

Practice Policies

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The purpose of this form is to explain some of the basics of how I run my practice—regarding communication with me outside of counseling sessions, fees and payment, and a few other things that will be relevant to you.

I. Communication Policies

Contacting Me.

The most effective ways to reach me within a reasonable amount of time are by phone (734-531-8109) (including text message and voice message) and email (talktotim@timcourtois.com). You will be given the opportunity to communicate your preferences for how I communicate with you when you fill out the Contact Info form.

Response Time.

I may not be able to respond to your messages and calls immediately. It is my goal to respond to messages within 48 hours. Please know that this will not always be possible, especially on weekends. Additionally, there may be other extended periods of time when I am unable to receive or respond to messages, such as when out of cellular range/ internet access or out of town.

Emergency Contact.

If you are ever experiencing an emergency, including a mental health crisis, please call 911 for general emergencies, or the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). You may certainly contact me to inform me of an emergency situation that has happened to you or to ask for an extra session on short notice. However, in the case of a true emergency you should always call 911 or some other service that can guarantee a timely response.

Confidentiality.

I take your trust and your privacy very seriously. In accordance with counseling laws and ethics, everything you discuss with me is confidential except when you give me permission to disclose it, or when disclosure is required by law (for example, in cases of child abuse, when a disclosure is required by a court, or in the case of a threat of harm to yourself or someone else). (Additional rules apply for minors. If you are a minor, please discuss this with your therapist.) A fuller description of the rules of confidentiality, and of your rights and my responsibilities with regard to your private information, can be found in the Notice of Privacy Practices (Section 1).

Social Media.

In compliance with codes of ethics for professional counselors, I refrain from engaging in personal virtual relationships with current clients through social media.

Electronic Communication.

It may become useful during the course of treatment to communicate by email, text message, interactive videoconferencing, telephone, or other electronic methods of communication. You may choose at any time which of these forms of communication you do or do not wish to use in communication with me. Be informed that these methods, in their typical form, are not confidential means of communication. If you use these methods to communicate with me there is a reasonable chance that a third party may be able to intercept and eavesdrop on those messages. The kinds of parties that may intercept these messages include, but are not limited to:

- People who can access devices that you use to read and write electronic messages.
- Your employer, if you use your work email to communicate with me.
- Student services, if you use your school email to communicate with me.
- Third parties on the Internet such as server administrators and others who monitor Internet traffic.

If there are people in your life that you don't want accessing these communications, it is your responsibility to take measures to keep your communications safe and confidential.

Additional threats to the integrity of your confidential information include but are not limited to: computer viruses, hackers, theft of technological devices, damage to hard drives or portable drives, failures of security systems, flawed software, and malfunctioning or outdated technology.

Seeing Each Other Outside of Counseling.

There is some possibility that we will bump into each other in a public setting outside of counseling. In such situations, I take a "you-first" approach to protect your confidentiality and to let you choose what you want to happen. This means that I will not initiate contact with you, but you may initiate with me if you choose to do so. If you have questions or concerns about such situations—before or after they occur—please discuss this with me.

II. Fees and Payment

Cost.

The fee for my counseling sessions is \$120 per 50-minute session. Longer sessions

may be scheduled upon request at a rate of \$180 per 80-minute session, or \$240 per 110-minute session (including time for a 10-minute break halfway through the session).

When To Pay.

Payment is expected at the time of each session. Automatic credit card payments through your stored credit card information on Simple Practice are preferred. Cash or check (made out to "Tim Courtois LLC") are also acceptable. Failure to pay may result in discontinuation of treatment.

III. Other Policies

Frequency of Sessions.

In most cases, sessions will be scheduled weekly, because that is what tends to be most effective. It is my responsibility to inform you of any schedule changes or vacations with appropriate advance notice.

Lateness and 24-Hour Cancellation Policy.

I require a minimum of 24-hours notice for cancellation of sessions. If you fail to give 24-hours notice, you will be charged the full agreed upon fee for that session (unless your failure to give proper notice is due to circumstances beyond your control). If you arrive late to a session, your session will still end at the scheduled time, and your fee will not be discounted.

Ending Counseling.

You have the right to end therapy at any time without any moral, legal, or financial obligations other than those already accrued. At any time you may decide that you have received what you were looking for or are ready to be done with counseling. I encourage you to discuss your desires about ending counseling openly with me at any time. While not required, closure sessions are strongly recommended.

Ending without closure sessions can be like skipping the final chapter of a good book: an important part of the experience is missed. Final sessions are not an addendum to good counseling; they are an integral part of the process. Further, since counseling involves the building of a trusting relationship between client and counselor, these sessions allow time to process the ending of that formal relationship.

Counseling Via Videoconferencing.

It is occasionally useful to conduct sessions via videoconferencing, such as when a client will be out of town for an extended period of time. Be informed that technological difficulties sometimes arise. If a few minutes of a session conducted via videoconferencing are interrupted due to technological difficulties, the full session fee will still be expected. If a significant percentage of the session (i.e. 50% or more) is unable to be completed due to technological difficulties, you will be charged according to the amount of the session completed, at my discretion. If technological issues persist for multiple sessions, I reserve the right to discontinue electronic therapy and make

appropriate recommendations. Payment for videoconferencing sessions is due within one week of any session, either by mail, credit card, or in person.

How Your Confidential Information Is Stored.

I am responsible to store any private information about you using methods that are compliant with HIPAA regulations. Hard copies of any of your information are stored in a locked location when not directly in my possession. Most of my Electronic Health Records (EHR) are kept using HIPAA compliant online EHR software (Simple Practice). EHR may also be stored on my personal computer so long as that information is encrypted and password protected. Finally, my email account (talktotim@timcourtois.com) includes a Business Associates Amendment so that all information in that account is subject to additional security measures rendering it HIPAA compliant.

Insurance.

I do not take insurance. However, some insurance companies will reimburse you directly for the cost of counseling. You should talk with your insurance company to find out if this is the case for you. I am able to provide you with receipts that you can turn in to your insurance company, and am willing to cooperate with you to a reasonable extent to help you to receive coverage.

Legal and Court-Related Activity.

In my practice I do not offer reports or records suitable for court proceedings, nor do I provide testimony in legal matters as part of my services. In signing this form you agree that, should you be involved in legal proceedings, you will not seek to use the record of your counseling as evidence or to compel my testimony.

Continuation of Services.

In the unlikely event that I am unable to provide ongoing services, Elizabeth Jackson, MA, LLP, will provide those services and will maintain your records for a period of seven years. Elizabeth may be contacted at 734-656-8191, www.RestoredHopeCounselingServices.com