



*Sarit Lesser, Psy.D  
Clinical Psychologist*

*154 Waterman st. Suite 10a  
Providence, RI 02906*

## **Information for Clients**

Welcome to Dyad Psychology. This document contains important, detailed information about our professional services and business policies. You will discuss this document with your provider during your intake appointment, and will be asked to sign a form indicating that you understand and agree with all of the information provided. This is important information, so please read it carefully.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of those involved, and the particular needs or issues brought forward. There are many different methods your provider may use to deal with the challenges that you hope to address. The methods used in our practice are based on a combination of clinical experience and the latest scientific advances in behavioral science. In order for therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things discussed during sessions, and in your personal life.

As with any treatment, psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. You should think about both the benefits and risks when making any treatment decisions. For example, in therapy, there is a risk that you will, for a time, have uncomfortable levels of sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other negative feelings. You may recall unpleasant memories. These feelings or memories may bother you at work or in school. Also, you may experience problems with people important to you. Family secrets may be told. In some cases, therapy may impact your marital relationship. It is also possible that your problems may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment. Most of these risks are to be expected when you decide to make important changes in your life. Finally, even with your best efforts, there is a risk that therapy may not work well for you.

Client Initials \_\_\_\_\_

On the other hand, while you consider these risks, you should also know that the benefits of therapy have been well documented in hundreds of scientific research studies. People who are depressed may find their mood lifting. Others may feel less afraid, angry, or anxious. Longstanding patterns of addiction may yield to recovery and improved quality of life. In therapy, you will have a chance to talk things out fully and try some new behaviors. Your coping skills may improve greatly. You may get more satisfaction out of social and family relationships. Your personal goals and values may become clearer. You may grow in many directions, as a person, in your close relationships, in your work or schooling, and in the ability to enjoy your life.

## **MEETINGS**

During the initial sessions, you will discuss a lot of information with your provider. During the first session, you will complete some paperwork and confirm your insurance and payment preferences. You will also be able to discuss your reasons for seeking treatment, and what you hope to achieve.

After this first meeting, our initial evaluation process typically requires 3-4 additional sessions. During these sessions you will be asked to complete some additional questionnaires, most of which can be made available to you through the Internet, if desired. All clients are asked to commit to completing the initial evaluation sessions and tasks, which provide a solid foundation for the services we offer. By the end of the fourth or fifth session, your provider will set aside some time to review and discuss your evaluation results, along with initial impressions. This is also a valuable time for you to evaluate your confidence in working with your provider, which will also be discussed. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the provider you select. Please know that your provider's feelings will not be harmed if you decide that you would rather look for someone else to work with following the first few sessions. Our main concern is that you find exactly the type of person and services you are looking for, and we are committed to helping you achieve that.

If you feel comfortable working together with your provider and confident that your work can be productive, you will establish a treatment plan that will identify priorities and define goals to address them. Based on what is learned about your circumstances, additional services may also be recommended like additional testing, a medical exam, use of medication, or lifestyle changes. If recommendation for additional services is made, the reasons will be discussed fully, so that you can decide what is best. If you are treated by another health professional (e.g. a psychiatrist or primary care physician), your provider will coordinate services with them where applicable, but only with your written consent.

At the beginning, you will typically meet for one regular (45 or 60-minute) session per week when getting started, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent. Most clients see their provider once a week for at least a couple of months. After that, meeting frequency is typically variable (e.g. some clients

Client Initials \_\_\_\_\_

remain weekly, while others may reduce session frequency to every other week once progress toward goals is consistent). Once treatment goals are met to your satisfaction, therapy usually enters a final transitional phase where many clients will schedule a few final sessions a month or more apart to insure stability of improvement before therapy comes to an end. The process of ending therapy, called "termination," can be a very valuable part of the work. Generally, stopping therapy should not be done casually, although either you or your provider may decide to end it if it is in your best interest. If you wish to stop therapy at any time, we ask that you agree now to meet for at least one session to review your work together with your provider. This will provide an opportunity for you to review your goals, the work you have done, any future work that may remain, and options for future support, if necessary.

Therapy is a partnership between you and your provider. You define the problem areas and goals to be worked on, and your provider will present you with some options and strategies to address those challenges and goals based on his or her knowledge and skills. If necessary, you and your provider can also change your treatment plan, its goals, and methods.

An important part of your therapy will be practicing new skills that you will learn in your sessions. Your provider will often ask you to practice these new skills in your daily life between your meetings. For example, your provider might ask you to do exercises, keep records, and perhaps other tasks to deepen your learning. You will probably have to work on relationships in your life and make long-term efforts to get the best results. These are important parts of personal change. Change will sometimes be easy and quick, but it may also be slow and frustrating at other times. Most people will experience doubts from time to time about whether they can make changes. This is normal. If, at any time, you have questions about the work you are doing with your provider, you should discuss them. If your doubts persist, your provider can help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

If you could benefit from a treatment that your provider cannot provide, your provider will help you to get it. You have a right to ask your provider about other treatments, their risks, and their benefits. If for some reason treatment is not going well, your provider might also suggest that you see an additional therapist or professional.

