



# Amanah Family Counseling, LLC

## Office Policies & Agreement for Psychotherapy Services

Form Update: 1/2023

Welcome to Amanah Family Counseling. Your first visit to a new therapist is very important, and you may have many questions. This document is to give you information to help you decide whether we can work together. Please take time to read it carefully and let me know if you have any questions or need more information. When you sign for this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

### The Process of Therapy Evaluation

During our first meetings, I will assess whether I can be of benefit to you. I do not accept clients who I believe I cannot help to, and if this is the case, I will refer you to others who work well with your particular issues. Within a reasonable period of time after starting treatment, we will discuss my working understanding of your issues, my proposed treatment plan, and therapeutic objectives and possible outcomes of the therapy. If you have questions about any of the procedures used in the course of your therapy, their possible risks, my expertise in employing them, or about the treatment plan in general, please ask me. You also have the right to ask about other possible treatments for your condition and their risks and benefits.

### Termination and Follow-Up

Deciding when to stop our work together is meant to be a mutual process. Before we stop, we will discuss how you will know if or when to come back or whether a regularly scheduled check-in might work best for you. If it is not possible for you to phase out of therapy, I recommend that we have closure on the therapy process with at least two termination sessions.

Noncompliance with treatment recommendations may necessitate early termination of services. I will look at your issues with you and exercise my educated judgment about what treatment will be in your best interest. Your responsibility is to make a good faith effort to fulfill the treatment recommendations to which you have agreed. If you have concerns or reservations about my treatment recommendations, I strongly encourage you to express them so that we can resolve any possible differences or misunderstandings.

If during our work together I assess that I am not effective in helping you reach your therapeutic goals, I am obliged to discuss this with you and, if appropriate, terminate treatment and give you referrals that may be of help to you. If you request it and authorize it in writing, I may talk to the psychotherapist of your choice (with your permission only) in order to help with the transition.

Please keep in mind consistent and regular attendance is important for therapy to be effective. Missing the first therapy appointment after intake, missing three appointments in a row or missing three appointments in a 60 day period may lead to your case being closed. If you do not attend an appointment or have any communication with me for 90 days I will close your case automatically. You are free to contact me after your case is closed to re-open it or get referrals for another provider.

If you commit violence to, verbally or physically threaten or harass me, the office, or my family, I reserve the right to terminate your treatment unilaterally and immediately. Verbal abuse including but limited to intimidation, bullying, controlling, insulting, scolding, name-calling, rebuking or inappropriate yelling will also lead to immediate termination. Failure or refusal to pay for services is another condition for termination of services. Please contact me to make arrangements any time your financial situation changes.

## **Benefits and Risks of Psychotherapy**

Participation in therapy can result in a number of benefits to you, including improved interpersonal relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to seek therapy. Working toward these benefits requires effort on your part. Psychotherapy requires your active involvement, honesty, and openness in order to change your thoughts, feelings, and/or behavior. I will ask for your feedback and views on your therapy and its progress. Sometimes more than one approach can be helpful.

During the initial evaluation or the course of therapy, remembering unpleasant events, feelings, or thoughts may result in your experiencing considerable discomfort, strong feelings, anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc. I may challenge some of your assumptions or perceptions or propose different ways of thinking about or handling situations that may cause you to feel upset, angry, or disappointed. Attempting to resolve issues that brought you into therapy may result in changes that were not originally intended. Psychotherapy may result in decisions to change behaviors, employment, substance use, schooling, housing, or relationships. Change can sometimes be quick and easy, but more often it can be gradual and even frustrating. There is no guarantee that psychotherapy will yield positive or intended results.

If you decide to pursue teletherapy therapy (online therapy) instead of therapy in the office please keep in mind that there are additional benefits and risks. Online therapy has greater risks than in-person therapy as the therapist and client are not in the same room if an emergency was to happen. I do not recommend online therapy for clients with current suicidal or homicidal ideation. If you have any of these issues prior to starting treatment with me or begin to experience these issues during treatment you need to notify me immediately. A specific benefit of online therapy is that the client can obtain services in his/her home which eliminates drive/travel time.

