

East Bay Family Therapy
Marc Komori Stager, Psy.D.

Informed Consent

Welcome

Welcome. My name is Marc D. Komori Stager, and East Bay Family Therapy is my private practice.

Purpose of this document

This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please feel free to ask questions about me, about therapy and this document. I've tried to make this article easy to read, which made it longer, but hopefully easier to understand. When you sign it, it will represent an agreement between us.

Therapy with me

It is hard to describe therapy in general terms, and its shape will depend on how we fit together and the issues you bring up. I will use various methods and ways of talking to work with you on the issues you hope to address. I might even, from time to time, try to trick you into doing better. On your part, therapy will require your active involvement and effort.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, shame, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience or that therapy will work.

Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. You are free to quit therapy at any time. I can give you referrals to other professionals if you would like. Therapy is supposed to be helpful; if I do or say anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, please tell me about it.

Meetings

I generally schedule one 50-minute session a week, although this can vary in length or frequency depending on need. Once we schedule a session, I will expect you to pay for it unless you give me 24 hours advanced notice that you will be unable to attend. The 24 hours is a compromise between changes in your schedule and my ability to give your appointment time to another person.

Communication

I can be reached at my cell phone number (925) 325-5022. I am often unable to answer the phone as I am with other clients. However, I do check my messages frequently during the week, and occasionally during the weekend. I try to return messages during business hours. I do not provide 24 hour emergency coverage. Please let me know the numbers where I can reach you and if you do not want me to leave a message at any of those numbers.

There are several ways to communicate, and they all offer varying degrees of confidentiality. I use a cell phone for regular communication. You may communicate with me by phone, text and email, though text and email are not generally considered a private way to communicate. You consent that I may communicate in the medium you use and that you consent to any breaches of confidentiality by these means. You agree that I can send statements by email.

Fees

My hourly fee is \$175 (\$300 for Sundays), which I charge for the standard 50-minute session and charge on a prorated basis for additional services, such as longer sessions, report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other service you may request of me. I ask that you pay for your sessions as they occur. My billing software and best accounting practices allows for only one person's name on the statement. When there is more than one person paying for my services, you agree that you are also responsible for paying the bill even if you are not the named person.

If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for my professional time away from the office even if I am called to testify by another party. Because

of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge \$350 per hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding. I ask that you pay for my participation in legal proceedings before they occur.

Confidentiality and its limits

In general, issues discussed in therapy are held in confidence, which means that I will not disclose what you say to other people without your written permission. However, there is no absolute confidentiality. I must breach confidentiality to protect you or others from harm. Specifically, I must break confidentiality when I learn or suspect that child, elder or dependent adult is being abused or neglected, and when a client communicates a serious threat of physical violence against a reasonable identifiable victim or victims including when a family member tells me that you might hurt someone else. I may also break confidentiality if I suspect that a client is a danger to him or herself, a danger to others or gravely disabled. I will ultimately comply when a court orders me to release records or testify though I will first endeavor to refuse to testify. In the case of minors, I will need releases from both parents to testify in court. Further, no office is absolutely soundproof; loud voices may be heard in the other rooms.

Confidentiality does not apply in criminal or delinquency proceedings, court-appointed custody evaluations, client-initiated court cases, Board of Psychology inquiries, supervision, consultation, grave disability, or court order. Under the US Patriot Act, I may be forced to break confidentiality and be forbidden to tell you about it.

If I die or become incapacitated you consent to having another mental health professional of my choosing take possession of your file and to contact you.

In couple and family therapy, I will not necessarily hold communication confidential between me and the various other people included in the therapy, even if we meet separately. This therapy is unique in that it considers the couple or the family as the entity in therapy, not the individuals. If I am meeting with your minor child, I will need to balance your interest in the content and process of therapy with the need for your child to trust what is said will be confidential. In general, I will report on your child's progress while limiting the amount of specific confidential information I give you.

Insurance

I take only a few insurance plans. While some clients who have insurance would like to use it, there are, from my perspective, several problems with it. The people who know about what goes on in therapy is much broader, as I must report to the insurance company what occurs in therapy. Insurance companies place many constraints on therapy, such as the number of sessions allowed, mandated referrals to a psychiatrist for medication, the type of techniques that can be used, and the need for a psychiatric diagnosis. Insurance companies will usually only pay for individual medical problems and not for couples or family problems. It is possible that other companies, such as life or disability insurance companies, might have access to your information. An insurance reviewer will have tremendous power over the therapy you receive, a position I do not believe is helpful or warranted.

I will fill out paper work as an out-of-network provider; however several of the above worries about insurance still apply. If they are a concern for you, please discuss them with me before turning in their paperwork. I ask that you pay me directly at the time of service and for your insurance company to directly reimburse you. If, for any reason, your insurance company refuses payment, you are still responsible for paying for your therapy. No insurance company pays for missed sessions, and thus you agree to pay the full rate for missed sessions.

Court

Some clients, couples or families get involved in court proceedings, for example, divorce. The oppositional nature of legal proceedings is antithetical to my approach to therapy and limits my ability to be therapeutic during trying times in your life. As such, you agree not to bring me or our therapy work into your private legal proceedings. I will ultimately comply when a court orders me to release records or testify though I will first endeavor to refuse to testify. In the case of minors, I will need releases from both parents to testify in court. If court is unavoidable, the court fee is as stated above.

Office

I work with a group of independently practicing mental health professionals who share the same building suite. While the members share office space, certain expenses and administrative functions, I want you to know that I am completely independent in providing you with clinical services and I alone am fully responsible for those services. My professional records are separately maintained and no member of the group can have access to them without your specific, written permission.

By signing below you agree, or you agree on the behalf of you minor child, to this document, Informed Consent.

Printed Name (and Name of Minor, if applicable)

Signature

Date