

# THERAPY AGREEMENT– TERMS OF SERVICE

Before beginning therapy, it is important to be clear about each of our roles in the process. I have therefore developed this document to provide some information and also to clarify some important elements. Please read the following sections which I hope will be helpful. If you have any queries or concerns please don't hesitate to raise them with me.



"If only I could talk  
to someone who  
would really listen to me  
(Marie Cardinal)

## How Online Therapy May Help

Engaging in therapy can bring a range of benefits. These may include relief from uncomfortable symptoms, improving relationships, changing situations and gaining insight and meaning about your life.

However, distance therapy offers a different experience to face-to-face therapy. While there are many advantages to this form of therapy, text-based therapy (instant messaging and email-based) in particular do lack some of the benefits of face-to-face interactions, including visual benefits (for example seeing a facial expression or showing one) and hearing a tone of voice in responses.

## **Availability of Sessions**

Please note that my online therapy service is available to UK-based residents only.

## **Beginning Therapy, Assessment, Agreement for the Work, and Referrals**

At the beginning of your therapy, during the first few sessions, and also from time to time as an ongoing process, it is important to develop, and review a shared understanding of your difficulties and the ways in which therapy can help.

Initially this can be achieved by exploring what has brought you to therapy and the ways in which you feel therapy can help. I'll make an assessment of the issues as I see them and discuss them with you. If I don't feel that I am the right therapist for you, I will share that with you too and we can discuss any other forms of help and/or therapists who might be more helpful.

As the therapy progresses, it will be important to discuss changes as they happen. Some of these may be expected or hoped for (feeling better, for example). Others may come as a surprise. We'll pay attention to these changes and consider any additional or different needs you may have for the therapy on an ongoing basis.

## **Dual Relationships**

The term "Dual Relationships" in psychotherapy refers to the idea that you and I may have some other kind of relationship with each other, in addition to the one we share with me as "therapist" and you as "client".

While not all dual relationships are unethical or avoidable in therapy, putting arrangements in place to avoid them is preferable. The reason for this is that they can have a detrimental effect on the therapy, by setting up conflicts of interests, exploitative

relationships and by blurring boundaries in the therapeutic relationship. With this in mind, while I do have professional profiles on social media, I will not respond to you if our paths cross on these websites. I explain more fully elsewhere in another document the professional stance I have adopted for engaging with social media in cyberspace. If you have any questions or concerns about my policy on this please do not hesitate to ask.

## **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

All conversations between us (whether by email or any form of live chat) will remain confidential, except for the following narrow set of circumstances:

- If you tell me about anything which indicates a risk of harm to you.
- If you tell me anything about somebody else which indicates a risk of harm to somebody else.
- I receive regular supervision of my work to ensure that you are getting the best standard of care and I am practicing ethically. At my meetings with my supervisor I may discuss elements of our work together. You will not be identified personally at these meetings but small sections of our conversations may be discussed with my supervisor.

If I become aware of any risk of harm to you or someone else, even then I would not break confidentiality with you without discussing my concerns with you first.

All of the written (email) conversations we have together, and live chat conversations are confidential and secure (see the “Ensuring Confidentiality When Working Online” section below). I will not reveal them to anyone without your written permission, except where disclosure is required by law. In very rare circumstances, for example if a crime had been committed, I could be required by court order to disclose information from our therapy sessions together.

I will keep brief notes about our sessions together. These are fully encrypted and secure. There is a legal requirement in the UK that I keep your information secure and I am registered as a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which comes into effect in May 2018. Both of these Acts ensure that I adhere to adequate standards for safeguarding your information. In accordance with the Data Protection Acts, I will keep identifiable information about sessions with you for a period of six years. However, these records, as stated previously will be fully encrypted and secure.

## **Ensuring Confidentiality When Working Online**

I use two secure platforms for online therapy sessions: Zoom and VSee. Which one is best for your therapy can be discussed during the conversations we have about getting started with online therapy. Both Zoom and VSee work much like Skype, which you may be familiar with, but offer more security.

## **Fees and Cancellation Policy**

Please see my fees page for therapeutic services here. Each session lasts for 50 minutes.

Payment is in advance of the session, by PayPal, Bank Transfer or you may also use my online booking system at <https://welldoing.org/counsellors/elizabeth-jeffries-transactional-analysis-psychotherapist-online>

If something happens and you are unable to keep the next session that you have booked, please let me know as soon as possible. As any booking you have made becomes your time, I do charge the full fee for the booked time.

The only exceptions for this are as follows:

- You have given me a full 48 hours' notice of cancellation.
- In the case of online synchronous chat, or video conference, where there has been disruption or disconnection due to technological breakdown, and reconnection has not been possible within 10 minutes. In these circumstances, please contact me to arrange a new session time.

## **Emergencies**

Online therapy is not suitable in cases of emergency, where you need urgent attention and cannot wait for a scheduled online therapy session. In such cases please either contact The Samaritans or Befrienders Worldwide.