

INTEGRITY



INTEGRITY PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, P.C.

INFORMATION FOR THERAPY CLIENTS

Welcome to Integrity Psychological Services! We appreciate your giving us the opportunity to work with you (or your child). We believe that when clients understand the therapeutic process and feel comfortable with their therapist, they are more likely to benefit from treatment and to grow in meaningful ways. As a result, we have written this document in order to increase your understanding and answer questions that clients often ask about psychological treatment.

PLEASE NOTE: *It is important that you read all of the information below. Please mark any portion that you do not understand or about which you have questions. During your initial session, your therapist will discuss this information with you and answer any questions you may have. You and your therapist will then sign the “Informed Consent to Treatment” document to acknowledge that you have reviewed and understood all of the issues and points raised.*

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INFORMATION ABOUT THERAPY AT INTEGRITY

The decision about whether or not to enter into therapy can be a challenging one, and if you've never been to see a mental health professional before, you may not know what to expect. You may feel understandably nervous at the thought of sharing specific details about your situation, especially if you are struggling with difficult thoughts and feelings or an issue that feels particularly confusing or complicated. Parents may feel uncertain about whether therapy is the right decision for their child; couples may worry about the effect couples therapy may have on their relationship. As with any significant decision, it is important to understand the benefits and the risks of therapy so that you can make informed choices about your treatment.

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF THERAPY

Psychology is a science as well as a practice, and hundreds of scientific experiments and studies have shown that therapy has many significant benefits. Some of these benefits include:

- Opportunities to talk through difficult issues and resolve internal conflicts in a supportive, nonjudgmental, and safe environment.
- Improved interpersonal and communication skills and deeper, more meaningful relationships.
- Clarification and expansion of your personal goals and values as an individual, in close relationships, in work or schooling, and in life in general.
- The ability to develop and use effective coping skills to better manage all types of stress, giving you more time and energy to fully participate in and enjoy life.
- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem from seeing the ways in which you have grown and developed over time in treatment.

Like any kind of treatment, therapy also has some risks that should be considered when making treatment decisions. These risks can include:

- Difficult feelings, such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, etc.
- Unpleasant memories or feelings, both inside and outside the session.
- Negative or inaccurate judgments of you by some people due to the societal stigma associated with mental illness.
- A temporary worsening of your issues or relationships at the beginning of treatment due to facing painful feelings or situations that you have been avoiding.
- Lack of benefit from therapy in the way you had hoped or a need for additional services to meet your goals.



ABOUT US

Integrity Psychological Services is a group psychology practice owned by two licensed clinical psychologists, Dr. Heidi McKenzie and Dr. Jill Fischer. Together, we have over 30 years of experience providing effective, solution-focused services to individuals, couples, families, and organizations. We founded Integrity because we shared a common vision of providing psychological services that emphasize people's strengths rather than their limitations. We achieve this by combining the "science" of psychology – evidence-based techniques derived from scientific research – with the "art" of psychology – a genuine respect and ability to connect with the clients whose lives we touch.

Please visit our website at www.integritypsych.com, a free, comprehensive resource for all current and potential clients and their families. The site contains detailed information regarding all of the specific services we provide as well as our backgrounds, qualifications, and areas of expertise. You can also explore the links, articles, and self-assessment tools that we have included on the site to cover a wide variety of topics related to personal growth and development.

HOW WE WORK

At Integrity Psychological Services, we believe that our clients already have within them the strengths and resources they need to thrive. Sometimes, they may face obstacles that make it difficult to fully tap into their resources. By learning how to overcome these obstacles, they can access their strengths, allowing you to feel more satisfied with life, find more meaning and fulfillment, and experience deeper connections to others.

We chose the word "integrity" to represent our practice because it represents what we believe to be the ultimate goal of psychological treatment. Integrity can be defined as "the state of being sound or whole." While many therapists focus solely on a client's problems, with the goal of "fixing" or changing them, we view our clients' struggles in the broader context of their lives. We see our role as helping them to be more fully and completely who they truly are.

Integrity can also be defined as "acting in accordance with one's values and principles." We work to help our clients uncover their inner wisdom, clarify and solidify what's important to them, and become the best possible version of themselves that they can be.

YOUR TREATMENT PLAN

At Integrity Psychological Services, we use a collaborative approach in which the client is always in the driver's seat. We'll help you clarify what you'd like to achieve, and we'll use our expertise and skill to guide you. During the first session, we will ask some questions in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the current situation as well as anything from the past that may be affecting things now.

