

Scott O. Hickman, PsyD
1340 N White Chapel Blvd, Ste 130
Southlake, TX 76092
817-381-6865

Psychotherapist-Patient Agreement

Welcome to my private practice. In this document, you will find information about treatment, as well as my policies and procedures. Please read through this carefully as this will provide much of the information you will need to know of the practicalities of therapy. While I try to be clear in this document, I understand you may have many questions; please don't hesitate to ask for any clarifications or any questions that I have not addressed sufficiently.

Background

I am a certified psychoanalyst and a licensed clinical psychologist in the state of Texas. I earned my Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) at Rosemead School of Psychology. I earned my certificate in psychoanalysis in 2016; this training is above and beyond my doctoral training, allowing me to specialize in psychoanalytic psychotherapy and psychoanalysis (see the description below). I provide psychotherapy and psychoanalysis with adults.

Treatment Approach

Treatment can be both a short-term and long-term process, often with short-term goals becoming long-term growth work. I approach treatment from a psychoanalytic perspective, meaning I work not only to help a person experience relief from debilitating symptoms, but to help that person understand the underlying causes of the symptoms. This approach helps with both the immediate struggle but also has as an aim to help a person address her or his underlying issues that caused the problems in the first place. I do not work with people any less frequent than once per week because it is necessary to work with greater intensity to address these long-term struggles.

Within this framework, I practice two variants of treatment:

- **Psychoanalysis** is an intensive form of therapy that addresses the deepest and most difficult to address struggles, especially as these impact all areas of a person's life. Most people can benefit from psychoanalysis, but it does require a commitment to treatment that is different from other forms of therapy while also allowing for the most life-changing impact. While the goal is to impact a person's overall functioning and personality, it also helps a person experience relief from more acute symptoms. Generally, psychoanalysis occurs 3-5 times per week, usually with the patient lying on the couch facing away from the analyst (who sits behind the patient). This allows the patient to relax more easily and focus more inwardly rather than having to focus on the analyst/therapist. The only expectation for the patient is to say "whatever comes to mind" (free association), which can include a stream of thoughts and feelings about one's life, history, current circumstances, and/or relationship with the analyst. Through this explorative process, the patient can experience relief from longstanding ways of living life and begin a new journey of living free from the shackles of often debilitating struggles, whether relational, internal, or symptomatic.
- **Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy** ("psychotherapy") is very similar to psychoanalysis, but is less intensive in nature, and can be short or long term in length. The focus of psychotherapy tends to be more on the immediate and the acute symptoms with a goal of remedying a problem of specific focus. Psychotherapy occurs 1-3 times per week, with the patient sitting up facing the analyst/therapist. Psychotherapy, if desired by the patient, can develop in to psychoanalysis.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is one of the most crucial elements of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Without the ability for the patient to trust the psychoanalyst to maintain her or his confidences, the patient is unable to share some of the happiest, saddest, darkest, scariest, most secretive parts of her or his emotional experiences. I will not discuss your information with any person, unless given prior permission (both written and verbal) by you. While I do maintain records of our appointments and content of our meetings, I make every effort to keep these secure.

In all but a few situations, state law and the rules of my profession protect your confidentiality. The following are the most common cases in which confidentiality is *not* protected:

- If I have cause to believe a child, disabled person, or an elderly person has been or will be abused, neglected, or exploited, I am legally required to report this to the proper authorities.
- If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or others, the law allows me to try to protect you or a potential victim. This usually means telling others about the threat and helping you seek appropriate help.
- If you inform me that a mental health professional has been sexually inappropriate with you, I am required to notify state authorities. You can choose to remain anonymous in this report.
- If I am subpoenaed to appear in court and provide testimony regarding my knowledge and experience of you, I will assert privilege on your behalf. If the judge insists I testify (via subpoena), I will testify truthfully and honestly to whatever I think or believe about you.

