

THUY CAO
~ Pronounced Twee Cow ~
LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST

Office: 424-835-0880

tcaomft@yahoo.com

OFFICE AND PRIVACY POLICIES & GENERAL INFORMATION
AGREEMENT FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES

WELCOME TO MY PRACTICE. I hope this information will be helpful to you. If I make substantive changes to my policies, I will inform you. Please let me know if you have any questions. Please also sign and return the separate form that's label *Receipt of Office And Privacy Policies form*.

CANCELLATION: Since scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, a **minimum of 24 hours (1 day's) notice is required for re-scheduling or canceling an appointment.** Unless we reach a different agreement, the full fee will be charged for sessions missed without such notification. Most insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All information disclosed within sessions and the written records pertaining to those sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your (client's) written permission, except where disclosure is required by law. Most of the provisions explaining when the law requires disclosure are described below.

When Disclosure Is Required By Law: Some of the circumstances where disclosure is required by the law are: where there is a *reasonable suspicion* of child, dependent or elder, abuse or neglect; and where a client presents a danger to self, to others, to property, or is gravely disabled. Please feel free to ask me if you need further details regarding State mandated or permitted breach of confidentiality.

When Disclosure May Be Required: Disclosure may be required pursuant to a *legal proceeding*. If you place your mental status at issue in litigation initiated by you, the defendant may have the right to obtain the psychotherapy records and/or testimony by me, Thuy Cao. Disclosure may also be required *in couple and family therapy*, or when different family members are seen individually. When conducting therapy where the unit of treatment is more than one person, confidentiality and privilege do not apply between the couple or among family members. I will use my clinical judgment when revealing such information. I will not release records to any outside party unless I, Thuy Cao, am authorized to do so by all adult family members who were part of the treatment.

Emergencies: If there is an emergency during our work together, or in the future after termination, where I, Thuy Cao, become concerned about your personal safety, the possibility of you injuring someone else, or about you receiving proper psychiatric care, I will do whatever I can within the limits of the law, to prevent you from injuring yourself or others and to ensure that you receive the proper medical care. For this purpose, I may also contact the police, hospital or the person whose name you have provided on the biographical sheet.

Health Insurance & Confidentiality of Records: Disclosure of confidential information may be required by your health insurance carrier or HMO/PPO/MCO/EAP in order to process the claims. If you so instruct me, I, Thuy Cao, will only disseminate the minimum necessary information to the carrier. Unless authorize by you explicitly, the Psychotherapy Notes will not be disclosed to your insurance carrier. I have no control or knowledge over what insurance companies do with the information I submit or who has access to this information. You must be aware that submitting a mental health invoice for reimbursement carries a certain amount of risk to confidentiality, privacy, or to future eligibility to obtain health or life insurance. The risk stems from the fact that mental health information is entered into insurance companies' computers and soon will also be reported to the, congress-approved, National Medical Data Bank. Accessibility to companies' computers or to the National Medical Data Bank database is always in question, as computers are inherently vulnerable to break-ins and unauthorized access. Medical data has been reported to have been sold, stolen, or accessed by enforcement agencies; therefore, you are in a vulnerable position.

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Confidentiality of E-mail, Cell Phone, Text Messaging and Faxes Communication: It is very important to be aware that e-mail, cell phone (also cordless phones) and text messaging communication can be relatively easily accessed by unauthorized people and hence, the privacy and confidentiality of such communication can be easily compromised. E-mails, in particular, are vulnerable to such unauthorized access due to the fact that servers have unlimited and direct access to all e-mails that go through them. Faxes can be sent erroneously to the wrong address. Please notify me, Thuy Cao, at the beginning of treatment if you decide to avoid or limit in any way the use of any or all of the above-mentioned communication devices. Please do not use e-mail, text message or faxes in emergency situations.

Litigation Limitation: Due to the nature of the therapeutic process and the fact that it often involves making a full disclosure with regard to many matters which may be of a confidential nature, it is agreed that should there be legal proceedings (such as, but not limited to **divorce and custody disputes**, injuries, lawsuits, etc.), neither you (client) nor your attorney, nor anyone else acting on your behalf will call on me, Thuy Cao, to testify in court or at any other proceeding, nor will a disclosure of the psychotherapy records be requested.

Consultation: I, Thuy Cao, consult from time to time with other professionals regarding my clients; however, the client's name or other identifying information is never mentioned. The client's identity remains completely anonymous, and confidentiality is fully maintained.

* Considering all of the above exclusions, if it is still appropriate, upon your request, I, Thuy Cao, will release information to any agency/person you specify unless I conclude that releasing such information might be harmful in any way.

