

Beverly Swann, MA, Marriage and Family Therapist

## **Introduction**

Greetings and welcome. This *Psychotherapy Client Information Packet* will answer many of your questions about my therapy services. It is an honor to meet with you and walk along the path with you on your journey of change and exploration. Please feel free to ask me any questions you have, at any time, about anything contained in this document or anything that you feel is missing.

## **Goals and Benefits of Psychotherapy**

Many factors come into play when we enter the therapy process together, and it is not always possible to predict the exact methods or outcomes of therapy. Therapists have different personalities and work with different theories and techniques, so sometimes a client and therapist just don't hit it off. Sometimes the therapy moves in an unexpected direction, or life events (change in job, death in family, etc.) change the focus of therapy. Sometimes, the results of therapy may not be what you originally expected and can even be unsettling. For example, you may discover that you have a career interest that changes the direction of your life or the relationships you currently have.

Through regular treatment planning and updates, I aim to help you reach your goals and minimize the disruptions to your life. Our first few sessions will be mostly assessments – information gathering sessions that help me to understand the issues you bring and what you would like to achieve. In the beginning it may not feel like anything is improving, and occasionally it may feel like things are getting worse. Please let me know about these feelings, as well as giving me the time to gain a full understanding to put together a treatment plan with you.

## **Treatment Planning**

Treatment planning is a process where strengths and goals are identified and a plan to reach your goals is created. This is usually done after the second or third session and then again every 3-6 months, depending on the client. We will work together to come up with an individualized plan for you.

## **Frequency and Length of Treatment**

Most clients respond best to weekly therapy sessions, particularly in the early stages of therapy. We will discuss how often to meet in our first session. The length of treatment depends on many different factors, including your goals for therapy, your background and beliefs, your attendance, and life events that happen while in therapy. Therapy is about change, and sometimes that change happens quickly while other times it takes awhile. Part of the treatment planning process includes monitoring your progress and periodically deciding whether to continue therapy.

You (the client) decide when to begin therapy and when to end. I encourage clients to discuss their concerns with me so that we can facilitate a rewarding ending to our work together. For new clients I ask that they attend at least three sessions before making a decision to end so that we get to know each other and decide whether we are a “fit” for therapy. If we are not a fit, I am happy to provide a referral to another therapist.

### **Confidentiality and Limits**

Confidentiality is essential to trust in the therapy room, and I make every effort to protect your confidential information. It is important to know that there are certain instances where I may be required by law to release information:

- If I have a reasonable suspicion of abuse of a child, disabled person, or an elderly person, I am required to report it to appropriate authorities.
- If a client is a danger to him/herself or to others, I need to take appropriate steps to ensure everyone's safety.
- In the event of a court order for me to appear in court or produce your records when you have not signed a release form for me to do so, I will work with an attorney to take whatever steps I am allowed to protect your privacy.
- When third parties pay for treatment, such as insurance plans that pay for therapy or regulatory agencies that have mandated therapy, they may require that I provide some confidential information. In these cases, I will discuss the information being released ahead of time with you and ask you to sign a Release of Information Form that describes what I may release and to whom.

Additionally I may consult with other professionals from time to time to ensure that I am providing the best treatment possible. The focus of these consultations is treatment options and approaches, and I avoid using information that will identify you personally.

Client files are maintained for seven years after treatment ends, with the exception of files for minors. These files are maintained until the child reaches age 18 or for seven years, whichever is longer.

*Confidentiality with children:* When a child is in therapy it is natural for parents to want to know everything that goes on; however most children feel a need for privacy in the therapy room. Whenever there is a direct safety issue parents are always informed, though I attempt to tell the child first so he or she is not surprised. In all other cases, I tell children that I will keep what they say in session private but I may feel that there are some things their parents need to know, and that their parents also need to know how things are going from time to time. We work together to find an appropriate way to tell parents; I encourage children to tell their parents themselves whenever possible.

*Confidentiality with families and couples:* When therapy involves more than one person, secrets can become a problem. I sometimes meet with individual members of a couple or family in order to gain better insight into each person. If something is revealed during one of these meetings that has not yet been revealed to the rest of the group, you will need to inform me that it is a secret and we will need to negotiate how this will be handled on an ongoing basis. Generally, I encourage clients to share information directly with the other people involved.

*Meetings in public places:* We may run into each other in a restaurant or store. If this happens, to protect your privacy I will not say anything to you unless you speak to me first.

