

## INFORMATION FOR COUNSELING CLIENTS OF ERIC ALBERT, MA, LMHC

Welcome to my practice. This document gives important information about my professional services and business policies. It also explains your rights and responsibilities as my client, and my rights and responsibilities as your therapist. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so we can discuss them.

**Benefits and risks of therapy:** Research shows that psychotherapy can benefit you in a number of ways. In your relationships, you may experience better communication, deeper intimacy, more satisfying sex, stronger commitment, less fighting, less emotional and physical abuse, and less anger, hurt, and fear. Individually, you may feel calmer, have a better mood, and be better able to cope with stressful situations. Your personal goals and values may become clearer. You may enjoy life more.

There are risks to therapy. Exploring feelings and thoughts you've avoided for a long time may be painful. Making changes in your beliefs or behaviors may be frightening, and may disrupt your current relationships. Your relationship with me may bring up strong feelings. Therapy may not help you. You should carefully consider if the risks are worth the potential benefits.

**My qualifications and services:** I'm a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, working in an independent private practice. My credentials include a Master's degree (1986) and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study (2009), both in counseling psychology from Lesley University. I'm licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, license # 7848. I offer counseling and psychotherapy to individuals, couples, and other relationship groups in the areas of mental health, relationships, adjustment, personal development, life transitions, and skill development.

My main focus is working with adults on relationship issues. I specialize in issues of sexuality, emotional and physical abuse, and unconventional relationships. I can also help with a number of other concerns. I reserve the right to refer you to another therapist or appropriate resource if at any time I feel my skills or experience are not a good match for your needs.

**My approach to therapy:** I integrate theories and techniques from a variety of approaches, including: Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Collaborative Couple Therapy, Cyclical Psychodynamics, Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy, Existentialism, Feminism, Gottman's Sound Relationship House, Mindfulness, Motivational Interviewing, Relational Psychoanalysis, Social Constructivism, and Solution-Focused Therapy. In order to customize my therapeutic approach for you, I typically use techniques from Client-Directed Outcome-Informed Therapy. You don't need to understand these approaches to benefit from therapy with me. If you want to learn more, I'm happy to answer your questions, and to refer you to resources that explain them.

**Process of therapy:** Your counseling will begin with you stating your concerns and hopes, from which we'll collaboratively generate a set of goals. We'll decide on how frequently to meet. Each session, you'll rate your progress on these goals, and rate how useful the session has been. Based on your ratings, and in consultation with you, I'll customize my therapeutic approach.

If I propose a specific technique that may have special risks attached, I'll inform you of that, and discuss with you the risks and benefits of what I'm suggesting. You have the right to refuse any recommended treatment.

You're free to leave therapy at any time. If you wish to withdraw from therapy, I recommend that we meet at least one more time so we can review our work together. If you'd like to take a break from therapy, we can discuss how to maximize the usefulness of the break.

**Special issues: Sexuality:** I often work with clients on sex-related issues. In order to usefully explore these issues, we may need to talk about very personal matters in a detailed way. At times, I may suggest that you engage with sexually explicit materials, both informational and erotic. I may also suggest sensual and sexual homework assignments. As with all of my suggestions and assignments, participation is optional on your part, and, if at any point you become uncomfortable, let me know and I'll suggest alternatives. *Under no circumstances do I engage in romantic or sexual relationships with clients, either during or after our work together.*

**Special issues: Abuse:** I often work with clients on issues related to physical and emotional abuse. I'll use my clinical judgment to attempt to minimize your risk, but I cannot accurately predict violent behavior under all conditions, and I cannot guarantee your safety. At times, I may make recommendations that I believe will create enough safety for therapy to successfully continue. These recommendations may include taking out a restraining order, respecting a restraining order, or entering a certified batterer intervention program. If you don't follow through on my recommendations; or if you threaten, harass, or harm me, or anyone associated professionally or personally with me; or if for any other reason I believe that therapy cannot be conducted safely, then I reserve the right to immediately stop our work together, in which case I'll offer you referrals to other sources of care, but cannot guarantee that they will accept you.

**Confidentiality:** Detailed information about my privacy practices is available in my Notice of Privacy Practices document, which you should read before we start working together. I update this document from time to time. Let me know if you'd like a copy of the current version. Here's a brief summary of a few important points:

Usually I won't share anything you tell me with anyone else, but there are a few exceptions. If a court orders me to give them information about you, I'll give them minimum information required. If you tell me about the abuse or neglect of a child, a disabled person, or an elderly adult, I'll report this to the appropriate state agency. If you threaten serious bodily harm to someone else, I'm required to take protective actions, which may include warning the potential victim, calling the police, or seeking hospitalization for you. If you threaten to hurt yourself, I'm required to seek hospitalization for you, or to contact family members or others who can help protect you. In an emergency, I may call another health care provider or a member of your family without your prior consent, but I will make every effort to fully discuss this with you before taking any action. These situations have rarely occurred in my practice.

