

Little Red Telescope

life unfolded

Office Policies & Agreement for Psychotherapy Services

Welcome to Little Red Telescope, life unfolded. Your first visit to a new 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 this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Qualifications

I received my Masters of Social Work degree in 2011 from the Rhode Island College School of Social Work. After receiving my degree, I continued my psychotherapeutic journey working in a management role overseeing a community mental health clinic in Boston, Massachusetts. During my time at the clinic, I directly saw individuals seeking psychotherapy as well as assisting in the daily clinic operations and organizational growth. I hold a Certificate of Advanced Clinical Practice from Boston College School of Social Work, as well as multiple designations as a practicing supervisor for clinical work. Currently I am working on obtaining my PhD in psychodynamic psychotherapy from the Institute of Clinical Social work based in Chicago, Illinois. Here in California, I am a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) license # LCSW73960 practicing independently.

My approach to treatment is an integrative one harnessing a range of psychodynamic perspectives such as relational theory, self-psychology, developmental theories and neuroscience. I am also trained in cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing and person centered treatment. As a clinical social worker, I bring certain expertise to our collaboration while you bring self-knowledge, the ability to learn from your life experiences, and a vision of what you want your life to be. I enjoy working with a diverse range of individuals seeking to improve their emotional, mental and physical wellness.

The Process of Therapy/Evaluation

During our first few meetings, I will assess whether I can be of benefit to you. I do not accept clients who I believe I cannot provide assistance and if this is the case, I will refer you to others who work well with your particular issues. Within a reasonable period of time after starting treatment, we will discuss my working understanding of your issues, my proposed treatment plan, and therapeutic objectives and possible outcomes of the therapy. If you have questions about any of the procedures used in the course of your therapy, their possible risks, my expertise in employing them, or about the treatment plan 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 treatments that I do not provide, I have an ethical obligation to assist you in obtaining those treatments.

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 therapy, I recommend that we have closure on the therapy process with at least two termination sessions.

Noncompliance with treatment recommendations may necessitate early termination of services. I will look at your issues with you and exercise my educated clinical judgment about what treatment 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 treatment recommendations, I strongly encourage you to express them so that we can resolve any possible differences or misunderstandings.

Courtland McPherson, MSW, LCSW Lic. # LCSW 73960
1101 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 201 Alameda, CA 94501
Phone: (510) 473-6032

Website: www.LittleRedTelescope.com Email: Info@Littleredtelescope.com

Little Red Telescope

life unfolded

Office Policies & Agreement for Psychotherapy Services

If during our work together I assess that I am not effective in helping you reach your therapeutic goals, I am obliged to discuss this with you and, if appropriate, terminate treatment 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 psychotherapist of your choice (with your permission only) in order to help with the transition. If at any time you want another professional's opinion or wish to consult with another therapist, I will assist you in finding someone qualified. You have the right to terminate treatment at any time. If you choose to do so, I will 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

Therapy never involves sexual, business, or any other dual relationships that could impair my objectivity, clinical judgment or therapeutic effectiveness or could be exploitative in nature. It is possible that during the course of your treatment, I may become aware of other preexisting relationships that may affect our work together, 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.

Benefits and Risks of Psychotherapy

Participation in therapy can result in a number of benefits to you, including improved interpersonal relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to seek therapy. Working toward these benefits requires effort on your part. Psychotherapy requires 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 your therapy and its progress. Sometimes more than one approach can be helpful.

During the initial evaluation or the course of therapy, 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 therapy may result in changes that were not originally intended. 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 psychotherapy will yield positive or intended results.

Emails, Phone Calls, and Emergencies

For small administrative matters such as checking appointment times or changing them, you are welcome to email me at Courtland@Littleredtelescope.com. I generally receive and return these emails within 24 hours with the exception of weekends.

If you need to contact me between sessions about a clinical matter, please leave a message for me at **510-473-6032**. I check my messages each day unless I am out of town. If I am planning on being out of town, I will let you know in advance. I will also let you know who I have covering for me if I plan not to take or respond to phone messages during my absence.

Courtland McPherson, MSW, LCSW Lic. # LCSW 73960
1101 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 201 Alameda, CA 94501
Phone: (510) 473-6032

Website: www.LittleRedTelescope.com Email: Info@Littleredtelescope.com

Little Red Telescope

life unfolded

Office Policies & Agreement for Psychotherapy Services

Emergency phone consultations of five minutes or less are normally free. However, if we spend more than five minutes in a week on the phone, if you leave more than five minutes worth of phone messages in a week, if I spend more than five minutes reading and responding to emails or coordination of care, I will bill you on a prorated basis for that time. If you feel the need for many phone calls and cannot wait for your next appointment, we may need to schedule more sessions to address your needs.

If an emergency situation arises, please indicate it clearly in your message to me. 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

Nearest emergency facility by my office:

Alameda Hospital

2070 Clinton Ave, Alameda, CA 94501

If you are in crisis you can also call:

Crisis Support Services of Alameda County

24 Hour Crisis Line

1-800-309-2131

Cancellations and Punctuality

Missed and cancelled sessions pose issues for both of us. First, the work of psychotherapy is sometimes challenging and when we hit a difficult place together, it can feel easier to want to avoid coming in for treatment. I would prefer we speak about this intentionally rather than you cancelling sessions. Also, I hold your scheduled appointment time specifically for you and you alone. 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 short notice. Therefore, I charge full fee for appointments cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice unless we can find another time that week that works for us both. If we are able to do so, in the same calendar week (M-F), 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 assume you do not plan to attend your session. If you are late for your session, we will still end at our regular time so that I have time to prepare for my next appointments and I can be on time for them.