I might talk about part of your case with another therapist or professional. The circumstances in which I might do this are as follows:

- I discuss various cases as a way to enhance my clinical skills and work with my patients with highly regarded psychoanalyst-consultants. These consultants are bound by the same confidentiality standards as outlined above.
- I sometimes consult other therapists and experts about my patients. This helps me provide high-quality treatment. These people are also required to keep your information private.
- When I am away from the office for a few days, if you or I believe you need support, I have a trusted fellow therapist “cover” for me. This therapist will be available to you in emergencies and needs to know about you. This therapist is bound by the same laws and rules I am bound to in regards to your confidentiality.
- If something were to happen to me in the course of our work together, I have arranged with a trusted colleague to handle matters on my behalf in regards to contacting you.

Appointments

During our first few appointments, we will discuss what brings you to treatment and your background; this phase typically lasts between 4-6 sessions. We will determine together the course of treatment and whether or not we would work well together. If we do not believe we would work well together, or if you would prefer someone different, I will provide you with names of trusted colleagues who might better suit your therapy goals.

If I believe I can help you and you are interested in pursuing therapy with me, we will set up regular appointments, at least once per week; increasing frequency of appointments allows a deepening of the therapeutic process and greater potential for long-lasting change. We will establish a time or times that work within both of our schedules. In doing this, the days and times set are reserved only for you whether you choose to attend your session or not (cancellations, vacations, sickness, etc.) and will not be used for anyone else unless you have rescheduled the specific time for a different day and/or time. When I know of the times I will be out of the office for vacation, holidays, or professional conferences, I will let you know of my absences as far ahead of time as I can for your planning purposes.

Fees

Please find my fees below. I accept cash, checks, all credit cards, as well as health and flexible savings accounts. I reserve the right to raise my fee at the beginning of the new year, by no more than 10%. I will inform you of any fee increase with reasonable advance notice.

| <u>Service</u> | <u>Amount</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| Initial Consultation | \$250 |
| Psychoanalysis/Psychotherapy (45 minutes) | \$225/session |
| Telephone Consultation(beyond 5 minutes) | \$225, prorated |

Billing

Payment is due at the end of each session during the evaluation period (first 4-6 sessions).

Once we have agreed upon treatment, you will be billed on the last session of each month. I will provide you a bill via email 3 days before your last session that will show your sessions for the month, as well as what you owe for the month. If you plan to pay by check or cash, your payment will be due the last session of the month. If you plan to pay by credit card, I will maintain your credit card on file (once stored on file, I will not have access to your information), charging your card on your last session of the month. If using a credit card, you will be charged a convenience fee not to exceed the credit card fee.

Cancellation, Rescheduled Appointment, and Late Arrival Policy

Because of the nature of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy, your full participation in treatment begins with your regularly attending your sessions, which is why when we agree on the session day(s) and time(s) they become *your* time(s) and *your* responsibility, including financially. *Because of this you will be charged for all missed or cancelled appointments initiated by you, regardless of the reason.* Your appointment time(s) are solely yours and will not be filled with any other appointments unless rescheduled within a reasonable timeframe (see next paragraph). You will not be charged for appointments when I am out of the office or am unavailable to meet.

If you know you will be unavailable for a future appointment time and can give at least 2 weeks notice, we can work to reschedule the appointment either the week before, the week of, or the week after the cancelled appointment. If we do reschedule a time, you are permitting my use of that specific day and time to use in other ways. Because of the nature of my practice, I am unable to reschedule appointments with less notice than 2 weeks as I am unable to make use of your cancelled time. Rather than cancelling an appointment when you are unable to come to the office, we can set

up a phone session; however, this must be arranged at least 24 hours (1 business day) before the appointment. If you are sick or are concerned you are sick, we can have a phone session or attempt to reschedule in a reasonable amount of time.

If I know ahead of time and/or have the ability, I can reschedule our normally scheduled appointment when I will be out of the office, especially if it is unexpected (for instance, I can sometimes offer to reschedule when there is a Monday holiday like Memorial Day and our time is regularly on Mondays or a day when I have an outside the office emergency).

Your appointment time(s) are set aside specifically for you and I do my best to begin and end on time. If you are running late, we will still end at the set time. If I am running late, I will either prorate our time proportionally, or I will make up the time when it is convenient for both of us.

