
Practice Policies & Agreement for Services

Welcome to my practice. Your first visit to a new coach and therapist is very important, and you may have many questions. This letter is to introduce myself and give you information to help you decide whether we can work together. Please take time to read it carefully and let me know if you have any questions or need more information. When you sign the receipt of agreements document, it will represent an agreement between us.

The Process of Coaching and Therapy/Evaluation

During our first meetings, I will assess whether I can be of benefit to you. I do not accept clients who I believe I cannot be helpful to, and, if this is the case, I will refer you to others who work well with your particular concerns. Within a reasonable period of time after starting services, we will discuss my working understanding of your needs, my proposed services plan, and possible outcomes of our working together. If you have questions about any of the procedures used in the course of your work with me, their possible risks, my expertise in employing them, or about your service agreement in general, please ask me. You also have the right to ask about other possible treatments for your condition and their risks and benefits. If you could benefit from any services that I do not provide, I have an ethical obligation to assist you in obtaining those treatments.

Benefits and Risks of Coaching and Psychotherapy

Participation in therapeutic services can result in a number of benefits to you, including improved interpersonal relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to seek help. Working toward these benefits requires effort on your part and I may recommend specific activities or exercises to do between sessions to help you achieve your goals. Coaching and psychotherapy services require your active involvement, honesty, and openness in order to change your thoughts, feelings, and/or behavior. I will ask for your feedback and views on our work together and its progress. Sometimes more than one approach can be helpful.

During the initial evaluation or during the course of our work together, remembering unpleasant events, feelings, or thoughts may result in your experiencing considerable discomfort, strong feelings, anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc. I may challenge some of your assumptions or perceptions or propose different ways of thinking about or handling situations that may cause you to feel upset, angry, or disappointed. Attempting to resolve issues that brought you into seeking help may result in changes that were not originally intended. Coaching and psychotherapy may result in decisions to change behaviors, employment, substance use, schooling, housing, or relationships. Change can sometimes be quick and easy, but more often it can be gradual and even frustrating. There is no guarantee that coaching and psychotherapy will yield positive or intended results, though I have certainly seen important and substantial progress with the majority of my clients.

Termination and Follow-Up

Deciding when to stop our work together is meant to be a mutual process. Before we stop, we will discuss how you will know if or when to come back or whether a regularly scheduled "check-in" might work best for you. If it is not possible for you to phase out of services, I recommend that we have closure on our working relationship with at least one termination session. I also ask all clients whether they consent to follow-up emails to assess your satisfaction with my services, and a six month follow-up to see if you have maintained your goals. You may opt out of both of these follow-up contacts.

Noncompliance with treatment recommendations may necessitate early termination of services. I will look at your issues with you and exercise my educated judgment about what services will be in your best interest. Your responsibility is to make a good faith effort to fulfill the treatment recommendations to which you have agreed. If you have concerns or reservations about my recommendations, I strongly encourage you to express them so that we can resolve any possible differences or misunderstandings.

If during our work together I assess that I am not effective in helping you reach your goals, I will discuss this with you and, if appropriate, terminate services and give you referrals that may be of help to you. If you request it and authorize it in writing, I may talk to the service professional of your choice (with your permission only) in order to help with the transition. If, at any time, you want another professional's opinion, I can assist you in finding someone qualified. You have the right to terminate services at any time. If you choose to do so, I can offer to provide you with names of other qualified professionals whose services you might prefer.

If you commit violence to, verbally or physically threaten or harass me, the office, or my family, I reserve the right to terminate your treatment unilaterally and immediately. Failure or refusal to pay for services after a reasonable time is another condition for termination of services. Please contact me to make arrangements any time your financial situation changes.

Dual Relationships

Any type of therapeutic service should never involve sexual, business, or any other dual relationships that could impair my objectivity, clinical judgment, therapeutic effectiveness, or include any relationship that could be exploitative in nature. It is possible that during the course of our time together, I may become aware of other preexisting relationships that may affect our work, and I will do my best to resolve these situations ethically, but this may entail our needing to stop working together, depending upon the type of conflict. Please discuss this with me if you have questions or concerns.

Emails and Phone Calls

For small, administrative matters such as checking appointment times or changing them, you are welcome to email me at alinebethea@gmail.com, call or text me. I generally receive and return these emails within 32 hours, or sooner, with the exception of weekends. If you need to contact me between

sessions about a matter, please leave a message for me at 773-888-2713. I check my messages each weekday unless I am out of town. If I am planning on being out of town, I will let you know in advance.