## **E-mails, Phone Calls, and Emergencies**

For small administrative matters such as checking appointment times or changing them, you are welcome to email me at [najwa@amanahcounseling.com](mailto:najwa@amanahcounseling.com) or call me at 410-429-7715. If I am planning on being out of town, I will let you know in advance. I will also let you know who I have covering for me if I plan not to take or respond to phone messages during my absence. Emergency phone consultations of five minutes or less are normally free. However, if we spend more than five minutes in a week on the phone, if you leave more than five minutes worth of phone messages in a week, if I spend more than five minutes reading and responding to emails or coordination of care, I will bill you on a prorated basis for that time.

I prefer using email only to arrange or modify appointments. Please do not email me content related to your therapy sessions, as email is not completely secure or confidential. If you choose to communicate with me by email, be aware that all emails are retained in the logs of your and my Internet service providers. While it is unlikely that someone will be looking at these logs, they are, in theory, available to be read by the system administrator(s) of the Internet service provider.

If you feel the need for many phone calls or cannot wait for your next appointment, we may need to schedule more sessions to address your needs. If an emergency situation arises, please indicate it clearly in your message to me. If your situation is an acute emergency and you need to talk to someone right away, contact the closest 24-hour emergency psychiatric service:

Dial 911 or  
Go to your nearest Hospital Emergency Room  
Call the Statewide Maryland Crisis Hotline 1-800-422-0009  
Grassroots Crisis Intervention 410-531-6006

## Cancelations, Lateness and Technical Issues

Missed and canceled sessions pose some issues for both of us. First, the work of psychotherapy is sometimes challenging and when we hit a difficult place together, it can feel easier to want to avoid coming in for treatment. I would prefer we speak about this intentionally rather than you canceling sessions. Also, I hold your scheduled appointment time specifically for you and you alone. I also see a limited number of patients so that I can give you the focus and attention you deserve. It is extremely difficult for me to fill your last minute canceled session on a short notice. Therefore, I charge \$75 for appointments canceled with less than 48 hours notice.

If you are running late for your appointment, please phone or email me as soon as you can to let me know you will be late. If I do not hear from you by 15 minutes into your session, I will assume you do not plan to attend your session and you will be charged the missed appointment fee. When you are late for your session, we will still end at our regular time so that I have time to prepare for my next appointments and I can be on time for them.

If you receive online therapy please note technical difficulties can arise at any time. If you can not log in to the online therapy platform or technical issues arise during session call me at 410-429-7115. You then have the option of completing your session on the phone or rescheduling your appointment to another time.

## Payment and Financial Arrangements

The rate for the initial diagnostic intake appointment is \$165, and \$135 for individual psychotherapy sessions after that. Family psychotherapy sessions with or without the patient are \$150. First and subsequent general mental health consultations for oneself or a family member are \$165. All standard appointments are 50 minutes long. EMDR is a psychotherapy specialty. Sessions are \$215 and 60 minutes long. The fee is to be paid at the start of each session unless other arrangements have been made. If you are late, we will end on time and not run over into the next person's session. I accept payment through the Therapy Notes patient portal.

**Late Fee:** Full payment is expected at the time of service unless otherwise agreed upon. A grace period will be allowed with no late fee if payment is received by 6:00 pm the next business day. After 6pm on the next business day, there will be a \$20 charge for late payments made within the same week, and a \$30 charge the next business week. I expect you to remember to send your payment and do not regularly send reminder e-mails.

**Balances:** I do not permit clients to carry a balance of more than two sessions and if you are unable to pay this balance, we will discuss whether it makes sense to pause your care or develop another strategy so that you can avoid incurring additional debt. Please let me know if any problem arises during the course of therapy regarding your ability to make timely payments.

