

## OFFICE POLICIES & GENERAL INFORMATION AGREEMENT FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES

Elizabeth Dunckel, M.A.  
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist #52727

*This practice is committed to respecting each person's unique therapeutic experience and to working in partnership with every client towards personal growth and satisfying interpersonal relationships.*

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** *All information disclosed within sessions and the written records pertaining to those sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission, except where disclosure is required by law.*

**When Disclosure Is Required By Law:** *Some of the circumstances where disclosure is required by the law are: where there is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent or elder abuse or neglect; where a client presents a danger to self, to others, to property, or is gravely disabled.*

**When Disclosure May Be Required:** *Disclosure may be required pursuant to a legal proceeding. If you place your mental status at issue in litigation initiated by you, the defendant may have the right to obtain the psychotherapy records and/or testimony by Elizabeth Dunckel. In couple and family therapy, or when different family members are seen individually, confidentiality and privilege do not apply between the couple or among family members. Elizabeth Dunckel will use her clinical judgment when revealing such information. Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT will not release records to any outside party unless she is authorized to do so by all adult family members who were part of the treatment.*

**Litigation Limitation:** *Due to the nature of the therapeutic process and the fact that it often involves making a full disclosure with regard to many matters which may be of a confidential nature, it is agreed that should there be legal proceedings (such as, but not limited to divorce and custody disputes, injuries, lawsuits, etc.), **neither you nor your attorney's, nor anyone else acting on your behalf will call on Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT to testify in court or at any other proceeding, nor will a disclosure of the psychotherapy records be requested.** No reports will be provided during or after the course of co-parenting counseling to either clients or their attorneys. **Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT does not make recommendations regarding custody or visitation.***

**Emergencies:** *If there is an emergency during our work together, or in the future after termination where Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT becomes concerned about your personal safety, the possibility of you injuring someone else, or about you receiving proper psychiatric care, she will do whatever she can within the limits of the law, to prevent you from injuring yourself or others and to ensure that you receive the proper medical care.*

**Health Insurance & confidentiality of records:** *Disclosure of confidential information may be required by your health insurance carrier or HMO/PPO/MCO/EAP in order to process*

*the claims. If you instruct Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT, only the minimum necessary information will be communicated to the carrier. **Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT is not contracted with any insurance provider and is an out-of-network provider, meaning you pay her and then you submit to your insurance carrier for their reimbursement, if they approve. You must check on this yourself as Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT is not responsible for business between you and your insurance company.***

**Confidentiality of E-Mail communication:** *It is very important to be aware that e-mail and cell phone communication can be relatively easily accessed by unauthorized people and hence can compromise the privacy and confidentiality of such communication. E-mails, in particular are vulnerable to such unauthorized access due to the fact that servers have unlimited and direct access to all e-mails that go through them. Faxes can easily be sent erroneously to the wrong address. Please notify Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT if you decide to avoid or limit in any way the use of any or all of the above mentioned communication devices. **Please do NOT use e-mail or faxes for emergencies. Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT does not do therapy nor answers therapy questions by email or text.***

**Consultation:** *Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT often consults with other professionals regarding her clients and the best course of treatment. The client's identity remains protected, and confidentiality is fully maintained.*

**TELEPHONE & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:** *If you need to contact Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT between sessions, please leave a message on the confidential voice mail (650) 722-4334 and your call will be returned as soon as possible. Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT checks her messages daily, unless she is out of town. **IF YOU HAVE A PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCY GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM OR CALL 9-1-1 FOR HELP.***

**PAYMENTS:** *Clients are expected to pay the agreed upon fee **Per 50 minute session** at the beginning of each session unless other arrangements have been made. **Telephone conversation past ten minutes, site visits, report writing and reading, consultation with other professionals, release of information, reading records, longer sessions, travel time, etc. will be charged, unless indicated and agreed otherwise.***