Phone consultations of 10 minutes or less are normally free. However, if we spend more than 10 minutes in a week on the phone, if you leave more than 10 minutes worth of phone messages in a week, or if I spend more than 10 minutes reading and responding to emails or coordinating care, I will bill you on a prorated basis for that time.

Emergency Contact

If your situation is an acute emergency and you need to talk to someone right away, contact the closest 24-hour emergency psychiatric service, Dial 911 or go to your nearest Emergency Room. The National Suicide Prevention Hotline is (800) 273-8255. Aline cannot guarantee availability for crisis calls.

If you need to contact me and the matter is urgent, the best method is phone: 773-888-2713. If you cannot reach me by phone, please leave a voicemail and then follow up with a text message regarding the urgency of your request. *Please note that SMS (normal phone text messages) are not designed for emergency contact. SMS text messages occasionally get delayed and on rare occasions may be lost. So, please refrain from using SMS as your sole method of communicating with me in emergencies.*

Cancellations and Lateness

Missed and cancelled sessions pose some issues for both of us. First, the work of coaching and psychotherapy is sometimes challenging and, when we hit a difficult place together, it can feel easier to want to avoid sessions. I would prefer we speak about this intentionally rather than you canceling sessions. In addition, I hold your scheduled appointment time specifically for you and you alone and I see a limited number of patients so that I can give you the focus and attention you deserve. It is extremely difficult for me to fill your last minute, cancelled session on a short notice. Therefore, I charge for appointments cancelled with less than 48 hours notice unless we can find another time that week that works for us both. If we are able to do so, before the weekend, I will allow you to reschedule at no extra fee.

If you are running late for your appointment, please phone or email me as soon as you can to let me know you will be late. If I do not hear from you by 20 minutes into your session, I will call to check on you and may assume you do not plan to attend your session.

If you are late for your session, we may still end at our regular time so that I have time to prepare for my next appointments.

Payment and Financial Arrangements

I accept cash, check, or credit card at the time of service. I can also send invoices to be paid online at the end of a session. If you are late to a session, we will end on time and not run over into the next person's session, but you will still be charged full price for the appointment slot.

After Hours or Out of Office Sessions: Some patients request sessions outside of my regular hours (after hours or on a weekend) or at their home or business. I am occasionally able to accommodate a limited number of these requests and charge accordingly for my time and travel.

Late Fee: Full payment is expected at the time of service unless otherwise agreed upon.

Balances: I do not permit clients to carry a balance of more than two sessions and if you are unable to pay this balance, we will discuss whether it makes sense to pause your care or develop another strategy so that you can avoid incurring additional debt. Please let me know if any problem arises during the course of services regarding your ability to make timely payments.

Fee Reduction: I offer some lower fee slots, based upon income and circumstances. If my fee is a concern, please discuss it with me. If I am unable to accommodate your financial situation, I will provide you with referrals. I do provide specialized packages upon request.

Insurance: I do not currently take insurance. I can provide you with a monthly billing statement for reimbursement if you wish to submit it to your insurance company. This monthly statement is your receipt for tax or insurance purposes.

Some or all your fees may be covered by your health insurance if you have outpatient mental health coverage. However, insurance companies do not reimburse all conditions that may be the focus of services. In addition, insurance companies typically require a diagnosis for reimbursement, which will go on your permanent record. It is your responsibility to verify the specifics of your coverage. Please remember that my services are provided and charged to you, not your insurance company, so you are responsible for payment. Fees you pay for therapy services that are not reimbursed by insurance may be deductible as medical expenses if you itemize deductions on your tax return. As described below in the section Health Insurance and Confidentiality of Records, be aware that submitting a mental health invoice for reimbursement carries a certain amount of risk.

Other fees: If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for my professional time and services even if I have been called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement and the interruption to my regular practice, I charge \$200 per hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding. I will provide bills/receipts at the end of each session and expect to be paid upon receipt unless otherwise agreed upon.

Electronic Payment Communications Disclosure

If you wish, you may pay fees electronically – through funds transfer or using a payment card -- using any of the following services:

- *PayPal*
- *Chase Quick Pay*
- *Venmo*

Please Be Aware of the Following:

I have a duty to uphold your confidentiality, and thus I wish to make sure that your use of the above payment services is done as securely and privately as possible. After using any of the above services to pay your fees, that service may send you receipts for payment by email or text message. These receipts will include my business name, and would indicate that you have paid for a session. It is possible the receipt may be sent automatically, without first asking if you wish to receive the receipt. I am unable to control this in many cases, and I may not be able to control which email address or phone number your receipt is sent to.

