

## LIVE OAKS COUNSELING

Welcome to our practice. We appreciate your giving us the opportunity to be of help to you.

This brochure answers some questions clients often ask about our therapy practice. It is important to us that you know how we will work together. Our work will be most helpful to you when you have a clear idea of what we are trying to do.

We would like to provide information about the following in a general way:

- What the risks and benefits of therapy are
- What the goals of therapy are and what our methods of treatment are like
- How long therapy might take
- How much our services cost, and how we handle money matters
- Other areas of our relationship

After you read this brochure we can discuss, in person, how these issues apply to your own situation. This brochure is yours to keep and refer to later. Please read all of it and mark any parts that are not clear to you. Write down any questions you think of, and we will discuss them at our next meeting. When you have read and fully understood this information, please sign it at the end. Your therapist will sign it as well. You may request a copy if you so desire.

### **About Psychotherapy**

Because you will be putting a good deal of time, money, and energy into therapy, you should choose a therapist carefully. We strongly believe that you should feel comfortable with the therapist you choose and hopeful about the therapy. When you feel this way, therapy is more likely to be very helpful to you.

We think of our approach to helping people with their problems as a process. We offer opportunities to develop insight into behavior and motivations and to help develop responses that better achieve client's goals. Our general aim is to help individuals become more productive and happier with their lives and their relationships.

The following are just some of the services offered:

- Relationship Counseling
- Couples Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Divorce Recovery- individual and group
- Play Therapy
- Parenting Coaching

We view therapy as a partnership. You define the problem areas to be worked on. We use some special knowledge to help you make the changes you want to make. Psychotherapy is not like visiting a medical doctor. It requires your very active involvement. It requires your best efforts to change thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. For example, if we don't ask, we want you to tell us about important experiences, what they mean to you, and what strong feelings are involved. This is one of the ways you are an active partner in therapy.

In our treatment plan, we will list the areas to work on, our goals, the methods we will use, the time and money commitments we will make, and some other things. From time to time, we will look together at our progress and goals. If we think we need to, we can then change our treatment plan, its goals, and its methods.

An important part of your therapy will be practicing new skills that you will learn in our sessions. We will ask you to practice these skills outside our meetings, and we will work together to set up homework assignments for you. You will probably have to work on relationships in your life and make long-term efforts to get the best results. These are important parts of personal change. Change will sometimes be easy and quick, but more often it will be slow and frustrating, and you will need to keep trying; however, you *can* learn new ways of looking at your problems that will be very helpful for changing your feelings and reactions.

### **About The Length of Therapy**

Most of our clients come to therapy once a week for various amounts of time. Each client and each case varies so the time spent in therapy also will vary. The process of

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ending therapy, called "termination," can be a very valuable part of our work. Stopping therapy should not be done casually, although either of us may decide to end it if we believe it is in your best interest. If you wish to stop therapy at any time, we may review our goals, the work we have done, any future work that needs to be done, and our choices. If you would like to take a "vacation" from therapy to try it on your own, we should discuss this. We can often make such a "vacation" be more helpful.

### **The Benefits and Risks of Therapy**

As with any treatment, there are some **risks** as well as many benefits with therapy. You should think about both the benefits and risks when making any treatment decisions. For example, in therapy, there is a risk clients will have uncomfortable levels of sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other negative feelings for a time. These feelings and/or memories may bother a client at work or in school. Also, clients in therapy may have problems with people important to them. Sometimes a client's problems may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment. Most of these risks are to be expected when people are making any important changes in their lives.

While you consider these risks, you should know also that the many **benefits of therapy** have been shown by scientists to be measurable as evidenced by many studies. People who are depressed may find their mood lifting. People who have experience social anxiety or general anxiety may find better methods of coping or controlling their fear. Clients' relationships and coping skills may improve greatly through therapy. They may get more satisfaction out of social and family relationships. Their personal goals and values may become clearer. They may grow in many directions—as people, in their close relationships, in their work or schooling, and in the ability to enjoy their lives.