THE PROCESS OF THERAPY/EVALUATION: Being in therapy is a good investment in yourself and your future. Participation in therapy can result in a number of benefits to you, including improving interpersonal relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to seek therapy. Working toward these benefits; however, requires effort on your part. Psychotherapy requires your very active involvement, honesty, and openness in order to change or modify your thoughts, feelings and/or behavior. Periodically, I will ask for your feedback and views on your therapy, its progress, and other aspects of the therapy and will expect you to respond openly and honestly. Sometimes more than one approach can be helpful in dealing with a certain situation. During evaluation or therapy, remembering or talking about unpleasant events, feelings, or thoughts can result in your experiencing considerable discomfort or strong feelings of anger, sadness, worry, fear, etc. or experiencing anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc. I may challenge some of your assumptions or perceptions or propose different ways of looking at, thinking about, or handling situations that can cause you to feel very upset, angry, depressed, challenged, or disappointed. Attempting to resolve issues that brought you to therapy in the first place, such as personal or interpersonal relationships, may result in changes that were not originally intended. Psychotherapy may result in decisions about changing behaviors, employment, substance use, schooling, housing, or relationships. Sometimes a decision that is positive for one family member is viewed quite negatively by another family member. Change will sometimes be easy and swift, but more often it will be slow and even frustrating. There is no guarantee that psychotherapy will yield positive or intended results. During the course of therapy, I, Thuy Cao, will likely draw on various psychological approaches according, in part, to the problem that is being treated and my assessment of what will best benefit you. These approaches include behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, existential, system/family, developmental (adult, child, family), or psycho-educational.

Length of Sessions: Other than the initial session, individual sessions are generally 50 minutes, group sessions are 90 minutes, and couples are generally 60 minutes in length, depending on need.

Dual Relationships: A "dual relationship" refers to situations in which the therapist has more than one role with the client. For example, I cannot be your therapist and your friend; cannot treat close relatives; cannot hire you or recommend you for anything; cannot accept expensive gifts or anything that might influence how I treat you. We may discuss sexual issues and feelings, but therapy should never involve sexual activity between clients and therapists. I hope our relationship will be warm and close, but it will be about you and helping you. It is not a mutual

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relationship in that you will not learn much about me, about my personal life, and you are not responsible for tending to my needs and feelings. My only needs from you are that you keep your appointments and pay me for my services. If there is a potential dual relationship, it needs to be discussed and evaluated to see if it would be wiser to continue therapy or transfer you to a different therapist. Avoiding dual relationships leaves you freer to be open and honest with me.

Termination: As set forth above, after the first couple of meetings, I will assess if I can be of benefit to you. I do not accept clients who, in my opinion, I cannot help. In such a case, I will give you a number of referrals that you can contact. If at any point during psychotherapy, I assess that I am not effective in helping you reach the therapeutic goals, I am obliged to discuss it with you and, if appropriate, to terminate treatment. In such a case, I would give you a number of referrals that may be of help to you. If you request it and authorize it in writing, I, Thuy Cao, will talk to the psychotherapist of your choice 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. If I have your written consent, I will provide her or him with the essential information needed. You have the right to terminate therapy 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.

TELEPHONE & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES: If you need to contact me between sessions, please leave a message on the answering machine (424) 835-0880 and your call will be returned as soon as possible. I, Thuy Cao, check my messages a few times a day, but never during the night time. I check messages less frequently on weekends and holidays. If an emergency situation arises, please indicate it clearly in your message. If you need to talk to someone right away, you can call the 24-hour crisis Suicide Prevention Center (877) 727-4747, the Police (911), or the 24-hour Psychiatric Emergency (800) 854-7771.

PAYMENTS & INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT: Clients are expected to pay the standard fee of \$150.00 per 50 minute session at the end of each session or at the end of the month unless other arrangements have been made. Telephone conversations, site visits, report writing and reading, consultation with other professionals, release of information, reading records, longer sessions, travel time, etc. will be charged at the same rate, unless indicated and agreed otherwise. Please notify me if any problem arises during the course of therapy regarding your ability to make timely payments. Clients who carry insurance should remember that professional services are rendered and charged to the clients and not to the insurance companies. Upon request, I can provide you with a copy of your receipt on a monthly basis, which you can then submit to your insurance company for reimbursement if you so choose. As was indicated in the section, *Health Insurance & Confidentiality of Records*, you must be aware that submitting a mental health invoice for reimbursement carries a certain amount of risk. Not all issues/conditions/problems, which are the focus of psychotherapy, are reimbursed by insurance companies. It is your responsibility to verify the specifics of your coverage.

MEDIATION & ARBITRATION: All disputes arising out of or in relation to this agreement to provide psychotherapy services shall first be referred to mediation, before, and as a pre-condition of, the initiation of arbitration. The mediator shall be a neutral third party chosen by agreement of me, Thuy Cao, and client(s). The cost of such mediation, if any, shall be split equally, unless otherwise agreed. In the event that mediation is unsuccessful, any unresolved controversy related to this agreement should be submitted to and settled by binding arbitration in Los Angeles County, I in accordance with the rules of the American Arbitration Association which are in effect at the time the demand for arbitration is filed. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in the event that your account is overdue (unpaid) and there is no agreement on a payment plan, I, Thuy Cao, can use legal means (court, collection agency, etc.) to obtain payment. The prevailing party in arbitration or collection proceedings shall be entitled to recover a reasonable sum for attorneys' fees. In the case of arbitration, the arbitrator will determine that sum.

I LOOK FORWARD TO OUR WORK TOGETHER. I welcome your questions. Please do not forget to sign and return to me the separate form title, *Receipt Of Office and Privacy Policies*.