Payment and Financial Arrangements

Standard fee: \$180 per 45 - 50 minute individual session.

This fee is to be paid at the start of each session, by cash, check or credit card (Visa and MasterCard only) unless other arrangements have been made. If you are late, we will end on time and not run over into the next person's session. I may increase my fee annually. If this is to take place, I will discuss this with you and begin to remind you of this in October and November.

Courtland McPherson, MSW, LCSW Lic. # LCSW 73960
1101 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 201 Alameda, CA 94501

Phone: (510) 473-6032

Website: www.LittleRedTelescope.com Email: Info@Littleredtelescope.com

Little Red Telescope

life unfolded

Office Policies & Agreement for Psychotherapy Services

After Hours Sessions: Some patients request sessions outside of regular therapy hours (after hours or on a weekend). I am occasionally able to accommodate a limited number of these requests. Please note that I add a \$100 fee to weekend or after hours sessions.

Late Fee: Full payment is expected at the time of service unless otherwise agreed upon. A grace period will be allowed with no late fee if payment is received by 6:00 pm the next business day. After 6pm on the next business day, there will be a \$20 charge for late payments made within the same week, and a \$30 charge the next business week. I expect you to remember to send/make your payment and will not regularly send reminders.

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 therapy regarding your ability to make timely payments.

Fee Reduction: I offer some lower fee slots, based upon income and circumstances, but I prefer to hold these slots for current clients who are experiencing life transitions. 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.

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 psychotherapy. 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 consult your tax professional for more information regarding deducting medical expenses. 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 \$400 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.

Office Conduct, Pet and Smoking Policy

Animals: As per the leasing requirements of our office building clients, patients, customers and guests are not permitted to bring animals into the building other than assistance animals.

Smoking: Smoking of any type i.e. nicotine, electronic or any other form, shall be prohibited in all public areas of the building, including hallways, conference rooms, training rooms and open or closed offices.

Office Conduct: Clients, patients, customers and guests shall conduct themselves in an appropriate manner; the noise level will be kept to a level so as not to interfere with other offices and will abide by Little Red Telescopes directives regarding security, parking and other such matters. Psychotherapy can invoke intense emotions such as crying, anger, increased anxiety and agitation which we will work through together and the intention of the office conduct policy is not to limit these affective responses.

Courtland McPherson, MSW, LCSW Lic. # LCSW 73960
1101 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 201 Alameda, CA 94501
Phone: (510) 473-6032

Website: www.LittleRedTelescope.com Email: Info@Littleredtelescope.com

Little Red Telescope

life unfolded

Office Policies & Agreement for Psychotherapy Services

Confidentiality

As a psychotherapy client, you have privileged communication. This means that as part of the therapist-client relationship, all information disclosed in 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 in the enclosed Notice of Privacy Practices.

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. If you have not paid your bill for treatment for a long period of time, your name, payment record and last known address may be sent to a collection agency or small claims court. 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. For this purpose I may contact the person whose name you have provided on your Client Information form.

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.

Confidentiality of E-mail, Voice mail and Fax Communication: E-mail, voice mail, and fax communication can be easily accessed by unauthorized people, compromising the privacy and confidentiality of such communication. Please notify me at the beginning of treatment if you would like to avoid or limit in any way the use of any or all of these communication devices. Please do not contact me via email or faxes for emergencies.

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.

Courtland McPherson, MSW, LCSW Lic. # LCSW 73960
1101 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 201 Alameda, CA 94501
Phone: (510) 473-6032

Website: www.LittleRedTelescope.com Email: Info@Littleredtelescope.com

Little Red Telescope

life unfolded

Office Policies & Agreement for Psychotherapy Services

Complaints

If you have a concern or complaint about your treatment, please talk with me about it. I will take your criticism seriously and respond with care and respect. If you believe that Little Red Telescope or your therapist have been unwilling to listen and respond, or that we have behaved unethically, you can contact the Board of Behavioral Science which oversees licensing.

The Board of Behavioral Sciences receives and responds to complaints regarding services provided within the scope of practice of (marriage and family therapists, licensed educational psychologists, clinical social workers, or professional clinical counselors). You may contact the board online at www.bbs.ca.gov, or by calling (916) 574-7830.

Board of Behavioral Sciences

1625 North Market Blvd., Suite S200, Sacramento, CA 95834

Telephone: (916) 574-7830 TTY: (800) 326-2297

www.bbs.ca.gov

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

Thank You and Welcome to Little Red Telescope!

Courtland McPherson, MSW, LCSW

References

Kolmes, K. (2010). Office Policies and Procedures. San Francisco, CA, USA.

Courtland McPherson, MSW, LCSW Lic. # LCSW 73960
1101 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 201 Alameda, CA 94501
Phone: (510) 473-6032

Website: www.LittleRedTelescope.com Email: Info@Littleredtelescope.com