

Practice Policies

PRACTICE POLICIES

CONTACT

- Jennifer is the Office Manager. She can be reached at the main office number (727) 808-4818 or by email at jessica.deeb@yahoo.com. Please note, Jennifer does not work on Saturdays.
- Email is the preferred method of contact instead of by phone. It provides us both with an easy confirmation. Should the office manager be out sick, on vacation, or you're contacting us outside of our normal work hours, time-sensitive messages may be missed by Jessica if you leave a voicemail. Instead, this one email address is shared by both of Jessica and Jennifer and is the quickest/best way to communicate. Please add my email to your smart phone's/computer's saved contacts to ensure correct typing of my address and that my emails don't go to your Spam folder.
- We do not use text. The only exception is if you are running late for an appointment and it's strictly within the 1-10 minute late window of your session start time. After 10 minutes, your session is automatically cancelled and you need to send an email if you wish to communicate.
- All communication is saved in your file.

APPOINTMENTS

- ALL appointments, insurance, credit card information, etc, are handled by Jennifer BEFORE your session - NOT in your session. This is to preserve your session time for therapy.
- Jennifer will automatically email you the following business day after our session if you do not already have a follow up appointment scheduled.
- We schedule up to two months in advance. Jessica will determine - based on the degree of your needs and her available openings (also taking into consideration the severity of other clients' crisis) - whether to schedule you weekly, every other week, as needed, and/or place you on the email waiting list. If you are scheduled for weekly or every other week understand that this rotation is time-limited and will be reassessed frequently to assess our work inside sessions and your readiness to make further progress outside your session. Once your situation stabilizes, we will switch to meeting only as needed and not on a recurring basis.
- The email wait list is a mass email sent out when a spot has opened up under short notice. You will need to monitor your emails and respond quickly, as these spots can go fast. If you respond first, we will notify you confirming the spot is yours. If you have an appointment already scheduled and get selected for a wait list cancellation, your original appointment still stands.
- Clients who show up late for their appointment by more than 10 minutes (or who do not show at all) will be charged the late cancellation fee, as I cannot ethically bill insurance for your shortened session time and because my work with private pay clients also necessitates that the professional time I've set

aside for you is respected.

- If the counselor is late to an appointment the client will receive full session time.
- If you are on a strict work or parenting schedule, please be aware that our weekly rotations get thrown off from time to time due to holidays and scheduling changes with our office- please alert us to any special accommodations you may need.

LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCIES

- I do not assure availability at all times and my practice is not geared to the provision of emergency services.
- If you are in a crisis you can call the Suicide Hotline 800-273-TALK (8255), Pasco Crisis Line 727-849-9988, Hillsborough Crisis Line 813-234-1234, or Orlando Crisis Line 407-425-2624.
- Should there be a psychiatric emergency and I am not readily available to assist you in making arrangements, call 9-1-1 or be driven to the nearest emergency room.
- ALL emergency interventions outside of a regularly scheduled session will be billed at my standard (non-sliding scale) private pay fee of \$150/60 min or \$2.50/min. Some insurances MAY NOT cover certain telehealth sessions (e.g. daily check-ins), phone calls and e-mails.

CANCELLATIONS

IF YOU CANCEL YOUR APPOINTMENT UNDER 24 HOURS- REGARDLESS OF THE REASON AND/OR IF YOU RESCHEDULE FOR ANOTHER TIME- YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE CHARGED THE \$85 LATE CANCELLATION FEE.

- This office is not questioning the legitimacy of your reason or commitment to therapy - we simply must treat everyone equally.
- If you need to make any changes/cancellations to your appointments, please don't leave a voicemail- instead email us at jessica.deeb@yahoo.com with the word "Cancellation" in the subject line so that you and our office both have a time-stamped receipt. Save your email for your records.
- If you are writing an email with two separate subjects, you must send a separate email for your cancellation notice so that it doesn't get missed.
- We will respond to your email to verify we received it. Otherwise, you will need to assume that we did not get your message and that you would still be responsible for the cost of your appointment.

ACCESSIBILITY

Counseling services are not provided outside of scheduled sessions. I value our time we have set aside to meet, and I will need to keep all of our communication to this scheduled appointment time - unless you are in a **life-threatening** emergency. I do not assure availability at all times and my practice is not geared to the

provision of emergency services. If you need to speak to me before your next scheduled visit, contact Jennifer to inquire if there are any earlier appointment openings.

Therefore, I am NOT able to respond outside of our session to:

- Non-life-threatening crisis (e.g self-harm, PTSD symptoms, etc)
- Difficult or important updates
- Time-sensitive decisions you'd like to process
- Forms/Reports/Special requests (Including time-sensitive documents, such as FMLA and ESA flight letters)
- Requests for consultation with other professionals on your team- and the corresponding releases that need to be discussed first and signed
- Journal entries or reflections on our recent session (please write down all your thoughts, select a few important passages, and make sure to share them at your next session)
- Neat articles and videos, photos, and general messages
- If you need to communicate with me sooner than your next appointment time, please contact Jennifer to see if an earlier appointment is available within my regularly scheduled session times. Or, if nothing is available as soon as you'd like:
- Ask to be placed on the waiting list should there be an unexpected cancellation.

***Insurance does not cover more than one session in a week unless deemed "medically necessary," and medically necessary means that you are in an extreme crisis situation with acute safety or decompensation issues.**

- Consider paying out of pocket for a telephone/Skype appointment so that you might be more available to a greater pool of openings. Some insurances do not cover anything that is not traditional face-to-face therapy.

