



Inner Peace Counseling Services

Individual, Couples and Family Therapy

Edward J. Thompson LMFT
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

What You Should Know about Confidentiality in Therapy

Confidentiality involves laws and professional ethics that recognize and support the privacy of what a therapist and a client talk about. Our relationship is confidential and I will treat what you tell me with great care. However there are some limits to confidentiality and I cannot promise that everything you tell me will *never* be revealed to someone else. Confidentiality is an important issue, so please read these pages carefully and keep this copy. At our next meeting, we can discuss any questions you might have.

Limits to confidentiality:

1. When you or other persons are in physical danger, the law requires me to tell others about it. Specifically:
 - a. If I come to believe that you are threatening serious harm to another person, I am required to try to protect that person and may have to tell the person and the police.
 - b. If you seriously threaten or act in a way that is very likely to harm yourself, I may have to seek involvement from others who can help protect you.
 - c. If I have a reasonable suspicion of child, elder/disabled adult abuse, I must file a report with a state agency.

In any of these situations, I would reveal only the information that is pertinent to the situation.

2. In general, if you become involved in a court case or proceeding, you can prevent me from testifying in court about what you have told me. This is called “privilege,” and it is your choice to prevent me from testifying or to allow me to do so. However, there are some situations where a judge or court may require me to testify, including, but not limited to:
 - a. In child custody or adoption proceedings, where your fitness as a parent is questioned or in doubt.
 - b. In cases where your emotional or mental condition is important information for a court’s decision.
 - c. In a civil commitment hearing to decide if you will be admitted to or continued in a psychiatric hospital.
 - d. When you are seeing me for court-ordered evaluations or treatment.
3. There are a few other things you must know about confidentiality and your treatment:
 - a. I may sometimes consult (talk) with another professional about your treatment, however I will not disclose any identifying information. Also, when I am out of town or unavailable, another therapist will be available to help my clients. I must give him or her some information about my clients.
 - b. I am required to keep records of the professional services I provide. These records are stored in a secure location. Because these records contain information that can be misunderstood by someone who is not a mental health professional, it is my general policy that clients may not review them. However I will provide, at your request, a treatment summary unless I believe that to do so would be emotionally damaging. If that is the case, I will be happy to send the summary to another mental health professional who is working with you.
4. Here is what you need to know about confidentiality in regard to money matters:
 - a. If your account with me is unpaid and we have not arranged a payment plan, I can use legal means to obtain reimbursement. The only information I will give to the court, a collection agency, or a lawyer will be your name and address, the dates we met for professional services, and the amount due to me.
5. Couples, children and families create some special confidentiality questions.
 - a. When I treat children under the age of 18, most of the details in things they tell me will be treated as confidential. However, parents or guardians do have the right to general information, including how therapy is going and if there are any safety concerns.

- b. In cases where I treat several members of a family I may have different duties toward different family members. At the start of our treatment, we must be clear about any limits on confidentiality that may exist.
- c. If you tell me something in the course of couples or family therapy your spouse does not know, and not knowing could harm him or her, I cannot promise to keep it confidential. I will work with you to decide on the best long-term way to handle situations like this.
- d. If you and your spouse have a custody dispute, or a court custody hearing is coming up, I will need to know about it. My professional ethics prevent me from doing both therapy and custody evaluations.
- e. If you are seeing me for marriage counseling, you must agree at the start of treatment that if you eventually decide to divorce, you will not request my testimony for either side.
- f. At the start of family treatment, we must also specify which members of the family must sign a release form for the common record I create in the therapy or therapies.

Again, I encourage you to ask questions and discuss concerns about confidentiality at any time.

The signatures here show that we each have read, discussed, understand, and agree to abide by the points presented above.

Signature of client (or person acting for client)

Date

Printed name

Signature of therapist

Date