



1133 Broadway, Suite 1028 – New York, NY 10010  
(646) 701-7990

[www.mybestrelationship.com](http://www.mybestrelationship.com)

## **Office Policies & Informed Consent Agreement for Services**

Welcome to My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC. Your first visit to a new therapist is important and you are likely to have questions. Please read this form carefully and ask your therapist any questions that you have. Once signed, this will represent an agreement between you and My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC.

### **Benefits and risks of psychotherapy**

Participation in therapy can result in numerous benefits, including, but not limited to, reduced stress and anxiety, improved interpersonal relationships, increased self-confidence, increased comfort and satisfaction in various arenas of your life, and the resolution of the problems that bring you to therapy in the first place. Working towards these benefits requires effort on your part, and psychotherapy will be most effective with your active involvement, honesty and openness. In order to change, you must be willing to change, both during our sessions and in the world, and this can often be a challenging process. Although psychotherapy can be rewarding, it sometimes involves talking about unpleasant aspects of your life, which can bring up all kinds of uncomfortable feelings, such as anxiety, anger, sadness and disappointment. Psychotherapy may result in decisions about making changes that were not originally intended, and sometimes a decision that you might view as positive might not seem positive to someone close to you. There are no guarantees of exactly what you will experience as a result of being in therapy.

### **Evaluation**

During your first few sessions, you and your therapist will both be deciding whether your therapist is the right person to help you meet your goals. If your therapist feels that they are unable to offer you the services that you need, you will be given referrals to someone who has greater expertise in the area of your needs.

You should also be evaluating your therapist during this time. For therapy to be effective, it is important that you feel comfortable with your therapist. Please feel free to discuss openly how you feel therapy is going; your feedback is always valued and is an important aspect of your therapy. If you have questions, doubts or dissatisfactions with therapy, please bring them up as soon as possible and they will be addressed. If any of these doubts or dissatisfactions persist and you wish to see someone else, we will help with the process of finding another psychologist or mental health professional.

## **Confidentiality**

Generally, the law protects the privacy of all communications between client and psychotherapist. Confidentiality is taken very seriously and information to others can only be released with a client's permission and authorization *in writing*, unless ordered by a court of law, or in the following circumstances, in which case a therapist has a duty to report to the appropriate authorities:

- A therapist has reason to believe that a client is in danger of harming himself/herself – the therapist will do what is needed to protect the client which may involve involuntary hospitalization if the therapist feels there is an imminent risk of suicide.
- A therapist has reason to believe that a client is in danger of harming someone else – the therapist may have a duty to warn to prevent such harm from taking place.
- A therapist has reasonable suspicion of child abuse – therapists are mandated reporters of child abuse, regardless of who the child is and his/her relationship with the client.

## **Amendment to Policy: March 15, 2013 – NY State SAFE ACT**

As of March 15, 2013, New York State has a new law around the issue of gun control that impacts mental health providers:

*WHEN A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL CURRENTLY PROVIDING TREATMENT SERVICES TO A PERSON DETERMINES, IN THE EXERCISE OF REASONABLE PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT, THAT SUCH PERSON IS LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN CONDUCT THAT WOULD RESULT IN SERIOUS HARM TO SELF OR OTHERS, HE OR SHE SHALL BE REQUIRED TO REPORT, AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE, TO THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES*

(those reported can then be cross checked by appropriate personnel to determine whether they have legal access to firearms)

## **Confidentiality of email, cell phone and fax communication**

It is very important to be aware that email and cell phone communication can be relatively easily accessed by unauthorized people, therefore, the confidentiality of such communication can be compromised. Please notify us at the beginning of treatment if you want to avoid or limit in any way the use of any or all of the above mentioned communication devices.

## **Contacting Your Therapist: Email/Text/Other communication**

Email is used for scheduling purposes only. Please do not send text messages to your therapist. If you wish to reach your therapist between sessions, please call. If your therapist is unavailable at the time of your call, please leave a message and your therapist will make every effort to return your call within 24-hours during business days, Monday-Friday.

If you are seeing your therapist for couples therapy and need to email for scheduling purposes, please CC your partner on all communication with your therapist.

## **Social Media<sup>1</sup>**

*Friending* - No friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc) are accepted. Adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship. If you have questions about this, please bring them up with your therapist for further discussion.

*Fanning* - My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC, has a professional Facebook Page. All information on the Facebook page is also available at [www.mybestrelationship.com](http://www.mybestrelationship.com). You are welcome to view the Facebook Page but you are strongly discouraged from "fanning" this page as it creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality.

---

<sup>1</sup> Social media policies adapted by original Social Media Policy by Keely Kolmes, PsyD

*Following* - My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC, additionally publishes a blog weekly and Jenev Caddell has a professional Twitter account to share information on psychology and relationships. There is no expectation that you as a client will want to follow this blog or Twitter stream, but please be aware that doing so additionally creates a greater likelihood of compromised client confidentiality. If you share this concern about your privacy, there are more private ways to follow on Twitter (such as using an RSS feed or a locked Twitter list), which would eliminate you having a public link to our content.

No current or former clients are followed on blogs or Twitter. It is our belief that casual viewing of clients' online content outside of the therapy hour can create confusion in regard to whether it's being done as a part of your treatment or to satisfy your therapist's personal curiosity. In addition, viewing your online activities without your consent and without an explicit arrangement towards a specific purpose could potentially have a negative influence on your working relationship with your therapist. If there are things from your online life that you wish to share with your therapist, please bring them into your sessions where you and your therapist can view and explore them together, during the therapy hour.

