

What to expect in counseling

What we discuss in counseling is generally confidential. You will read in another, more detailed informational form about privacy practices and confidentiality in counseling relationships. Counseling is a process of self-examination, emotional awareness, and growth. You may choose to make changes in your attitudes, perceptions and behavior, as your progress. This is no guarantee that counseling will “cure” you. Counseling about issues of concern will require different amounts of time to address and resolve. Research has shown that psychotherapy may contribute to productivity, enhanced self respect, and improved communication in all kinds of relationships.

This process may be exciting, energizing, exhausting, or even painful. Emotional healing may become personally enriching, encouraging you to face conflict in relationships and learn new coping styles. I will do everything possible to provide a positive counseling experience for you. When indicated, you or your family may be referred for additional services; such as physical examination by your physician, medication evaluation, or other types of therapy or support groups. We will discuss those options during your sessions. If I cannot provide the professional care you need or you would like to consult another counselor, I will be happy to refer you to someone who may help you with your concerns.

Upon my death or incapacitation, your records will be stored with Mrs. Elyse Volpe, LPC, here at the same office address. All questions about your counseling experience will be answered with respect to your concerns.

Limits of the Therapy Relationship: What Clients Should Know: 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 professionals 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 interest, 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:

1. I cannot be your supervisor, teacher, or evaluator.
2. I cannot be a therapist to my own relatives, friends (or relatives of friends) people I know socially, or business contacts.
3. I cannot provide therapy to people I used to know socially, or to former business contacts.
4. I cannot have any other kind of business relationship with you besides 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 good for therapy.
5. I cannot give legal, medical, financial, or any other type of professional advice.
6. I cannot have any kind of romantic or sexual relationship with a former or current client or any other people close to the 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 a secret. Therefore, I may ignore you when we meet in a public place, and I must decline to attend your family's gatherings if you invite me. Lastly, when our therapy is completed, I will not be able to be a friend to you like your other friends. In sum, my duty as a therapist is to care for you and my other clients, but only in the professional role of a therapist.