### Consultations

If you wish for another professional's opinion at any time, or wish to talk with another therapist, I will help you find a qualified person and will provide him or her with the information needed with your written permission.

### **What to Expect from Our Relationship**

As professional counselors, we will use our best knowledge and skills to help you. This includes following the rules and standards of the Texas Counseling Association, or TCA. In your best interests, the TCA puts limits on the relationship between a therapist and a client, and we will abide by these. Here is an explanation of these limits, so you will not think they are personal responses to you.

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First, we are licensed and trained to practice counseling—not law, medicine, or any other profession. We are not able to give you good advice from these other professional viewpoints.

Second, state laws and the rules of the TCA require us to keep what you tell us confidential (that is, private). You can trust all of our

professionals not to tell anyone else what you tell us, except in certain limited situations, which are explained below in the section titled “About Confidentiality.” It is important for you to know that we try not to reveal who our clients are. This is part of our efforts to maintain your privacy. If we meet on the street or socially, we may not say hello or talk to you very much. Our behavior will not be a personal reaction to you, but a way to maintain the confidentiality of our relationship.

### **About Confidentiality**

We will treat with great care all the information you share with us. Live Oaks Counseling, operates within the federal guidelines of HIPAA and the Texas Medical Record Privacy Act. A copy of our privacy practices is available to all new clients. It is your legal right that our sessions and our records about you be kept private. That is why we ask you to sign a ***Release of Records*** form before we can talk about you or send our records about you to anyone else.

In all but a few rare situations, your confidentiality is protected by state and federal law and by the rules of our profession. Here are the most common cases in which confidentiality is not protected:

1. If you were sent to us by a court for evaluation or treatment, the court expects a report from us. If this is your situation, please talk with me before you tell me anything you do not want the court to know. You have a right to tell me only what you are comfortable with telling. In instances where the court was not involved when a client came to see us but is later involved, we may be subpoenaed by the Court and will be required to provide the information requested.
2. If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or another person, the law requires me to try to prevent harm from occurring. This means telling others about the threat; therefore, be aware that serious threats may require disclosure to an appropriate third party.

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3. If you tell us something that leads us to believe a child, elderly person or disabled person has been or will be abused or neglected, we are legally required to report this to the authorities.
4. If you are using insurance benefits for counseling, personal information and a mental health diagnosis must be shared with your insurance company or EAP for payment of benefits. It will become part of your permanent medical record. If you are concerned about how the information will affect you, you should discuss this with us. Our policy is to provide only as much information as the insurance company will need to pay your benefits. Please understand that we have no control over how these records are handled at the insurance company.

There are situations in which we might talk about part of your case with another therapist. As instructed by our code of ethics, professionals sometimes consult other professionals about clients. It is one of the ways we gain understanding of how others' viewpoint may help us in our work with clients. These persons are also required to keep your information private. Your name will never be given to them, and they will be told only as much as they need to know to understand your situation.

Except for the situations described above, our organization will always strive to maintain your privacy. I also ask you not to disclose the name or identity of any other client being seen in this office. All staff members who see your records have been trained in how to keep records confidential. If your records need to be seen by another professional, or anyone else, and if you agree to share these records, you will need to sign a release form. I do not divulge the fact that you are a client or anything about you or your sessions to anyone, unless you request me (in writing) to do so.

It is our office policy to retain clients' records for 7 years after the end of our therapy.

## **Our Background**

Live Oaks Counseling, was founded by Elaine S. Brown, MA JD, LPC. Prior to starting LOC in 2015, Elaine had practiced counseling in private practice and had practice law for almost 20 years prior to continuing her education in Counseling Psychology. In an effort to bring quality services to those touched by divorce, separation and related issues, Elaine is joined by other counselors and counselor-interns, who all have at least a Master's degree in counseling or a related field. In addition, all practitioners here have practiced

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counseling in practicum, internships, and/or work environments, and each practitioner has a license relevant to their field.

Again, welcome to our practice. Please feel free to contact us with any concerns or questions at any time. We look forward to working with you!

Elaine S. Brown, MA JD, LPC

Director