

## Deborah Mertlich, LCSW

4550 SW Kruse Way, Suite 225 ~ Lake Oswego, OR 97035 ~ P: (971) 252-1545 ~ F: (503) 427-7856

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### **Policies & Procedures:**

Appointments: Appointments will be scheduled in advance at a time that is convenient to you. Cancellation of scheduled appointments should be avoided. If you must cancel, you will not be charged for the appointment if you notify the office 24 hours in advance of the scheduled appointment. If you need to cancel a Monday appointment please call by Friday morning. Cancellations can be done online, by email or phoned into the office at any time by calling (971) 252-1545. Missed appointments are not reimbursable by insurance companies. First late cancellations and no shows will be charged at a rate of \$60. Any subsequent late cancellations or no shows will be charged at my full fee.

Electronic media: In order to be compliant with the HIPAA HITECH law I am using encrypted email through a secured site. This is to protect your electronic Personal Health Information (ePHI). You will need to register for the site and then enter in my secure email address. My billing specialist is also using the secured site to protect your information. I do not provide therapy via email, so please only use email for brief questions, updates, and some scheduling questions. Emails are not intended for urgent matters. If you are seeking urgent care, please call 911 or go to your closest hospital emergency department.

Policy for payment: I ask that you pay co-pay or full fee for your therapy at the time of service. If you want to use insurance please verify your benefits before your first session. My billing specialist will also contact the insurance company to verify benefits. I am on several insurance panels, but that does not guarantee benefits. I accept credit, debit, cash and checks.

Under certain circumstances, I may carry a limited balance on your account for a short time provided we both agree on a payment plan in advance. A check that is returned for insufficient funds, will be subject to a \$25 service charge in addition to the fee for the session. Overdue bills will be charged a percentage if not paid within 60 days. Unpaid fees will be processed legally, this may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court which will require me to disclose otherwise confidential information. In most collection situations, the only information a therapist will release regarding a client's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due. If such legal action is necessary, any costs will be included in the claim.

Benefits & Risks: There are some risks as well as many benefits to therapy. You should think about the benefits and risks when making any treatment decisions. There is a risk of an increase in conflict for a while as we are working through challenging situations. It is also possible that some people may feel some uncomfortable feelings, for a time, such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, or other negative feelings. Most of these risks are to be expected when people are making important changes in their lives.

While you consider these risks, you should know that there are many benefits to therapy. There is a lot of research that shows that therapy can help individuals and families improve their relationships. Others may be able to handle difficult situations with more confidence and hope. During these sessions individuals are given the opportunity to discuss challenges they are facing and find ways to overcome them. All in all there are many things that can be accomplished in therapy.

Therapy Consultations: In order for me to give you the best possible services I believe I must use the resources around me and I often find it valuable to consult with other professionals about how to best serve you and your family. When consulting with other professionals about your treatment I will not use your name or any identifying information so your identity will be kept confidential. In order to get any formal records I would have you sign a written authorization.

## **Therapist:**

Deborah Mertlich, MSW, LCSW: I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the states of Oregon and Washington. I received my Masters degree in Social Work from Washington University School of Social Work in St. Louis, Missouri. I specialize in health care issues, anxiety and family therapy. I am trained in Behavioral Family Systems Therapy (BFST), Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP), Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), and Gestalt Therapy.

Office Hours: Monday – Saturday. I am out of the office on Thursday. I will do in-home sessions as needed.

Telephone calls & Emergencies: My answering machine (971) 252-1545 enables you to call the office at any time, day or night, and leave a message for a return call. I will check my phone messages at least once a day and I will return calls as soon as possible. If you have an emergency after hours or over the weekend and cannot reach me, you should call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room authorized by your insurance company. Returned calls should be brief in order not to be charged for a phone consult. Phone consults are not usually covered by insurance.

Therapy services offered: I offer different services in order for people to design a therapy program that works for you and/or your family. Please ask about in-home rates. Rates for office based services are listed below:

- Diagnostic Interview (generally the first session) = \$180 per 60 minute session
- Individual = \$110 per 45 minute session; \$70 = 25 minute session
- Family therapy = \$130 per 45 minute session
- Group therapy = \$65 per 60 minute session
- Phone consult = \$110 per 45 minute, \$70 = 25 minute (phone consults are not usually covered by insurance)
- In-home or In vivo = ask about rates (Pre-authorization is required by most insurance)
- School meetings (504 or IEP) = ask about rates

My fee for expert witness testimony in court cases is \$180 per 60 minutes away from the office. All fees for such legal case-associated work must be paid by the law office requesting the service or testimony. A 50 percent retainer is required before professionals services will be rendered.

My Educational Training: How the person interacts with his/her environment is important to incorporate into therapy. By looking at the person in their environment a therapist is able to see the individual and family as being a part of several different systems. A system is anything the individual is connected to. For example, the family, school community, and the medical community, can all be systems of one person. Looking at the individual's environment takes into account both the direct and indirect effects of these various systems and allows the therapist to intervene in different ways depending on the needs of the individual and/or family.

My Code of Ethics: As a clinical social worker I am bound by the National Association of Social workers (NASW) code of ethics and the state licensing boards of Oregon and Washington.

If you are not satisfied with any area of our work, please raise your concerns with me at once. Our work together will be slower and harder if any concerns you have with me are not resolved. If you feel that I have treated you unfairly please let me know.

In my practice as a therapist, I do not discriminate against clients because of any of these factors: age, sex, marital/family status, race, color, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, place of residence, veteran status, physical disability, health status, sexual orientation, or criminal record unrelated to present dangerousness. This is my personal commitment, as well as being required by federal, state, and local laws. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please bring this matter to my attention immediately.

Thank you for your interest in working with me. I look forward to meeting with you.

Deborah Mertlich, MSW, LCSW