### **Fees and Payment Options**

The current fee is \$90.00 per 50 minute session. In some cases, a sliding scale fee may be available based on ability to pay. Fees are agreed upon before the first therapy session; however fees are reviewed annually and may be raised by approximately \$5 per year. If this occurs, we will discuss the fee change and how it may affect your therapy well in advance

Fees are due at the beginning of each session unless other arrangements have been made or the session is being paid for by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party. Payment may be made in the form of cash, personal check, money order, MasterCard, Visa, Discover Card, or American Express.

**Checks should be made out to Beverly Swann.** Returned checks or denied credit card charges will result in an additional charge of \$25.00.

### **Insurance Coverage**

The insurance plans I am able to bill directly are Blue Shield of California, Magellan, Cigna, MNH, Healthnet, ComPsych, Contra Costa Medi-Cal and Contra Costa Health Plan (for county employees); however I can provide you with an invoice at the end of each month to give to your insurance company for reimbursement if they provide that coverage. Most Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs) will allow you to choose a therapist out-of-network and may allow me to bill them directly. It is your responsibility to contact your insurance company to determine eligibility and coverage, but I will assist as much as I am able.

### **Cancellation Policy**

A therapy appointment is a promise between therapist and client. When I make an appointment with you, that time is reserved and no other client is able to use it. If you are unable to make it to an appointment, please give me as much notice as possible. My confidential voicemail is available 24 hours a day to leave messages. Please see the Counseling Service Agreement for more details. If you arrive later than 15 minutes for a scheduled appointment and do not call me, we will not be able to meet that day and it will be counted as a missed appointment.

### **Electronics Policy**

Therapy is a time for focus and reflection. This is difficult to do when there are interruptions from electronic devices. Please silence or turn off cell phones and other devices. If you are expecting a truly important call, let's discuss it at the beginning of the session.

### **Contact Information**

My *voicemail* is confidential; no one else has access to it. You may leave a message there at any time, but please be aware that I may be unable to answer your call immediately. On Monday through Friday during business hours, I check my voicemail regularly and will return your call when I am able; on weekends I check voicemail at least once a day.

My *email* address may be used for non-urgent messages, but please remember that anything transmitted over the internet is *not confidential* and may even be stored on a computer somewhere else for years.

In a medical or psychiatric emergency, please call 911 for immediate assistance. For urgent after-hours situations, you may call 925-930-3319. This is an exchange line where you can leave an urgent message and they will attempt to contact me outside the office. You may also call the Contra Costa Crisis Center at 1-800-273-TALK or 1-800-833-2900.

### **Ethics**

As a member of two professional organizations, California Association for Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT) and the United States Association for Body Psychotherapy (USABP), I am bound by professional ethical standards. These standards provide guidelines for therapist conduct. To learn more about these ethical standards, please visit the following links:

CAMFT Ethical Standards Part I: <http://www.camft.org/CAMFTBenefits/EthicalStandardsPart1.pdf>

CAMFT Ethical Standards Part II:

[http://www.camft.org/scriptcontent/index.cfm?displaypage=../CamftBenefits/whatisacamft\\_ethnic2.html](http://www.camft.org/scriptcontent/index.cfm?displaypage=../CamftBenefits/whatisacamft_ethnic2.html)

USABP Ethical Guidelines: <http://www.usabp.org/associations/1808/files/USABPEthics.pdf>

### **Complaint Process**

Therapists in the State of California are governed by the Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS). When a therapist commits an illegal or unethical act, there is a complaint process for consumers. Please visit the following link for more information: <http://www.bbs.ca.gov/consumer/index.shtml>.

### **About Therapy With Beverly**

I offer professional, affordable, and confidential psychotherapy, welcoming clients from all religions, ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and sexual orientations. As a therapist I see my role as one of a facilitator, providing an environment that is gentle and safe for exploration and discovery while incorporating the qualities of mindfulness, creativity, wholeness, spirituality, humor, and resilience.

The foundation for my strengths-based, whole-person approach to therapy is a Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology from John F. Kennedy University, with a specialization in Body Oriented (Somatic) Psychotherapy. Body-oriented therapy views “the body” as an integral part of the person and the therapy. Rather than a mind versus body perspective, I have a solid grounding in traditional psychology and strive to bring awareness and understanding to the physiology of thoughts and feelings.

When I work with clients, I always keep in mind that **you** are the expert on you. If something I suggest feels uncomfortable or not a fit for you, please bring it up in session. You never have to say or do anything you do not want to.

I am currently a member of CAMFT, East Bay CAMFT, Yolo-Solano CAMFT, APTED and USABP.