



Inner Peace Counseling Services

Individual, Couples and Family Therapy

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Limits of the Therapy Relationship: What Clients Should Know

The nature of psychotherapy requires our relationship to be different from most relationships. It may differ in how long it lasts, in the topics we discuss, or in the goals of our relationship. It must also be limited to the relationship of therapist and client *only*. If we were to interact in any other ways, we would then have a “dual relationship,” which would be unethical and may not be legal.

Dual relationships can set up conflicts between the therapist’s interests and the client’s interests. In order to offer all my clients the best care, my judgment needs to be unselfish and professional, and dual relationships like the following are improper:

- I cannot be your supervisor, teacher, or evaluator.
- I cannot have any other kind of business relationship with you besides the therapy itself. For example, I cannot employ you, lend to or borrow from you, or trade or barter your services (things like tutoring, repairing, child care, etc.) or goods for therapy.
- I cannot give legal, medical, financial, or any other type of advice outside my scope of practice.
- I cannot have any kind of romantic or sexual relationship with a former or current client, or any other people close to a client.

There are important differences between therapy and friendship. As your therapist, I cannot be your friend. Friends may see you only from their personal viewpoints and experiences. Friends may want to find quick and easy solutions to your problems so that they can feel helpful. These short-term solutions may not be in your long-term best interest. Friends do not usually follow up on their advice to see whether it was useful. They may *need* to have you do what they advise. A therapist offers you choices and helps you choose what is best for you. A therapist helps you learn how to solve problems better and make better decisions. A therapist’s responses to your situation are based on tested theories and methods of change. You should also know that therapists are required to keep the identity of their clients confidential. Therefore, I may ignore you when we meet in a public place, and I must decline to attend your social gatherings if you

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invite me. Lastly, when our therapy is completed, I will not be able to be a friend to you like your other friends.

In sum, my duty as therapist is to care for you and my other clients, but *only* in the professional role of therapist. Please note any questions or concerns on the back of this page so we can discuss them.