

# Practice Policies 12/20/2021

## MEANINGFUL JOURNEY COUNSELING

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### Practice Policies

The therapeutic relationship is unique in that it is a highly personal and at the same time, a contractual agreement. Given this, it is important for us to reach a clear understanding about how our relationship will work, and what each of us can expect. This consent will provide a clear framework for our work together. Please read and indicate that you have reviewed this information and agree to it by filling in the checkbox at the end of this document.

### Fee Information

It is up to you and me to determine the length of time of your sessions. This will be discussed in the initial appointment and periodically throughout treatment as necessary. The hourly rate is \$350 per 50 minute hour. The 2.5 hours introductory couples package is \$1000. Consultation with other professionals, release of information, reading records, longer sessions, travel time, etc. will be charged a prorated rate based on the standard 50 minute appointment. Any work pertaining to legal proceedings are billed at a rate of \$800 per hour, including preparation and travel/commuting.

Upon scheduling a first appointment, a non-refundable deposit equal to the rate of the first appointment is required to hold the appointment. One reschedule of this appointment is allowed without further charge, as long as I am notified prior at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled appointment time.

Rates are subject to change; they are evaluated twice per year, January and June.

### Scheduling Sessions

Session Cadence: I work with clients on a **weekly** basis. Progress in the couple's relationship is a process of change. This process requires consistency to change the long-term habits in the relationship, anything more than a week between sessions and the practice starts to fade resulting in backwards momentum. This weekly cadence is maintained until close to the end of the therapeutic process, once the new habits are well established; we will discuss stepping down in cadence when the time is right. Please make sure you can commit to scheduling **four (4)** sessions per month. On average this process takes about 6 months, but can vary between 4 months and over a year depending on your personal situation. If there are any concerns please discuss this with me rather than stepping down to a less consistent session pace.

**\*\*\*Please Note:** If we do not meet **three (3)** weeks in a row, without advanced discussion, then I will consider you an inactive client and you will need to reach out to me directly in order to restart appointments. Also consider that, as I work with a limited number of clients at one time in an effort to offer the highest quality of service, it may mean losing your spot on my caseload and you may need to wait for a spot to open up.

Online Scheduler: You are responsible for your own scheduling. To schedule appointments you will need to go into your Client Portal → Appointments and request the appointments that you want. This is first come first serve. I open my calendar for the following month by 4:30pm PST on the 15th of each month (ex. August calendar is opened on July 15). You are able to schedule week to week based on availability, or can schedule all your sessions for the month at once. If you need specific times based on your schedule, please put a reminder in your phone or calendar to go into your client portal on the **15th** to schedule your sessions. Specific times are not guaranteed, but I will do my best to accommodate your scheduling needs.

### Cancellations and Fees

Cancellations: Please remember to cancel or reschedule 48 hours in advance. Cancellations and re-scheduled session will be subject to a full session charge if **NOT RECEIVED AT LEAST 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE**. This is necessary because a time commitment is made to you and is held exclusively for you. If you are late for a session, you may lose some of that session time.

Returned Checks: A \$20.00 service charge, in addition to any bank fees, will be charged for any checks returned for any reason for special handling.

Accounts must be paid in full within 30 days. If your payment is not received within 30 days of billing, you will be charged a 10% fee on the remaining balance. If you are in default on payment for appointments, I reserve the right to no longer schedule future appointments until payment is made. It is my goal not to let the balance become unmanageable and will cease scheduling appointments (or cancel future appointments that exist in the scheduling system) if the balance is equal to or greater than \$500, or the equivalent of two of your typical session fees, whichever comes first. I will always attempt to contact you before cancelling any future appointments by phone, email, and/or postal mail.

### **Paying for Sessions and Credit Card on File**

Payment is due at the time of service in the form of cash, check, credit/debit card, or flex-spending (FSA)/ Health Savings Account (HSA) card. Checks can be made payable to "Meaningful Journey, PLLC". It is my policy to securely hold your credit/debit card number on file, as per HIPAA guidelines, and submit the charge following your appointment. You may also use a separate credit card than the one on file, should you choose, on the day of your service. You are responsible for your account and are expected to pay for all services you receive. Please make sure that this credit card on file remains up-to-date and valid.

