will probably be unable to meet for the full time, because it is likely that I have another appointment after yours.

## **FEES AND PAYMENT**

My hourly fee is \$75. I charge this same rate for other professional services you may need, though I will prorate cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other professional services might include letter writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 15 minutes, and preparation of treatment summaries. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for any professional time I spend on your legal matter, even if the request comes from another party.

I accept checks and major credit cards as payment. I do not accept insurance in my office. However, I can provide you with a monthly billing statement if you wish to seek reimbursement from your insurance carrier or FSA. Please remember that your health insurance carrier may require disclosure of confidential information in order to process claims.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

My policies about confidentiality, as well as other information about your privacy rights, are fully described in a separate document, *Notice of Privacy Practices*. You have been provided with a copy of that document. Please remember that you may revisit confidentiality questions *at any time* during our work together.

If we meet on the street or socially, I may not say hello or talk to you at all. I am not ignoring you; this is part of my effort to maintain the confidentiality of our relationship. As part of the confidentiality that I offer you, I ask you not to disclose the name of any other client being seen in this office.

I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other counseling professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my patient. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. Ordinarily, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I believe that it is important to our work together.

## **CONTACTING ME**

I am often not immediately available by telephone since I do not answer my phone when I am with clients. You may leave a message on my confidential voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible, but it may take a day or two for non-urgent matters. *Please do not ever leave an emergency message on my voice mail.* If you are in acute crisis and do not feel you are able to keep yourself safe, focus on taking immediate action to protect yourself—please call 911 or go to your local emergency room for care. You can also call the 24-hour Dane County Crisis Line at 608-280-2600 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255.

**OTHER CLIENT RIGHTS**

If you are unhappy with what is happening in therapy, I hope you will talk with me so that I can respond to your concerns. Such comments will be taken seriously and handled with respect. You are also free to end therapy at any time. You have the right to considerate, safe, and respectful care, without discrimination as to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, or source of payment. You have the right to expect that I will not have social or sexual relationships with clients or with former clients. You have the right to ask questions about any aspects of therapy and about my specific training and experience.