*Interacting* - Please do not use SMS (mobile phone text messaging) or messaging on Social Networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn to contact your therapist. These sites are not secure and your messages may not be read in a timely fashion. Do not use Wall postings, @replies, or other means of engaging with your therapist in public online if you have an already established client/therapist relationship. Engaging with your therapist in this way could compromise your confidentiality. It may also create the possibility that these exchanges become a part of your legal medical record and will need to be documented and archived in your chart.

*Use of Search Engines* – My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC, does NOT search for clients on Google or Facebook or other search engines. *Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis.* If there is reason to suspect that you are in danger and you have not been in touch with your therapist via usual means (coming to appointments, phone, or email) there might be an instance in which using a search engine (to find you, find someone close to you, or to check on your recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring your welfare. These are unusual situations and if such means are ever resorted to, they will be fully documented and discussed with you when we next meet.

*Google Reader* - We do not follow current or former clients on Google Reader and we do not use Google Reader to share articles. If there are things you want to share with your therapist that you feel are relevant to your treatment whether they are news items or things you have created, please bring these items of interest into your sessions.

*Business Review Sites* - You may find My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC, on sites such as Yelp, Healthgrades, Yahoo Local, Bing, or other places which list businesses. Some of these sites include forums in which users rate their providers and add reviews. Many of these sites comb search engines for business listings and automatically add listings regardless of whether the business has added itself to the site. If you should find our listing on any of these sites, please know that this listing is NOT a request for a testimonial, rating, or endorsement from you as my client.

The American Psychological Association's Ethics Code states under Principle 5.05 that it is unethical for psychologists to solicit testimonials: "Psychologists do not solicit testimonials from current therapy clients/patients or other persons who because of their particular circumstances are vulnerable to undue influence." Of course, you have a right to express yourself on any site you wish. But due to confidentiality, we cannot respond to any review on any of these sites whether it is positive or negative. We urge you to take your own privacy as seriously as we take our commitment of confidentiality to you. You should also be aware that if you are using these sites to communicate indirectly with your therapist about your feelings about our work, there is a great possibility that it will never be seen. Bringing your feelings and thoughts directly into therapy about the process is strongly encouraged. This can be an important part of therapy, even if you decide you and your therapist are not a good fit.

None of this is meant to keep you from sharing that you are in therapy at My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC, wherever and with whomever you like. Confidentiality means that your therapist cannot tell people that you are a client and the Ethics Code prohibits your therapist from requesting testimonials. You are more than welcome to tell anyone you wish about your therapy, in any forum of your choosing. If you do choose to write something on a business review site, please keep in mind that you may be sharing personally revealing information in a public forum. We urge you to create a pseudonym that is not linked to your regular email address or friend networks for your own privacy and protection.

*Location Based Service* - If you used location-based services on your mobile phone, you may wish to be aware of the privacy issues related to using these services. My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC, is not a check-in location on various sites such as Foursquare, Gowalla, Loopt, etc. However, if you have GPS tracking enabled on your device, it is possible that others may surmise that you are a therapy client due to regular check-ins at our office on a weekly basis. Please be aware of this risk if you are intentionally "checking in" from our office or if you have a passive LBS app enabled on your phone.

### **Scheduling sessions**

If you becoming an ongoing client at My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC, we will most likely begin with a schedule of one 45-60 minute session per day, on a day and time agreed to, unless you need another arrangement. That time can then be your regular weekly appointment time, reserved specifically for you. It's important to begin sessions on time. Sessions must end promptly, so if you arrive late, you will not be able to have a full session. In time, when you begin to achieve your goals, it may make sense to meet less often, and eventually taper meetings down until therapy is over. You are always welcome to schedule refresher sessions once therapy has ended.

### **Canceling an appointment**

Because your appointment times are reserved specifically for you, please provide as much notice as possible in the case of a cancellation. With less than 24-hours notice to reschedule or cancel, you will be responsible for the full fee of your session. Insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions, so if you use insurance, you will be charged the full fee for the session, not just the co-pay. If it is possible, we also request that you provide at least one week notice when you will be away on vacation, and your therapist will do the same.

### **Payments and insurance reimbursement**

You are expected to pay the standard fee of \$175 per 45-minute individual session or \$250 per 60-minute couples session, unless you are an individual using an insurance plan that we are in network with in which case your co-pay depends on your plan.

Other services lasting longer than 10 minutes, such as telephone conversations, site visits, report writing and reading, consultations with other professionals that you request, release of information, reading records, longer sessions, etc., will be charged at the above standard rate, pro-rated, unless indicated and agreed otherwise.

Payment is due at the time of service. Please notify me if any problem arises during the course of therapy regarding your ability to pay. In the event that your account is overdue, and there is no agreement on a payment plan, I may use legal means, such as a collection agency, to obtain payment. Please also note that if you plan to use your insurance, not all issues/conditions/problems that bring you to therapy are reimbursed. It is your responsibility to verify the specifics of your coverage.

### **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. We 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.

### **Client-Therapist privilege**

Client-therapist privilege results from the special relationship of the client and therapist from a legal perspective. If My Best Relationship Psychological Services, PLLC, receives a subpoena, we will assert this privilege until otherwise instructed by you, in writing. Please be aware that you may be giving up this privilege if you make your mental or emotional condition an issue in a legal proceeding.

### **Litigation**

To maintain the integrity of psychotherapy, we do not voluntarily communicate with an attorney regarding your treatment in any litigation or custody dispute in which you become involved. 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 any other proceeding, nor will a disclosure of the psychotherapy records be requested.