*Please notify Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT if any problem arises during the course of therapy regarding your ability to make timely payments.*

**THE PROCESS OF THERAPY/EVALUATION:** *Participation in therapy can result in a number of benefits to you, including improving interpersonal relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to seek therapy. Working toward these benefits; however, requires effort on your part. Psychotherapy requires your very active involvement, honesty, and openness in order to change your thoughts, feelings and/or behavior. Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT will ask for your feedback and views on your therapy, its progress and other aspects of the therapy and will expect you to respond openly and honestly. Sometimes more than one approach can be helpful in dealing with a certain situation.*

*During evaluation or therapy, remembering or talking about unpleasant events, feelings, or thoughts can result in you experiencing considerable discomfort or strong feelings of anger, sadness, worry, fear, etc. or experiencing anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc. Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT may challenge some of your assumptions or perceptions or propose different ways of looking at, thinking about, or handling situations which can cause you to feel very upset, angry, depressed, challenged or disappointed. Attempting to resolve issues that brought you to therapy in the first place, such as personal or interpersonal relationships may result in changes that were not originally intended.*

Psychotherapy may result in decisions about changing behaviors, employment, substance use, school, housing or relationships. Sometimes a decision that is positive for one family member is viewed quite negatively by another family member.

*Change will sometimes be easy and swift, but more often it will be slow and even frustrating.*

***There is no guarantee that psychotherapy will yield positive or intended results.*** During the course of therapy, Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT is likely to draw on various psychological approaches according, in part, to the problem that is being treated and her assessment of what will best benefit you. These approaches include behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, existential, system/family, developmental (adult, child, family), or psycho-educational. ***Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT uses a variety of interventions deemed appropriate for her field.***

**Discussion of Treatment Plan:** Within a reasonable period of time after the initiation of treatment, Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT will discuss with you her working understanding of the problem, treatment plan, therapeutic objectives and her view of the possible outcomes of treatment. If you have any unanswered questions about any of the procedures used in the course of your therapy, their possible risks, Elizabeth Dunckel's expertise in employing them, or about the treatment plan, please ask and you will be answered fully. You also have the right to ask about other treatments for your condition and their risks and benefits. If you could benefit from any treatment that Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT does not provide, she has an ethical obligation to assist you in obtaining those treatments.

**Termination:** As set forth above, after the first couple of meetings, Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT will assess if she can be of benefit to you. Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT does not accept clients who, in her opinion, she cannot help. In such a case, she will give you a number of referrals that you can contact. If at any point during psychotherapy Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT assesses that she is not effective in helping you reach the therapeutic goals, she is obligated to discuss it with you and, if appropriate, to terminate treatment. In such a case, she would give you a number of referrals that may be of help to you. If you request it and authorize it in writing, Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT will talk to the psychotherapist of your choice in order to help with the transition. If at any time you want another professional's opinion or wish to consult with another therapist, Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT will assist you in finding someone qualified, and if she has your written consent, she will provide her or him with the essential information needed. You have the right to terminate therapy at any time. A final termination session is usually scheduled. If you choose to do so, Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT will offer to provide you with names of other qualified professionals whose services you might prefer.

**Dual Relationships:** Therapy never involves sexual or any other dual relationship that impairs Elizabeth Dunckel's, objectivity, clinical judgment and therapeutic effectiveness or can be exploitative in nature. Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT will assess carefully before entering into non-sexual and non-exploitative dual relationships with clients, discusses with her clients the potential benefits and difficulties that may be involved in relationships and will discontinue the dual relationship if she finds it interfering with the effectiveness of the therapeutic process.

**Elizabeth Dunckel, MA, MFT does not attend social events, personal events, or receive gifts from clients.** This assures a clear boundary on the nature of the therapeutic relationship she shares in session with her clients. She will not acknowledge a relationship with you in public.

**CANCELLATION:** Since scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, a minimum of a full-24 hours (1 day) notice is required for re-scheduling or