At the end of the first session, we will let you know specifically how we think we can help and how often or how long we think you (or your child) should be seen in order to achieve your goals. We will also review any financial issues related to using your health insurance or other payment options. We



will end up with a customized, realistic, and achievable treatment plan that we will work hard to follow. As we move forward with the plan, we will regularly look at our progress and make any adjustments that may be needed.

Most of our clients see us once a week for 3 to 4 months, at which time we usually meet less often until therapy gradually comes to an end. The frequency of sessions and length of treatment can vary widely, however, depending on the situation, goals, availability, and preferences. Stopping therapy should not be done casually, although you or your therapist may decide to do so if it is in your (or your child's) best interest at that time. If you wish to stop therapy, we strongly recommend meeting for at least one more session to review the therapy process, as this can be an extremely valuable experience.

Psychotherapy is not like visiting a medical doctor. It requires active participation and effort in order to adjust thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in a way that allows brings out the best in each client. An important part of this process is practicing new skills at home that have been learned in session. This may include completing worksheets, keeping records, or reading to deepen learning. While participation is a vital part of treatment, we also understand that our clients have many other important priorities in their lives that demand their time and energy. If you (or your child) have difficulty completing your "homework" for any reason, please discuss it with us so that we can help you gain needed skills in a way that feels more realistic. Identifying and overcoming obstacles to meeting goals is far more important than whether or not a specific homework assignment has been completed.

When we provide therapy to a couple, the focus is on preserving and enhancing the relationship as a whole rather than on individual happiness. Sometimes, however, a couple may seek therapy in order to help them decide whether or not they should remain in the relationship. In those cases, if we mutually decide that remaining together is not optimal or is harmful to one or both partners, we will focus on facilitating an amicable separation, particularly when there are minor children involved.

REFERRALS TO OTHER SERVICES

Based on your (or your child's) symptoms, condition, or situation, we may recommend a medical or medication evaluation by a qualified physician or psychiatrist. We may also recommend participation in an additional type of evaluation or therapy with another professional. If we refer you for other services, we will fully discuss our reasons with you so that you can decide what is best. If you are treated by another professional, we will coordinate our services with them upon your consent.

In compliance with the Ethics Code of the American Psychological Association (APA), we will only practice within the scope of our competence and expertise. If we feel that you (or your child) would likely benefit more from a type of treatment that we do not provide, or if we feel that our treatment is just not working, we can find an appropriate professional and assist you with obtaining other services. You have the right to receive services that help, regardless of the provider of those services. In addition, you have the right to ask us about other treatments, including their risks and benefits, and we will do our best to provide you with any information at our disposal.



THERAPY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AT INTEGRITY

SESSION POLICIES

First Therapy Session During the first therapy session, we will discuss your reasons for coming to see us as well as your needs and expectations for treatment. We will also go over the forms and documents you filled out before the session in order to clarify any points you feel you did not understand and answer any questions you may have. We will then ask you some questions about your history in an effort to get to know you better, and at the end of the session, we will discuss your customized treatment plan.

If you are seeking therapy for your child, we will typically begin the session by discussing the above information with you, your child, and any other family members who have come with you. Then we will likely want to meet with your child by him- or herself. We have great respect for the vital role you play in your child's life and emotional well-being, but we know from experience – and scientific research has shown – that children and teens often receive the maximum benefit from therapy when they are able to talk to the therapist without their parent in the room.

Reserved Therapy Sessions Most clients have a regular appointment time that is reserved for them and that typically lasts 45 to 55 minutes. Having regular therapy sessions will be a crucial part of the treatment plan, as missed appointments can interrupt momentum and slow down overall progress in treatment. We strive to accommodate clients' schedules as much as possible, and we will give you advance notice of any vacations or other absences that may occur during your regular appointment time so that you can plan accordingly.

Session Lateness Policy In order to receive the full time allotted, it is important that you arrive on time to sessions. It is likely that we will have another appointment scheduled after yours, so we will usually need to end your appointment on time, regardless of when you arrive. We are committed to starting sessions on time, ready to focus on our clients and their needs. On rare occasions, however, a client emergency may cause us to be unable to start on time; if this happens, we will attempt to notify you as soon as possible, and we will make every effort to still give you the full session time.