### **Insurance**

I do not directly participate in any insurance panels, but I can provide you with a receipt that you can submit to your insurance company to seek reimbursement. It is up to you to check with your insurance provider about your coverage for out of network providers and their services. If your insurance company requests more information than is provided on the receipt, I will provide a brief summary of treatment and an explanation of why further treatment would be beneficial; I will not provide a treatment plan or therapy notes. You retain ultimate responsibility for payment of services if your insurance company decides that this documentation does not meet their requirements for coverage of your treatment.

### **Communication**

I check email and voicemail throughout the day on days that I am working and typically respond to messages within a couple of hours. Please do not expect a delay in communication on nights and weekends, knowing that I will return your message as soon as possible when I'm back in the office.

- Telephone Accessibility:

1. If you need to contact me between sessions, please leave a message on my voicemail. I am often not immediately available; however, I will attempt to return your call within 48 business hours. Telephone, urgent, and professional consultation sessions are billed at my session fee rate, in quarter hour segments, after the first 10 minutes. I make and receive phone calls and texts on a HIPAA secure app on my mobile phone. When calls are received, your phone number is not visible. If my mobile phone should be lost or stolen please be aware that separate passwords are required to access my mobile phone and the secure app that may contain your information. I also have the ability to delete all contents from my mobile phone, which I will utilize if my phone is lost or stolen.
2. Please note that Face- to-face sessions are highly preferable to phone or online sessions. However, in the event that you are out of town, sick or need additional support, phone or online sessions are available.

3. **Emergencies:** If something urgent comes up outside of our sessions you are welcome to call me. We may talk briefly by phone and/ or schedule an emergency session for you to come in ASAP. Time spent on the phone beyond 10 minutes will be billed at my hourly rate. If a true emergency situation arises, please call the local crisis line at 866-4-CRISIS (866-427-4747), 911 or go to any local emergency room.
- **Social Media** Due to the importance of your confidentiality and the importance of minimizing dual relationships, I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). I believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up when we meet and we can talk more about it.
  - **Interactions Outside the Office**

If we see each other accidentally outside of the therapy office, I will not acknowledge you first. Your right to privacy and confidentiality is of the utmost importance to me, and I do not wish to jeopardize your privacy. However, if you acknowledge me first, I will be more than happy to speak briefly with you, but feel it appropriate not to engage in any lengthy discussions in public or outside of the therapy office.

- **Electronic Communication**
  1. I cannot ensure the confidentiality of any form of communication through electronic media, including text messages. If you prefer to communicate via non-encrypted email or text messaging for issues regarding scheduling or cancellations, I will do so. While I try to return messages in a timely manner, I cannot guarantee immediate response and request that you do not use these methods of communication to discuss therapeutic content and/or request assistance for emergencies. Also be aware that emails are retained in the logs of your and/or my internet service provider (ISP) and may potentially be read by the system administrator(s) of the ISP. Your choice to communicate by email implies your consent to a non-secure platform.
  2. Through my email, I have the ability to communicate through an encrypted format with the use of a password. In your initial intake paperwork I will ask you to create a password for encrypted emails. Please remember this password as you will need to it to view encrypted communication. When an encrypted email is received, you will be directed to an internet portal in which you can read the email and respond through encryption.
  3. Please notify me if you decide to avoid or limit, in any way, the use of e-mail, texts, cell phone calls, phone messages, or e-faxes. If you communicate confidential or private information via unencrypted e-mail, texts or e-fax or via phone messages, will assume that you have made an informed decision, will view it as your agreement to take the risk that such communication may be intercepted, and she will honor your desire to communicate on such matters.

### **Ending Therapy**

You have the right to discontinue therapy at any time. Ending a therapeutic relationship is best done in person, and I recommend at least one session to properly bring our work together to a close. Typically the client is the one who decides when to end therapy, but I also reserve the right to do so, allowing at least one session for closure. I maintain a list of other counselors with a range of specialties and will provide you with a referral to another counselor if I feel your needs are beyond the scope of my expertise. I will not end the therapeutic relationship without first discussing and exploring the reasons and purpose of terminating. If you verbally or physically threaten or harass me, I reserve the right to terminate treatment immediately.

If you do not show up for scheduled sessions for three consecutive appointments, I will consider our professional relationship ended, unless we have discussed otherwise. The fee for missed sessions will still apply and you will be billed for services as per my cancellation policy.

These policies will be updated periodically and a notice will be given to current clients. Updated forms will also be available on the "Forms and Notices" section of the website ([www.meaningfuljourneycounseling.com](http://www.meaningfuljourneycounseling.com)).

**BY CLICKING ON THE CHECKBOX BELOW I AM AGREEING THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREE TO THE ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.**