### **RESCHEDULING MEETINGS**

Meetings represent a commitment between you and your provider. Your provider agrees to meet at the agreed upon time and to be on time, and you will receive the full time agreed to.

Please try not to miss appointments if you can possibly help it. If you know you must cancel ahead of time, we ask that you give your provider as much advance notice as possible. Your session time is reserved for

Client Initials \_\_\_\_\_

you, and we are rarely able to fill a cancelled session on short notice. Your provider will also tell you in advance of any times he or she will not be able to meet.

If you need to reschedule an appointment, our cancellation policy requires that you provide notice at least **2 full business days before the time of the appointment** by calling or messaging your provider directly. **Business days do not include weekend days or Federal holidays. If you fail to provide 2 full business days notice of cancellation for a missed appointment, you will be personally responsible for a standard session fee of \$125 if we are not able to fill the appointment.** This fee is not covered by insurance. Your provider will, however, waive the fee if you were unable to attend due to circumstances that you both agree were beyond your control. If you need to reschedule an appointment, your provider will try to find a suitable time as soon as possible. However, depending on how full your provider's schedule is, you may have to wait until your next regularly scheduled time.

In the rare event that your provider needs to cancel your meeting on short notice for an emergency or illness, they will reschedule with you as soon as possible.

#### **WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR PROVIDER RELATIONSHIP**

As a professional, your provider will, to the best of his or her ability, use their knowledge and skills to help you improve the quality of your life. This includes following the standards of the American Psychological Association (APA). In your best interests, the APA put limits on the relationship between a therapist and a client, and your provider will abide by these. Let us explain these limits, so you will not think they are personal responses to you.

First, state laws and the rules of the APA require your provider to keep what you tell them confidential (that is, private). You can trust your provider not to tell anyone else what you tell him or her, except in certain limited situations. We explain what those are in the "About Privacy and Confidentiality" section of this brochure. Your provider will make every effort to try not to reveal who their clients are. This is part of our effort to maintain your privacy. If you meet your provider by accident on the street or socially, he or she may not say hello or talk to you very much. Your provider's behavior will not be a personal reaction to you, but a way to maintain the confidentiality of your relationship.

Second, in your best interest, and following APA standards, your provider can only be your therapist. Your provider cannot have any other role in your life. Your provider cannot, now or ever, be a close friend or socialize with any of his or her clients. Your provider cannot be a therapist to someone who is already a friend. Your provider can never have a sexual or romantic relationship with any client during, or after, the course of therapy. Your provider cannot have a business relationship with any of his or her clients, other

Client Initials \_\_\_\_\_

than the therapy relationship.

Third, while gifts are a common gesture of appreciation, they can complicate the nature of the professional relationship you have with your provider. Therefore, your provider will not typically accept gifts.

### **FEES, PAYMENTS, and BILLING**

Payment for services is an important part of any professional relationship. Whether you have insurance that will help cover your sessions and/or other services we may provide, or you are paying for services yourself, you are ultimately responsible for seeing that all professional services are paid for at the time they are provided. Therefore, we ask that you please pay for each session at its end. This arrangement helps your provider to stay focused on your goals. It also allows us to keep our fees as low as possible, because it cuts down on bookkeeping and billing costs.

**We accept cash, check, and most major credit cards, and require that all clients keep a credit card on file for efficient payment of any applicable fees.** Any payment arrangements that differ from those outlined above must be discussed and agreed to by both you and your provider before the end of your first meeting. **There will be an additional \$10 fee applied to any payment due, but not made, at the time services are provided.**

Fees for the most common services are as follows (items noted with a ✓ are typically covered by most insurance plans): **Intake/Diagnostic session:** The fee for an initial intake/diagnostic evaluation (60 minute) is \$225 ✓ **Standard psychotherapy sessions:** The fee for a 45-50 minute session is \$200 ✓ **Hourly psychotherapy sessions:** The fee for a 60-minute session is \$225. ✓ **Extended psychotherapy sessions:** The fee for a 90-minute session is \$280. **Family/Couple psychotherapy sessions:** The fee for a family/couple session is \$225. **Group psychotherapy:** The fee for a 90-minute group session is \$50 per participant. ✓

**Missed appointments:** Missed appointments that are not cancelled **2 full business days** (business days do not include weekends and Federal holidays) **before the time of the appointment**, and that are not due to an emergency, are charged at a flat rate of \$125 if they are not filled.