Session Cancellation Policy We understand that our clients have busy lives and may occasionally need to cancel or reschedule sessions. Because it can be difficult to fill your reserved session time, we ask that you give us as much notice as possible of any schedule changes. ***Please note that we require at least 24 hours advanced notice or you will be charged the entire session fee.*** If you are using your insurance, this missed session fee will be equal to the amount allowed by the insurance company; if you are unsure of this amount, please ask your therapist. Your insurance will NOT cover this charge, so you will be responsible for paying the full fee. In addition, parents/guardians are financially responsible for any fees incurred by child or adolescent therapy clients (except when an adolescent client 14 or older has provided his/her own consent).



Phone and Email Contact Most discussions will take place during your (or your child's) therapy sessions. Sessions are an ideal place to do the work of therapy, as they provide a safe and confidential space that is free from distractions or other intrusions. At times, however, phone calls or emails may be suitable or even necessary, such as when a client is going through an unusually difficult time and needs some extra support.

While occasional phone or email contact is a regular part of the therapy process, we consider unusually frequent or lengthy contact to be an additional service that we would then need to bill you for, since it takes time that would ordinarily be spent treating other clients. If we feel that this is the case, we will let you know beforehand so that you can make an informed decision regarding whether or not you would like to continue.

Bringing Children to the Office We ask that you please not bring children to the office unless the child is a client. While we understand that finding regular childcare during your session time can be challenging, bringing a child into your therapy session, even a very young child who cannot understand what is being discussed, can be very distracting and will prevent you from getting the full benefit of your session. In addition, you will not be able to leave your child in the waiting room, as we cannot guarantee any supervision, and the safety of your children is our highest priority.

POLICIES SPECIFIC TO CHILD AND ADOLESCENT CLIENTS

Pennsylvania Age of Consent In the State of Pennsylvania, children under the age of 14 can only participate in mental health treatment if their parents or guardians give permission. Adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17, however, can legally consent to mental health treatment by themselves. In addition, children and adolescents of any age can consent to substance abuse treatment by themselves.

POLICIES SPECIFIC TO COUPLES THERAPY CLIENTS

Physical Violence Between Partners Couples therapy is not recommended when there is any physical violence between partners. While you are in couples therapy with us, you must agree not to engage in any physical expression of anger against your partner or any other household member for any reason whatsoever. This prohibition includes both direct physical violence and indirect violence, such as throwing or breaking objects when angry. If your therapist has any concerns about the physical safety of you or your partner, he or she may discontinue the therapy and refer you to a more appropriate venue.

Individual Contact When a couple is seen for therapy, our therapeutic relationship is with the couple as a whole, not the individual members of the couple. Therefore, if you tell your therapist something that your partner does not know, your therapist will not keep that information confidential, especially if not knowing could cause harm. He or she will instead work with you to decide on the best long-term way to handle the situation. If one partner is unable to come to your session, we ask that you cancel or reschedule.



the session, rather than coming alone. (You will need give us 24 hours advanced notice to avoid being charged a missed session fee.) In addition, whenever contact occurs that is not just about scheduling or other session logistics, both partners should be on the phone or copied on an email, as contact with only one partner can cause the other partner to feel “left out” and may negatively impact the therapy.

Legal Proceedings Information discussed in couples therapy is for therapeutic purposes only and is not intended for use in any legal proceedings involving the partners. For example, if you are married, you must agree that if you eventually decide to divorce, you will not request your therapist’s testimony for either side, particularly regarding child custody issues.

PAYMENT AND BILLING POLICIES

Payment Philosophy Payment for services is an important part of any professional relationship. At Integrity, we feel that it is our responsibility to clarify our expectations and policies regarding payment for services up front to avoid any unpleasant surprises that may disrupt the therapeutic process. If you have any questions regarding your financial arrangements with us, please discuss them with us as soon as possible. We understand that many people have difficult and complicated relationships with money, and we believe that direct and open communication with us regarding financial matters is essential.

While our fees are subject to change, we will give you advanced notice of any changes so that we can address any concerns you may have. In addition, if you are using your insurance benefits, please note that each insurance company has a contracted rate that it pays to all providers, regardless of the rate billed to them.

Paying Fees at the Time of Service We ask our clients to please pay for each session at the time of the service, whether you are paying an insurance copay or paying for the full fee out-of-pocket. We have found that this arrangement helps us stay focused on our goals and allows us to keep our fees as low as possible by cutting down on administrative costs.

