

Beachside Counseling and Wellness, LLC

Lucy S. Lauer, LMHC

Introduction to Psychotherapy

Welcome to my practice. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to work with you. Because psychotherapy involves a large investment of time, energy, money and commitment, it is important that you understand what is involved so you can make an informed decision to proceed with treatment. Please review the following information, including the policies on the back of this sheet, and discuss any questions or concerns with me during our first meeting.

My background and therapeutic approach:

I earned my Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology in 1996, from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, with an emphasis on marriage and family counseling. As a Licensed Mental Health Counselor with 26 years experience as a Registered Dietitian, I have unique experience in treating disordered eating, obesity and other chronic health conditions. I am especially sensitive to the challenges of life transitions such as marriage, childbirth, death, divorce, relocating, and the empty nest. I am trained in EMDR for the treatment of issues related to trauma.

My approach is to collaborate with clients to identify and enhance their strengths so we can use them to address their challenges. I believe that people can heal themselves within a safe and supportive therapeutic environment. I encourage clients to discuss any and all concerns with me, especially those that may arise in our relationship as we explore what works and what gets in the way of reaching important goals. I use a variety of therapeutic interventions to meet individual needs and do not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, religion, disability, national origin, gender or sexual orientation.

Benefits and risks of psychotherapy:

Many people find relief from emotional suffering through the process of psychotherapy. Other benefits may include expanded coping skills, improved self-esteem, healthier relationships, and/or resolution of a nagging personal problem. Exploration of your history may uncover unhealthy patterns of behavior that psychotherapy may help you change. Psychotherapy can also be helpful in treating specific diagnosed mental illness such as major depression, anxiety disorders and many others too numerous to list. During your initial evaluation, we will discuss your goals and expectations as well as my impressions and ideas for appropriate treatment options. This may include a diagnosis and/or referral to other medical or psychiatric professionals I believe will enhance your treatment.

Potential risks include a worsening of your symptoms before they get better. It is not uncommon for people to feel intense emotional pain that they may have pushed aside for years, when they begin discussing their story with a counselor. While the therapeutic relationship is experienced by most people as safe, comforting and healing, a few people may find the exposure of feelings, flaws or insecurities, unbearable. As a seasoned counselor, I make every effort to ease the difficulty that is inherent in this process. For people suffering from depression, it is rare, but possible that the initiation of psychotherapy increases the risk of suicide.

There is also a risk of increased conflict in intimate relationships when only one partner participates in therapy.

If at any time during our work together, you have questions or concerns about your progress, the work we are doing, or anything else, please do not hesitate to talk with me about them. Thank you for your trust and cooperation. Since I do not take on clients I don't believe I can help, I look forward to our work with optimism and hope.

Please see other side for Policies that pertain to our working alliance.

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Please read the following policies and take a copy of this information with you for your records.

Appointments: The first appointment is scheduled for 60-75 minutes and is dedicated primarily to information-gathering and assessment of your concerns. We will also discuss your goals for therapy. Please come 15 minutes before your appointment to complete necessary paper work. Subsequent appointments are scheduled for 60 minutes: 50 minutes of face-to-face contact between us, with the extra 10 minutes devoted to planning and record keeping on your behalf. Sessions are scheduled on a regular basis to facilitate the consistency and security needed to establish a working relationship and to allow for the natural ebb and flow of therapy to take place.

Cancellations: There is a **\$75 charge** for appointments missed or not canceled 24 hours in advance. Medical or other emergencies will be considered on an individual basis. If you are late, I will wait 20 minutes before considering the appointment canceled. Insurance does not cover fees for missed appointments.

Confidentiality: All information you share will be held in confidence within the confines of the law and professional ethics. Specific exceptions and limitations to confidential handling of your Personal Health Information are described in detail in the **Notice of Privacy Practices. Please read these carefully and discuss any questions or concerns about them with me.** You are encouraged to keep a copy of this notice for your own records. Because **email and text messaging** are not considered strictly confidential forms of communication due to the technology involved, I do not encourage the exchange of clinical information via these tools. With your consent, we will email or text reminders of your appointments, for your convenience.

Couples and family therapy: with few exceptions, I prefer to see both partners in a couple together to avoid confusion or any sense of unequal loyalty on my part. Occasionally, I will see partners individually if it is necessary for more thorough information-gathering, or the occasional scheduling conflict. In these instances, **I will not keep secrets** from the absent partner. We will discuss this in more detail, if and when separate appointments are scheduled. When both partners are in therapy together, both must give written consent for any protected health information to be released.

Emergencies: If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, please call 911 or 211 immediately. If you feel the need to speak with me before your next scheduled appointment, you may call the office at 321-327-3793, and I will call you back sometime during regular office hours (9:30 am-5:30 pm, M-TH; 9:00-2:30 F). After hours and during my planned absences, you may leave a message and I will return your call on the next day I am in the office.

Financial Agreement: Your fee will be established at the first session and is based on my standard fee and any insurance contract which may pertain to you. Payment is due at the time services are rendered unless other arrangements are made. You may pay by cash, check, or credit card. Returned checks are subject to a \$25.00 fee. If financial emergencies arise, I will expect you to discuss these with me as soon as possible. Special arrangements may be made to avoid a lapse in your therapy. However, delinquent accounts without regular monthly payments will necessitate the termination of therapy or other action.

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