**Other services:** Charges for other services, such as hospital visits, involved consultations requiring in-person meetings with other health providers, or home visits, will be based on the total time involved preparing for, and providing the service, including travel, and billed at a rate of \$250 per hour. Some services may require payment in advance. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require your provider's participation (e.g. consultations with lawyers, depositions, or attendance at courtroom

Client Initials \_\_\_\_\_

proceedings) you will be expected to pay for your provider's professional time—even he or she is called to testify by another party.

The agreed-upon fee-paying relationship will continue as long as you receive professional services here. We will assume this until you tell your provider in person, by telephone, or by certified mail that you wish to end it. You have a responsibility to pay for any services you receive before you end the relationship.

If there is any problem with charges, billing, your insurance, or any other money-related point, please bring it to your provider's attention as soon as possible. Your provider will do the same with you. Such problems can interfere greatly with your work and they must be worked out openly.

**Fees that remain unpaid when treatment services are terminated, or after 60 days, whichever occurs first, and for which we have not agreed upon a payment plan, will be submitted to a collection service for payment and may also be pursued through small claims court.**

### **INSURANCE COVERAGE**

In order to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you will be using insurance to help pay for services, decisions about what kind of care you need and how much of it you can receive may be reviewed by your plan. In addition, all plans have rules, limits, and procedures that may need to be discussed with your provider.

Our providers may be contracted with one or more insurance companies (e.g. Blue Cross/Blue Shield, United, etc.), which allow them to provide services on an "in-network" basis. If you are a member of an insurance plan with a company that your provider is contracted with, you are typically responsible for only the applicable co-payment, co-insurance, or deductible for each session or service provided. Increasingly, however, many insurance plans may have initial deductibles that must be satisfied before any benefits will be paid. These deductibles can be significant, and it will be important for you to be aware of this if it applies to our services.

You may be able to receive partial reimbursement for the cost of services if your plan allows for "out-of-network" benefits. Because specific coverage varies widely both within and between companies, we cannot tell you what your specific plan covers. Please read your plan's booklet under coverage for "Outpatient Psychotherapy" or under "Behavioral or Mental Health Services", or call your employer's benefits office to find out what you need to know. If you decide to go forward with your provider on an out of network basis, you will be provided with a statement listing all required information that you can submit to your insurance company for reimbursement following each payment made.

Client Initials \_\_\_\_\_

## **PROFESSIONAL RECORDS AND INSURANCE**

Professional laws and standards require that all providers keep treatment records. If desired, you are entitled to receive a copy of your records, or your provider can prepare a summary for you instead. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. If you wish to see your records, we recommend that you review them in your provider's presence to facilitate any desired discussion regarding the contents.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize your provider to provide them certain information about you like clinical diagnosis, date, and type of services provided. Sometimes your insurance company may ask that your provider also provide additional clinical information related to your work such as treatment plans, progress, or even copies of the entire record. They may also require your provider to allow them to inspect selected records as part of a regular audit process to assure compliance with their policies. If more detailed information is requested, your provider will let you know what the company has asked for. In general, our policy is to provide only as much information as the insurance company will need to pay your benefits, and this information will be sent via secure Internet portals. Your provider will do his or her best to maintain the security and privacy of your records. Furthermore, any information provided will become part of the insurance company files and will probably be stored in a computer. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, we have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. Your provider will provide you with a copy of any report submitted, upon request.

## **ABOUT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your confidential information will be treated with great care. It is your legal right that your sessions and our records about you are kept private and confidential. That is why your provider will ask you to sign a "release of information" form before he or she can talk about you or send his or her records about you to anyone else. In general, your provider will tell no one what you tell him or her. They will not even reveal that you are receiving treatment.

In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent your provider from providing any information about your treatment. In some proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may order your provider's testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it. However, if you ever become involved in a divorce or custody dispute, we want you to understand and agree that your provider will not voluntarily provide evaluations or expert testimony in court. You should hire a different mental health professional for any evaluations or testimony you require. This position is based on two reasons: (1) your provider's statements will be seen as biased because you have a

Client Initials \_\_\_\_\_

therapy relationship; and (2) the testimony might affect your therapy relationship, and your provider must put this relationship first.

In nearly all situations, your privacy and confidentiality is protected by state law and by the rules of APA. Here are the most common cases in which confidentiality is **NOT** protected:

1. If you were referred by a court or an employer for evaluation or treatment, the court or employer may expect a report from your provider. If this is your situation, please talk with your provider before you tell them anything you do not want the court or your employer to know. You have a right to tell your provider only what you are comfortable with telling.
2. Are you suing someone or being sued? Are you being charged with a crime? If so, and you tell the court that you are seeing your provider, your provider may then be ordered to show the court their records. Please consult your lawyer about these issues.
3. If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or another person, the law requires your provider to try to protect you or that other person. This usually means telling others about the threat, and may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for you. Your provider may also be obligated to contact your family members or others who can help provide protection.
4. If your provider believes a child has been or will be abused or neglected, they are legally required to report this to the authorities.