So before using one of the above services to pay for your session(s), please think about these questions:

- At which email address or phone numbers have I received these kinds of receipts before?
- Are any of those addresses or phone numbers provided by your employer or school? If so, the employer or school will most likely be able to view the receipts that are sent to you.
- Are there any other parties with access to these addresses or phone numbers that should not be seeing these receipts? Would there be any danger to you if such a person discovered them?

Confidentiality

As a coaching and psychotherapy client, you have privileged communication. This means that your relationship with me as my client, all information disclosed in our sessions, and the written records of those sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission, except where law requires disclosure. Most of the provisions explaining when the law requires disclosure are described below.

When Disclosure Is Required by Law: Disclosure is required when there is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent or elder abuse or neglect and when a client presents a danger to self, to others, to property, or is gravely disabled.

When Disclosure May Be Required: Disclosure may be required in a legal proceeding. If you place your mental status at issue in litigation that you initiate, the defendant may have the right to obtain your psychotherapy records and/or my testimony.

In couple or relationship therapy, or when different family members are seen individually, confidentiality and privilege do not apply between the couple or among family members. I will use my clinical judgment when revealing such information. **Emergencies:** If there is an emergency during our work together or after termination in which I become concerned about your personal safety, the possibility of you injuring someone else, or about you receiving psychiatric care, I will do whatever I can within the limits of the law to prevent you from injuring yourself or another, and to ensure that you receive appropriate medical care.

Health Insurance and Confidentiality of Records: Your health insurance carrier may require disclosure of confidential information in order to process claims. Only the minimum necessary information will be communicated to your insurance carrier, including diagnosis, the date and length of our appointments, and what services were provided. Often the billing statement and your company's claim form are sufficient. Sometimes treatment summaries or progress toward goals are also required. Unless explicitly authorized by you, psychotherapy notes will not be disclosed to your insurance carrier. While insurance companies claim to keep this information confidential, I have no control over the information once it leaves my office. Please be aware that submitting a mental health invoice for reimbursement carries some risk to confidentiality, privacy, or future eligibility to obtain health or life insurance.

Communication by Email, Text Message, and Other Non-Secure Means

It may become useful during the course of treatment to communicate by email, text message (e.g. "SMS") or other electronic methods of communication. Be informed that these methods, in their typical form, are not confidential means of communication. If you use these methods to communicate with Aline Bethea, 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 in your home or other environments who can access your phone, computer, or other devices that you use to read and write messages
- Your employer, if you use your work email to communicate with Aline
- 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, please talk with Aline about ways to keep your communications safe and confidential.

Aline Bethea uses the following methods to secure communication, session notes and payment records. While it cannot be guaranteed that they will prevent 100% of confidentiality breaches, they are designed with the intention of supporting the confidentiality of clinical communications and records:

- Method 1: encrypted hard drive and firewall protection
- Method 2: password protected phone and computer
- Method 3: remote wiping of all data should any device be lost or stolen

Consultation: I consult regularly with other professionals regarding my clients in order to provide you with the best possible service. Names or other identifying information are never mentioned; client identity remains completely anonymous and your confidentiality will be fully maintained. If, for some reason, I believe it is important to consult with another professional in-depth, and I believe identifying information about you may be shared, I will have you sign a release of information allowing me to

share this information. Without such a release, I will not consult with another professional providing information that might lead another person to be able to identify you.

Release of Information: Considering all of the above exclusions, upon your request and with your written consent, I may release limited information to any person/agency you specify, unless I conclude that releasing such information might be harmful to you. If I reach that conclusion, I will explain the reason for denying your request.

Complaints

If you have a concern or complaint about working with me, please talk with me about it. I will take your criticism seriously and respond with care and respect. If you believe that I've been unwilling to listen and respond, or that I have behaved unethically, you can contact the National Association of Social Workers, which oversees licensing, and they will review the services I have provided.

NEC Intake Subcommittee
National Association of Social Workers
750 First Street, NE, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20002
(800) 742-4089

You are also free to discuss your complaints about me with anyone you wish and you do not have any responsibility to maintain confidentiality about what I do that you don't like since you are the person who has the right to decide what you want kept confidential. I hope this answers some of your questions. Please let me know if you have concerns or questions about any of these policies and procedures or this agreement for working together.

Thank you for your time and attention to these important issues and I am looking forward to working with you!