

Understanding Therapy

This document should answer some of your questions about therapy. Because results are not guaranteed and risks exist, it is important that you make an informed decision to begin this process. Together we can explore any questions you have before you commit to this journey.

What to expect from therapy

Therapy is not a magic button that your therapist presses for you. When you enter into therapy, you should be ready and willing to do the self-reflection and personal work required for change to happen in your life. This can be uncomfortable to begin with, but it can be extremely rewarding in the long run as you begin to cultivate a more fulfilling life.

Unlike a friendship, the focus of therapy is on you and your growth and exploration. We will work together to uncover patterns, feelings, beliefs, and behaviors that are not working for you and look for their causes and potential alternatives. As we explore areas where changes are desired, we also discover and enhance your strengths and evaluate resources to better support you in your process.

Therapy is a place where you can practice behaviors and communications that are challenging for you. Please be honest about any concerns, resistance, wishes, or feedback and trust that I can explore it with you.

Therapy can be a subtle process where your commitment to the effort and my commitment to listening without judgment help you create new patterns and ways of being.

Potential Benefits and Risks

Benefits* can include, but are not limited to:

- Increased self-acceptance
- Improved relationships
- Better communication skills and decision-making
- Increased sense of control and choice

Risks can include, but are not limited to:

- Becoming aware of painful emotions or memories
- Changes in feelings and relationships
- Potential discomfort of self-exploration
- Feelings of vulnerability or exposure

*There is no guarantee of benefits or risks in therapy. Your results are largely determined by your own efforts.

My Specialization and Training:

- Depression, anxiety and stress management
- Communication issues
- Sexuality, gender, body image
- Relationships of all kinds: beginnings, endings, challenges and transitions
- Out-of-the-box lifestyles
- Grief and loss, including loss of health and mobility
- Life transitions
- Self-exploration and authenticity

My Therapeutic Theories and Styles:

My work integrates several styles, depending on the client's needs and the stage of therapy. Some styles I incorporate:

- Humanistic therapy stresses empathy and personal connection. The therapist's role is to support the client in finding their own answers.
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy addresses thoughts and behaviors directly, guiding the client in consciously choosing to challenge those that are not serving them.
- Mindfulness works with the client's intentions to tune into their feelings, body, thoughts, and inner wisdom.

How long does it take?

People seek different things from therapy, so there is no cookie-cutter answer. Some clients like a goal-oriented approach while others appreciate the support and space to work through ongoing issues. We will check in about goals and ending therapy as we go. To bring our work to a close in a healthy and productive way, I recommend making termination a process over at least two sessions.

Lara Willing, LMFT #93111

Psychotherapist

www.LaraWilling.com

Confidentiality:

For the most part, what you share in therapy will not be shared with any third parties unless you expressly request it in writing. My hope is that you will consider your therapy sessions a safe environment to share anything you need to share.

Exceptions to Confidentiality:

I am obligated to break confidentiality in the following situations:

- ◇ on suspicion of abuse or danger to a child, elder, or dependent adult
- ◇ if you show intent to harm yourself or others
- ◇ in compliance with a court order or the Patriot Act
- ◇ in conjunction with supervision or consultation (your identity will remain anonymous)

In addition, disclosure of some information may be required for billing, collections, or insurance purposes. Please read my Notice of Privacy Practices and give your informed authorization for electronic submission of client information.

Questions or Concerns?

If you have any questions, concerns, or feedback regarding our therapy, please bring them up so we can discuss them in session. Part of my task is to be a safe sounding board for anything therapy brings up in you, including issues with the therapy itself. I can handle it! And this might be a great growth opportunity.

My Privacy

I have a full life outside of being a psychotherapist. If you come across my personal presence online, please honor my privacy by ignoring it. If you see me in public, you are welcome to say hello, but I will not be the first to acknowledge you (to protect your privacy).

You have my express permission to share my contact information with anybody that you think wants or needs it.

Office Policies:

Cancellations:

Consistency is an important aspect of therapy. Your weekly session time has been reserved for you, so please make every effort to keep your appointments. I request 3 days' notice for cancellations. There is a small fee if you cancel less than 3 days in advance, and full fee is expected if you cancel less than 24 hours in advance.

Because emergencies do sometimes come up at the last minute, I "waive" one cancellation (or no show) fee per 6 month period.

Contacting me between sessions:

You can call, text, or email me any time without disturbing me; however these are not confidential forms of communication, so I suggest limiting texts and emails to scheduling matters only. I will acknowledge all texts and emails about scheduling matters within 24 hours, so please send again if you don't get my confirmation. Voicemails are less convenient for me, and I prefer text or email.

There are guidelines and recommendations for the electronic transmission of client information. Please read my Notice of Privacy Practices in order to understand your participation.

Emergencies:

I regret that I am not available for emergency or crisis care. If you have an emergency, please call 911 or a local crisis line, or go to the nearest emergency room. Sometimes the ER is the best place for you.. One suggested crisis line is the San Francisco Crisis Line at 415-781-0500.

Vacation/Sick Leave:

I will give you as much notice as possible when I am unable to meet.

When I am unavailable, I will provide a backup contact when requested. If I become incapacitated, my professional will designate Mike Brown, LMFT to contact clients and make arrangements on my behalf.

Lara Willing, LMFT #93111

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