***Appointments are only scheduled for either 45-minute sessions or 60-minute sessions if using insurance or 50 minutes if self-pay, even if your need does not require the full session time.**

- Consider reserving appointments every other week or weekly (if you find there's too much to catch up on in-between sessions and/or if things are intensifying for you).
- Consider discussing how you can better utilize or grow your support system as a main counseling goal to carry you through between sessions.

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP

- Unfortunately, I am not able to form friendships outside of my professional work - whether you are an active client or not. Ethically I feel obliged to follow the very strict boundaries I was trained under. While I have a great deal of fondness for my clients and sincerely enjoy my work, I believe there is the

potential for unintended consequences whenever the boundaries of such a sensitive relationship are blurred.

- Due to the importance of your confidentiality and the importance of minimizing dual relationships, I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social media or networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). I believe that 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 when we meet and we can talk more about it.
- It is not a regular part of this practice to search for client information online through search engines such as Google or social media sites such as Facebook. Extremely rare exceptions may be made during times of crisis. If this office has a reason to suspect that you (client) are in danger and you have not been in touch with this office via our usual means (coming to appointments, phone, or email) there might be an instance in which using a search engine (to find me, find someone close to me, or to check on my recent status updates) becomes necessary as part of ensuring my welfare. These are unusual situations and if this office ever resorts to such means, Jessica Deeb will fully document it and discuss it with me when we next meet.

GENERAL OUTPATIENT THERAPY

- I practice general outpatient therapy to high-functioning adults whose needs can be addressed within my availability and with my skill set. I have a special interest in couples/adult family therapy, existential issues (e.g. identity and expression, meaning, control, mortality, loneliness), and compassion fatigue/highly sensitive people.
- I provide exploratory counseling and not judgement-based counseling. Therefore, I do not provide evaluations or letters determining or recommending any eligibility, status, or services based on our work together. This includes, but is not limited to: ADHD, disability, parenting rights, etc. However, you may obtain a copy of your file to provide to whomever you wish.
- If, at any point, you or I feel your needs are greater than the scope of my general outpatient practice, we will discuss a referral to a more specialized provider who has the appropriate training to give you the necessary therapeutic support. I do not specialize in crisis/trauma, addictions/abuse, rage/impulse control, self-harm/safety, and personality disorders, to name a few.
- Therapist-client fit has been studied time and again as the most important factor in successful therapy. Therefore, if you find that I am misunderstanding you or not helping as much as you'd like, please feel free to tell me this very important feedback. I am very open and wanting to hear what you need me to do differently.

SESSION FORMAT

- The first two sessions are used to complete the assessment portion, in which I (therapist) will lead the sessions with my questions to gather a wide spectrum of background information and identify your treatment goals.

- After these initial sessions, the focus shifts to you (client) directing each treatment session- not Jessica. You will do this by bringing concrete examples to session that you want to understand better, identifying places you are still stuck and patterns you are noticing, etc. Therefore, it's best to take notes between sessions of things to discuss and spend some time before your session identifying the priority of your topics. Please review the "Next Session Preparation" questions at the bottom of this document.
- My style of therapy is to provide focused counseling, in addition to supportive counseling. Therefore, the goal is to help you not only gain insight but also to apply action between sessions and to identify if you might be in a holding pattern. We will check-in to evaluate your progress and adjust your session frequency as needed. Therapy is not indefinite- we work towards goal attainment, coping skills, and building up your support system outside of therapy.

EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

The office of Jessica Deeb uses email as the primary mode of administrative communication. There is some risk that any protected health information that may be contained in such email may be disclosed to, or intercepted by, unauthorized third parties.

This office will take reasonable steps to ensure that all information shared through emails is kept private and confidential and will use the minimum necessary amount of protected health information in email communications. However, this office is not liable for improper disclosure of confidential information that is not a result of our negligence or misconduct.

All email/text communication will be retained either by paper and/or electronic copies, within the limits of the server. Therapeutic communication (sensitive subject matters) should be kept at a minimum. Please call the office to set up an appointment for therapeutic matters. E-mail correspondence will not be used to establish a patient-therapist relationship.

Encrypted messages are the most protected form of communication; however, the office does not presently use an encryption program. Our email is SSL enabled and our computers are password protected. My office manager and I are the only ones with access to my email address or mobile number (for texts or voice mail messages).

This office will double-check all "To" fields prior to sending messages. This office will back-up all communication weekly and communication backups will be maintained for the term applicable to paper records. These policies also apply to facsimile communications.

Summary of risks of using email:

- Email can be immediately broadcasted worldwide and received by many intended and unintended recipients and/or recipients can forward email messages to other recipients without the original sender's permission or knowledge.
- Users can easily send an e-mail to the incorrect address.
- Email is easier to falsify than handwritten or signed documents.

- Backup copies of email may exist even after the sender or the recipient has deleted his or her copy.
- If you are sending your emails from your employer's computer, your employer does have access to your emails. Since employers do not observe an employee's right to privacy in their email system, you should not use their employer's email system to transmit or receive confidential emails.
- Medical information is sensitive and unauthorized disclosure can be damaging. You should not use email for communications concerning insurance, diagnosis or treatment of AIDS/HIV infection, other sexually transmissible diseases, mental health, and developmental disability or substance abuse issues.
- *You are responsible for informing your therapist of any type of information that you do not want sent to you by email.* Any email that you send that discusses your insurance, diagnosis or treatment constitutes informed consent to the information being transmitted. If you wish to discontinue emailing information, you must submit a written notification or an email informing your clinician that you are withdrawing consent to email information.
- You are responsible for protecting your password and access to your email account and any email you send or receive from our office to ensure your confidentiality. Our office cannot be held liable if there is a breach of confidentiality caused by a breach in your account security.

BY CLICKING ON THE CHECKBOX BELOW YOU ARE AGREEING THAT YOU HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREE TO THE ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.