**Fee Reduction:** I offer some lower fee slots, based upon income and circumstances, but I prefer to hold these slots for current clients who are experiencing life transitions. If my fee is a concern, please discuss it with me. If I am unable to accommodate your financial situation, I can provide you with referrals upon request.

**Bounced Checks:** A bounced check will result in a fee equivalent to the fee I incur by processing the bad check. After a check bounces the first time you will not be able to pay by check again. If payment is not provided before session, the appointment will be rescheduled.

**Other Fees:** If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for my professional time and services even if I have been called to testify by another party. Due to the nature of the therapeutic process and the fact that it involves making disclosures with regard to matters that are of a confidential nature, it is agreed that should there be legal proceedings (such as, but not limited to, divorce and custody disputes, injuries, lawsuits, etc.), neither you nor your attorney, nor anyone else acting on your behalf will call on me to testify in court or at any other proceeding, nor will a disclosure of the psychotherapy records be requested by any third party. If, however, you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for all of my professional time at the rate of \$500 per hour, including consultation, preparation and transportation costs, even if I am called to testify by another party.

## Confidentiality

As a psychotherapy client, you have privileged communication. This means that your relationship with me as my client, all information disclosed in our sessions, and the written records of those sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission, except where law requires or permits disclosure. Most of the provisions explaining when the law requires disclosure are described in my HIPAA Privacy Form.

**When Disclosure Is Required by Law:** Disclosure is required when there is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent or elder abuse or neglect and when a client presents a danger to self, to others, to property, or is gravely disabled.

**When Disclosure May Be Required:** Disclosure may be required in legal proceedings depending on circumstances. Disclosure for legal consultation on you or my behalf may also occur if needed. If you have not paid your bill for treatment for a long period of time, your name, payment record and last known address may be sent to a collection agency or small claims court.

In family or relationship therapy, or when different family members in counseling are seen individually, confidentiality and privilege do not apply between the couple or among family members. Confidentiality also does not apply between parents/guardians and minors, if there is a need to disclose information to the caregiver. I will use my clinical judgment when revealing such information.

**Emergencies:** If there is an emergency during our work together or after termination in which I become concerned about your personal safety, the possibility of you injuring someone else, or about you receiving psychiatric care, I will do whatever I can within the limits of the law to prevent you from injuring yourself or another, and to ensure that you receive appropriate medical care. For this purpose I may contact the person whose name you have provided on your "Clients Contact" form.

**Confidentiality of E-mail, Voice mail and Fax Communication:** E-mail, voice mail, and fax communication can be easily accessed by unauthorized people, compromising the privacy and confidentiality of such communication. I use G Suite, a service which promises secure, encrypted email on my end (most e-mail providers do not provide this service). Please notify me at the beginning of treatment if you would like to avoid or limit in any way the use of any or all of these communication devices.

**Consultation:** I consult regularly with other professionals regarding my clients in order to provide you with the best possible service. Names or other identifying information are never mentioned; client identity remains completely anonymous and your confidentiality will be fully maintained. If, for some reason, I believe it is important to consult with another professional in-depth, and I believe identifying information about you may be shared, I will have you sign a release of information allowing me to share this information. Without such a release, I will not consult with another professional providing information that might lead another person to be able to identify you.

**Release of Information:** Considering all of the above exclusions, upon your request and with your written consent, I may release limited information to any person/agency you specify, unless I conclude that releasing such information might be harmful to you. If I reach that conclusion, I will explain the reason for denying your request.

## Record Keeping

I will hold on to records as long as determined by law. After that time frame I reserve the right to discard the clinical record. Record may be written or in the form of an electronic medical record.

## Social Media & Texting

I do not communicate with clients via text messages, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Twitter or other social media platforms. If you attempt to communicate with me through one of these methods I will not respond to help maintain your privacy. We can discuss what you intended to communicate via phone, e-mail or at your next session.

I hope this answers some of your questions. Please let me know if you have concerns or questions about any of these policies and procedures or this agreement for working together in psychotherapy.