If you're in relationship therapy with me, I may share anything you tell me with your partner(s) unless I feel this would pose a safety risk. If another health care person is working with you, I'll

ask for a release of information from you so I can communicate with that person about your care. To become a more effective therapist, I meet regularly with supervisors and colleagues to discuss my clients. I keep records about each client and each therapy session.

When I'm out of town or otherwise unavailable, I may have another licensed therapist on call for me. I may disclose confidential information about you to this therapist so they can better serve you in my absence.

**Emergencies:** I'm unable to respond immediately to counseling emergencies. In such cases, please call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency room. After you're settled, get in touch with me and we'll discuss how to proceed.

**Communicating with me:** I prefer that you use e-mail for simple questions, including scheduling issues. E-mail is not a confidential medium, so don't include personal details in any message. If you're in relationship therapy with me and I reply to your e-mail message, I'll send a copy of my reply to your partner(s), so think carefully about what you write.

You can also call and leave a message. In your message, please let me know how late I can call you back. I try to return phone calls within the same day, but sometimes I take longer. There is no charge for calls to schedule appointments or for other business matters. If we talk for more than ten minutes about therapeutic issues, I reserve the right to charge you for the call at our prorated session rate. If you give me materials that you wish me to read, I reserve the right to charge you for my time at our prorated session rate.

**When I'm unavailable:** I take vacations several times a year. I'll tell you in advance of any lengthy absences, and, if you request, I'll give you the name and phone number of the therapist who will be covering my practice during my absence.

In the event of my incapacity or death, the records for my clients who I have seen within the past month will be given to one or more local mental health professionals to facilitate the continuation of treatment. In such a situation, you have the right to continue treatment with this professional, discontinue treatment, or ask for a referral. Records for my inactive clients will be handled by a "records custodian," which may be an individual or company. The custodian will be responsible for satisfying records requests and destroying records when the legal timeframes for records retention are satisfied.

**Attending and canceling appointments:** I reserve your time for you, and I prepare for each of our meetings. If you're late, I reserve the right to end our session at the usual time. If you need to cancel, please notify me a minimum of 24 hours prior to your appointment. Appointments for Mondays should be canceled by the prior Friday. I rarely initiate reminder phone calls or messages. *I reserve the right to bill you at our usual rate for any appointments you miss if you don't cancel in accordance with this policy.*

My evening and weekend sessions are in great demand, and I reserve them for clients who see me weekly; if you wish to see me less often, I'll offer you weekday sessions. If you miss scheduled appointments, frequently reschedule appointments, or schedule appointments so

sporadically that I feel it is detrimental to the therapy or to my ability to successfully run my practice, I reserve the right to refer you to other sources of care.

**Financial issues:** I expect full payment at the beginning of each session unless we arrange otherwise. I'm not willing to have clients run a bill with me. You agree to pay for services I render and any additional expenses that I may accrue in collecting these fees. I reserve the right to change my fees with 30 days notice. I don't accept insurance, either directly or indirectly, because I feel the costs outweigh the benefits; for my reasons, please see my web site.

Charges for other services will be based on the time involved in providing the service, and billed at our prorated session rate. These services include consultations with other therapists, doctors, relatives, and friends; hospital or home visits; attendance at meetings you have authorized with other professionals; preparation of records or treatment summaries; and time spent performing any other service you request of me. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for my professional time even if I am called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge twice my usual rate for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding.

If you have any questions or concerns about our financial interactions, please talk with me.

**Our relationship:** I encourage you to ask questions about anything that happens in therapy. I'm always willing to discuss the reasons for what we're doing, and to look at alternatives that might work better. You can ask me to try something that you think would be helpful.

If you feel you've been treated unfairly or disrespectfully, please talk with me. It's never my intention to treat my clients in this way, but sometimes misunderstandings arise, and sometimes I make mistakes. I want to address and resolve any such issues as soon as possible.

If you're dissatisfied with my response, and feel that I have behaved unethically, you can file a complaint with the Division of Professional Licensure, Office of Investigations, 1000 Washington Street, Suite 701, Boston, MA 02118. (phone: 617-727-7406; web: [www.mass.gov/dpl](http://www.mass.gov/dpl)) I follow the Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association, which you can find at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org) online.

If we run into each other out in the world, I may nod or smile, but to protect your confidentiality I won't acknowledge you as someone I know. Feel free to talk with me if you wish.