Most of these situations are rare. If, however, one of these situations does occur, your provider will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

There are two situations in which your provider might talk about part of your case with another therapist. We ask now for your understanding and agreement to let them do so in these two situations.

First, when your provider is away from the office for an extended time (e.g. vacation) he or she may ask a trusted fellow mental health professional to be available to their clients in case of emergencies. Therefore, the other provider needs to know about you. The same laws and rules regarding privacy and confidentiality apply to any provider entrusted with this information.

Second, our providers sometimes consult other therapists or professionals about their clients. This helps them to provide high-quality treatment. These persons are also required to keep your information private. Your name will never be given to them, and they will be told only as much as they need to know to understand your situation.

Client Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Except for the situations described above, your privacy and confidentiality will always be maintained. We also ask you not to disclose the name or identity of any other client seen here.

If your records need to be seen by another professional, or anyone else, your provider will discuss it with you. If you agree to share these records, you will need to sign a release. This form states exactly what information is to be shared, with whom, and why, and it may also sets time limits. You may read this form at any time. If you have questions, please ask your provider.

It is our policy to destroy clients' records 7 years after the end of therapy. Until then, we will keep your case records in a safe and secure place.

If your provider must discontinue your relationship because of illness, disability, or other presently unforeseen circumstances, we will do all that we can as a practice to insure that you continue to have access to adequate support and services, and ask you to agree that your records be transferred to another therapist (of your choosing) who will assure their confidentiality, preservation, and appropriate access.

**If you are engaged in family or couple therapy, and you want to have records of this therapy sent to anyone, all of the adults present will have to sign a release.**

For additional information about privacy and confidentiality, please reference the "Notice of Privacy Policies" handout.

#### **IF YOU NEED TO CONTACT YOUR PROVIDER**

Once services are initiated, your provider will give you their direct contact information. However, your provider will not typically be immediately available by telephone. When your provider is unavailable, you will always have the option of leaving a message (voice or text). Our providers monitor messages regularly during every day of the week, and will make every effort to respond on the same day, with the exception of weekends and holidays, unless it is an emergency. If you are difficult to reach, please inform your provider of some times when you will be available.

There is a website for our practice: [www.dyadpsychology.com](http://www.dyadpsychology.com). The website contains a range of information, forms, and links to resources that you may find helpful. We encourage all of our clients to explore the site, and are always open to suggestions that might improve it.

**Emergencies:** If you are unable to reach your provider and feel that you can't wait for him or her to return your call, contact your family physician, the nearest emergency room, or call 911. Listed below are some important phone numbers for your convenience.

Client Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Assistance: 911  
Butler Hospital (Providence, RI): (401) 455-6214 or (401) 455-6215  
National Suicide Hotline: (800) 784-2433 or (800) 273-8255  
Rhode Island Suicide Hotlines  
    Hope Valley: (401) 539-7474  
    Providence: (800) 365-4044  
    S. Kingstown: (401) 783-0782  
National Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-7233  
Alcohol Hotline Support & Information: (800) 331-2900  
Alcohol Abuse & Crisis Intervention: (800) 234-0246

**IF WE NEED TO CONTACT SOMEONE ABOUT YOU**

If there is an emergency during your time here, or your provider becomes concerned about your personal safety, they are required by law and by professional rules of conduct to contact someone close to you—perhaps a relative, spouse, or close friend. Your provider is also required to contact this person, or the authorities, if they become concerned about you harming someone else. Please write down the name and information of your chosen contact person in the blanks provided:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

Problems can arise in the therapy relationship, just as in any other relationship. If you are not satisfied with any area of your work, please raise your concerns with your provider at once. Your work together will be slower and harder if your concerns are not worked out. Your provider will make every effort to hear any complaints you have and to seek solutions to them. If you feel that your provider has treated you unfairly or has even broken a professional rule, please tell them. It is our intention to fully abide by all the rules of the APA and by those of the state of Rhode Island.

In our practice, we do not discriminate against clients because of any of these factors: age, sex, marital/family status, race, color, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, place of residence, veteran status, physical disability, health status, sexual orientation, or criminal record unrelated to present dangerousness. This is both a personal and organizational commitment of Dyad Psychology Providers, as well as being required by federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Furthermore, we will always take steps to advance and support the values of equal opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic/cultural diversity. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please bring this matter to our attention immediately.

Client Initials \_\_\_\_\_