

New Client Information

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How I work

I believe that stalled human emotional growth and development re-awakens within an environment of deep understanding and acceptance. When people feel they are safe and truly known they can again begin to take the risks and experience the vitality that growth entails. It is my aim to create this environment within my practice.

How therapy begins

When we begin, I will ask you about what brings you to therapy and other questions about your life, such as health history, early family experiences and prior therapy. This allows me to develop an understanding of you and what may be making things difficult. With your permission, I will probably take notes during these early sessions. This period is called the ASSESSMENT.

I use the information gathered during the assessment to develop and recommend a TREATMENT PLAN, which reflects our mutually agreed upon goals and methods for achieving them. We may consider other available resources to achieve these goals, such as couples or family therapy, or medication.

Benefits and Risks of Therapy

There are some risks as well as many benefits to therapy. Making changes in how you think about things, see yourself in the world and respond to situations can occasionally be disruptive to your relationships or other aspects of your life. Sometimes people report a temporary increase in symptoms and discomfort when they begin therapy. Sometimes people recall unpleasant memories that bother or confuse them. These risks can generally be managed within the context of the therapy relationship. If you experience an increase in symptoms or other distress, please let me know so that we can understand what is going on and modify the approach, if necessary.

My Background

I am a licensed independent clinical social worker. My clinical orientation is psychoanalytic psychotherapy. This approach emphasizes the influence of factors that are outside a person's daily awareness, like unconscious thoughts or early experiences, as well as the relationship between the client and therapist. My work with clients is also informed by attachment theory, object relations and recent advances in neuroscience. In a precise and focused way, I help clients identify the obstacles and internal processes that have prevented them from having the lives they want and together we find ways to change or remove these things.

I have a Master's Degree in Social Work from Saint Catherine's University and University of Saint Thomas School of Social Work. I have also graduated as a psychoanalyst from the Minnesota Psychoanalytic Institute, which is a member of the American Psychoanalytic Association. In addition to my mental health background, I have a personal history as a private practice attorney and corporate legal executive. This experience informs my work with clients facing difficult professional challenges or seeking support in navigating demanding or highly stressful work environments.

Fee, Payment and Billing

My fee is \$160 per 45-minute session. I typically will provide you with a statement of your fees on a monthly basis and request full payment, including any co-payment or deductible amount, within two weeks of the statement. You may also pay your copays on a weekly basis, if you wish. You are responsible for the payment of your fee.

If you have a concern about my fee, making a payment, the billing process or any other related matter, please bring it to my attention so we can find a solution.

Health Insurance

Many health insurance plans will help you pay for therapy. Please read about your plan's coverage for "outpatient psychotherapy," or call your employer's benefits department to find out what your financial responsibilities will be regarding deductibles, co-pays, etc.

Scheduling

Meetings will be scheduled at regular intervals, usually once or twice a week. I will use my best efforts to let you know in advance when I will be away from my office and we will not be able to meet. Please give me a minimum of 48 hours' notice if you need to change your appointment.

Teletherapy

Under certain circumstances, I may suggest that we meet via secure, video link. I will consider with you how to ensure your privacy and the confidentiality of our communications. Teletherapy has unique risks and benefits and may not be appropriate in all circumstances. You will need to participate in creating an appropriate space for teletherapy sessions.

Cancellations/Missed Appointments

Your appointment time is reserved for you. If you give less than 48 hours' notice you will be charged a cancellation fee of \$80. Insurance will not cover charges for missed or cancelled sessions.

When Therapy Ends

Therapy can end for many reasons; however, when therapy ends it is important to have at least one final session following a decision to end therapy. As part of my duty of care, I may make a follow-up call up to three months after the ending of therapy to check on your progress and well-being.

Contacting me

I am in the office most weekdays during normal business hours. I do not take phone calls when I am with a client. If you need to reach me, you can leave a message on my confidential, office voicemail (612-824-0802) and I will return your call as soon as I am able. Generally, I will return messages on the same day. My email address is elizabeth@wittenbergconsult.com. Please use email only for making or changing appointments or similar logistical matters. If you email me or text me via my cell phone number, the confidentiality of the communication cannot be ensured.

If you have an emergency, and cannot reach me or wait for a return call, you or a family member should go to your hospital emergency room, or call 911.

Confidentiality and Privacy of Your Information

Maintaining your privacy is very important. Over the course of our work together, I will create a record of your care. It will contain items such as your informed consent for therapy, the goals for our work, your diagnosis and progress notes.

You can review your own records in my files at any time. You also have the right to object to any information you perceive as inaccurate or incomplete. I am not able to give you access to records created by anyone else and sent to me, for example, records from a previous therapist. In some exceptional circumstances, you may not have access to your records. This might happen if I think the information in your record would be harmful to you or someone else. When you are no longer a client, I will keep your records for 12 years. Thereafter, they may be destroyed.

Exceptions to confidentiality

In all but a few rare situations, your right to privacy is protected by state law and by the rules of my profession. If I determine that it is necessary to make use of one of the exceptions to your right to privacy I will try to discuss with you any disclosure I must make beforehand. Cases in which confidentiality is *not* protected include:

- If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or another person, the law requires me to try to protect you or that other person.
- If I believe a child or vulnerable adult has been or will be abused or neglected, I am legally required to report this to the authorities.
- If you are involved in any legal proceedings, I may be ordered to produce the records in court.

No one else may have access to your records without your written permission. If your records need to be seen by another professional or anyone else, I will discuss it with you. If you agree to share these records, you will need to sign a time-limited consent form that states what information is to be shared, with whom, and for what purposes.

Our Agreement

I have read the information presented here. I have discussed provisions I did not understand, and have had any questions fully answered. I agree to these provisions.

Signature of client

Printed name and date

I have met with this client, and have responded to any questions regarding the information provided above. I have given the client a copy of this agreement.

Elizabeth Wittenberg, JD, LICSW

Date

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to work with you.