Payment Methods We accept cash, debit cards, and credit cards. ***Please note that we do not take checks.*** We have tried to make our payment methods as flexible as possible to make it easier for our clients to adhere to our payment policies. Any alternative payment or fee arrangements must be worked out with the therapist.

Fees for Contact Outside of Sessions Extended phone or email contact with you will be billed at our regular rates, prorated over the time needed. (See “Phone and Email Contact” under “Session Policies” regarding when this policy will apply.) In addition, you will also be billed at our regular rates for lengthy telephone conferences, email exchanges, or reports with other professionals on your behalf that are not part of routine coordination of care efforts. Please note that your insurance may not cover these fees.



Client Statements Because payments are due at the time of service, we do not typically send statements to clients. If you need a statement for tax, insurance, or other purposes, please notify your therapist.

Problems With Payment or Billing If you have any problems with payment, billing, insurance, or other financial issues, please discuss this with your therapist as soon as they arise. Your therapist will make every effort to arrive at a solution that does not disrupt your treatment. If you have accumulated a balance and have not been able to agree on a payment arrangement, your therapist may decide that it is in your best interest to refer you to more affordable services.

CONTACTING US

In Case of Emergency If you (or your child) have a life-threatening emergency, please contact 911 or go to your nearest Emergency Department **immediately**. Because we see clients on an outpatient basis only, we are not equipped to handle emergencies. If you (or your child) are having a behavioral or emotional crisis and you are able to contact us safely, however, please let us know how to reach you and whether we have your permission to speak to a support person on your behalf.

If your therapist becomes concerned about your (or your child's) personal safety, he or she may be required by law and by professional ethics to contact someone about you. For details regarding the situations in which these procedures would apply, please see our "Client Confidentiality" document.

Leaving Us Voicemail or Email Messages During your first session, your therapist will give you his or her contact information, including a phone number and an email address. We strive to be available to our clients as much as possible, and we can usually return phone or email messages within 1 business day. Please note that any voicemails or email messages will only be seen by the therapist whom you contacted.

Requesting Return Calls or Emails If you have given us permission to leave you a voicemail or email, you are responsible for monitoring who has access to those messages. Furthermore, we suggest that you password-protect any email accounts that you wish to use with us.

A Note About Emails/Texts Email can be a great way to communicate, and it is being used by an increasing amount of people as a primary communication tool. Email can even communicate tones or feelings, especially when used by people who are familiar with how to use it. Email cannot, however, communicate the non-verbal cues or body language that we all use to communicate without even noticing that we are doing so.

Because of this limitation, email communication can sometimes lead to unfortunate misunderstandings. As a result, if you become hurt or upset during an email exchange with us, please let us know right away to allow us to clear up any misunderstandings so that they do not interfere with your treatment.



If your (or your child's) therapist has given you a number that allows you and the therapist to text each other, we ask that you please confine texting to scheduling or other non-clinical issue, as texting is typically an ineffective way of discussing deeper therapeutic issues.

FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

- Obtaining Client Feedback** As therapists, it's important for us to learn how we are helping our clients and, even more importantly, what we can do to improve. To accomplish this, we may ask you to fill out a brief questionnaire about your experience in therapy with us. Please also feel free to give your (or your child's) therapist any feedback you may have during your treatment. We know that even if your therapy experience is primarily positive, there are always ways we can improve.
- Resolving Complaints Informally** We realize that problems can arise in the therapy relationship, just as in any other relationship. If you are not satisfied with any area of your (or your child's) treatment, please raise your concerns with your therapist, who will make every effort to hear and complaints and seek solutions to them.
- Filing a Formal Complaint** We commit to fully abiding by all the rules and ethical principles of the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Pennsylvania (PA) State Board of Psychology, as well as other relevant licensing boards. If you feel that we have treated you unfairly or broken a professional rule, please tell us. You can also contact your therapist's licensing board or the chairperson of his or her professional ethics committee to help you clarify your concerns or tell you how to file a complaint.
- Non-Discrimination Commitment** Integrity Psychological Services does not discriminate against clients on the basis of of any of the following 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 our personal commitment, as well as being required by federal, state, and local laws and regulations. We will always take steps to advance and support the values of equal opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic/cultural diversity. If you believe you (or your child) have been discriminated against, please bring this matter to our attention immediately.

Please complete and sign the "Informed Consent to Treatment" document, which acknowledges your receipt and understanding of the information contained above, and return it to your therapist. Please retain this document for your records so that you will be able to refer to it in the future, if needed.