If you choose to discontinue therapy, I request we meet at least one more time to discuss your reasons for ending treatment. This not only gives us a chance to address any concerns you might have, but also an opportunity to end treatment well. If you desire, at any time, to see a different therapist, I am happy to provide a list of names of therapists I know and trust.

Insurance Reimbursement

I do not accept insurance for direct payment (see my website for an explanation), but I am considered an out-of-network provider, simply meaning you pay me directly in full and can seek a portion reimbursed through your insurance company. If you need to seek insurance reimbursement, I can include the necessary codes on your statement for these purposes (I do not add a diagnostic code to your bill unless you are seeking reimbursement). Please contact your insurance carrier for more information.

Legal/Forensics

As a patient of mine, you agree you will not call on me for any legal or forensic proceedings on your behalf. In these scenarios, I would be seen as a biased witness and this could potentially ruin our therapeutic relationship. If you are in need of a referral for any kind of forensic work, I can provide names of colleagues with this speciality who can assist you with this type of evaluation. If I do get called to court for any proceeding involving you (whether called by you or not), you will be responsible for payment of my services, including any preparation or travel I might have to do (unless, of course, the party who subpoenas me is paying my fee). My forensic fee is \$500 per hour.

Holidays

There are a few holidays I take off every year: New Years day, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving (Thursday and Friday), Christmas (eve and day). In addition, I may take off days around each of these holidays, but I will let you know of my plans well before the holiday.

Bad Weather Policy

There are rare occasions when bad weather may keep us from meeting in person. If the schools in the district where you live or the district where my office is (Southlake Carroll ISD) cancel or delay school, I will not be meeting in person for sessions, but we will still have sessions by phone in order to not miss any important therapy time. If this is not possible given your circumstances, we may try to reschedule our time for the next convenient available time.

Contacting Me

My practice phone number is 817-381-6865. Please contact me directly by phone. I have found that communication through any other medium can hinder the message that is being conveyed. Talking by phone is the most confidential way we can communicate. If I am unavailable, I utilize a confidential voicemail system that others do not have access to. I will make every attempt to call you back by the next business day. When I am out of the office, I will return your phone call the first day I have returned to the office. Please handle all appointment-related concerns this way. My phone does not receive texts.

I do, on occasion, interact via email; while I maintain a HIPPA compliant email, most email services are not compliant and would be at greater risk for others having access. Because of this, I do not communicate about matters of clinical importance on email; please refrain from emailing except regarding administrative issues (appointments, etc.). If you do choose to email, this is at your discretion and with your full knowledge of the confidentiality risks.

Emergency

If you are experiencing an emergency, please contact 911 or go to your nearest emergency room. Because I cannot be available 24 hours a day, this is the quickest and most efficient way for you to achieve safety; however, please let me know of your emergent situation, as well.

Summary

I am grateful you chose to work with me in psychoanalysis or psychotherapy. I recognize the large commitment you are making and am looking forward to the journey you are allowing me to join you on. I do not take your choice lightly and hope this endeavor is fruitful and worthwhile for you.

The greatest compliment I can receive is a referral from a patient. If you are satisfied with our work together, I would greatly appreciate your referring other people who might benefit from therapy with me.

*Please retain this for your own records.

COVID-19 Addendum

Due to the ongoing pandemic, I wanted to let you know of current policies:

- If you
 - have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, especially fever, please do not come to your appointment. We can meet by phone in lieu of an in-person meeting if you are feeling well enough to meet.
 - test positive for COVID-19, we will meet via phone for the number of days recommended by the CDC if and when you feel well enough to meet for your session(s).
 - have first hand exposure to someone who has tested positive, we will meet via phone for the number of days recommended by the CDC.
 - are in close proximity to someone who had first hand exposure to someone who tested positive, please call the office so we can discuss a plan about in-person versus phone sessions
- If I
 - have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, I will contact you and plan to meet via phone if I am feeling well enough to be present for your session(s).
 - test positive for COVID-19, we will meet via phone for the number of days recommended by the CDC if and when I feel well enough to meet for your session(s).
 - have first hand exposure to someone who has tested positive, we will meet via phone for the number of days recommended by the CDC. I will get tested as soon as I am able and will return to in-person meetings upon a negative test.