



**Elisa M. Thomas** MA LMFT  
LICENSED MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPIST

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Successful psychotherapy is built on a trusting relationship between client and therapist where each person's responsibilities to the other are clearly stated upfront. This makes it possible for intelligent and informed decision making to take place. Trust is built by keeping agreements and following through with what we say we will do. This form outlines my responsibilities to you as my client and your responsibilities in therapy to me as your therapist to gain the most benefit. My goal is to educate you and give you as much information as you need to make an informed decision about your care. Please take time now to read the information below and sign it at the bottom if you are in agreement with these provisions. I will give you a copy of the signed form for you to retain and refer to during our work together.

### **My Training and Practice**

I earned a Masters Degree in Counseling with a concentration in Transpersonal Therapy in 2006 while living in California and obtained my Arizona Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist License in January of 2011. From 2005-2006, as part of my graduate degree requirements I worked as a California Marriage and Family intern in a small adult outpatient therapy group in Berkeley, working with individuals, families and groups on issues involving substance abuse, codependence, developmental immaturity, weight and eating problems, lack of healthy self esteem, anxiety, depression and much more. Later, from 2007-2010, I was a program therapist for an inpatient boarding school for teenage girls in Arizona working on issues involving successful parenting skills, individual and family developmental immaturity, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, underachievement, life skills and finding balance and happiness in their lives. Having passed the required Arizona exam and fulfilling the 3200 experience hours and supervision requirements of the state, I have recently started a private practice in Sedona, Arizona in January of 2011. I am a clinical member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, the Arizona Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and a clinical member of the Association for Transpersonal Psychology

### **My Treatment Style**

I view informing you about your treatment and evaluating your progress as an ongoing process, not a one time event. We will have a continuing dialogue as therapy proceeds and if treatment is not going as you expected it might, and/or you would like to change either the issues/goals we are working on or would like to change the way it is being worked on, you have that right and I am relying on you to bring that up as a part of your therapy. I view my role as your therapist is to be completely honest and direct with you. At times, the truth as I see it may be hard to hear; I will confront you in a respectful way if need be. Above all, my job in therapy with you is to give you my honest opinion about what I believe is contributing to a lack of

healthy personal growth in relationships. I promise you that I will find the most caring, respectful and tactful way to share my thoughts and opinions in a professional manner.

I work with people using a family systems orientation. That means that I look at each individual in the family as being part of a larger system and work with how each influences the other. Depending on the issues being worked on I work from two perspectives- cognitive and emotional. For individual brief work, I often use Depth Oriented Brief Therapy techniques (Bruce Ecker and Laurel Hulley) which may incorporate cognitive behavioral and behavior modification approaches as well as Post Induction Therapy techniques (developed by Pia Mellody and incorporated into many of the programs of The Meadows treatment center in Wickenburg, Arizona) which delves into the family of origin and past traumas in order to make sense of current feelings and behaviors. I will occasionally use Gestalt Therapy, sandtray work, art therapy, visualization and meditation, journaling, Focusing, family mapping and use of genograms, and inner child work as alternative therapies with all of my clients. In addition, I encourage and educate clients about Non-Violent Communication practice (Marshall Rosenberg). With couples and families I utilize experiential techniques found in the Imago Relationship Therapy (Harville Hendrix) as well as the Post Induction work outlined above, delving into family of origin, early trauma and developmental immaturity. I also use Virginia Satir's experiential family work such as family sculpting and psychodrama. I will at times also use other experiential mindfulness techniques (Rob Fisher) as a brief technique to tap into unconscious attitudes and beliefs about the self and other in relationship. I welcome those who are in recovery and familiar with the 12 Step model and encourage use of these programs and support groups.

### **Procedures and Your Treatment**

When you arrive at the office, please have a seat and I will come out to greet you at the appropriate time. If you arrive late, I will leave my door open for you to just come right on in. After an initial evaluation and assessment, I will create a formal treatment plan and discuss your goals and objectives in therapy with you. We will set priorities together, I will give you a general idea of my philosophy and share some preliminary ways in which I believe your goals can be achieved. I will require your signature on the plan we agree on in order to proceed. Your signature on the plan will convey to me that you understand it and are satisfied with the direction we are going. Should one technique in your therapy not work as I had intended it would, I will evaluate your progress and then discuss with you what possible alternatives might be available. Should you decide, after participating in these techniques, that you would rather not use them, that is always your choice and we can work together to find another way that will work. If some of the alternatives are not techniques that I am skilled in delivering I will not hesitate to refer you to another professional who I believe will give you the care you need. I want all of my clients to understand what the therapeutic relationship will consist of and encourage you to ask questions when needed to gain that understanding.

Oftentimes, when therapy is begun clients may feel more open, vulnerable, sometimes excited and agitated and after being reminded of past traumas can also feel worse than when they walked in the door. If and when this happens it will usually just be a matter of time before the cloud lifts and new insights and understandings start to form. This process will always be unique to each person and are considered part of an expected treatment pattern. Gradually, a sense of calm, optimism, motivation, happiness and sometimes even joy return. There is no way to predict ahead of time when these feelings and stages of therapy will take place.

I encourage you to tell me when or if it seems that any of the feelings you are having are getting in the way or your normal activities, lasting longer than feels right to you and are preventing you from feeling good about yourself. Together we will find an appropriate solution.

There are however, always risks to therapy. There are no guarantees that any form of therapy will provide you with the outcomes that you desire.

### **Confidentiality**

The information you share with me as your therapist is strictly confidential. I will respect and guard your information and will not share it with anyone else, except where you have specifically given me a written authorization to do so. There are, however, very specific instances where I am legally mandated by the State of Arizona to disclose your confidential information. If I become aware, in the process of your therapy with me, of information which suggests that child abuse, elder abuse, threats of violence exist to you or a third party, or if I believe that you have become seriously suicidal and are a threat to yourself or others, I am obligated to disclose this information to the local sheriff or police department in order to keep you and others safe from harm. I am also obligated to the person(s) identified as being targets of the proposed violent acts or threats spoken of to warn them as well.

### **Diagnosis**

If you require a statement of services provided in order to be reimbursed by an insurance company for fees you have paid, these companies traditionally require a diagnosis. A diagnosis code on the form will refer to a description of the nature of the problems or issues you bring into therapy. There is a generally accepted coding process acceptable by the insurance industry and used by psychotherapists which is summarized in a book called the DSM-IV. I have a copy of the publication in my office and will at any time allow you access to it should you want to read it and ask further questions about the diagnosis given.

### **Vacations**

There will be times during the year that I will be away on vacation. My policy is to alert you in advance (approximately 6 weeks ahead) when these times will occur so that you will be prepared for this gap in therapy. As a courtesy, I would also like to have advance notice, 2 weeks or more if you have it, of any plans you have for vacations as well.

### **Your Records**

I will keep brief notes of the sessions we have in a client chart which will remain secure in a locked and confidential location. You have the right to a copy of your file at any time and you can also give me written permission to share the information in your file with another healthcare provider. Unless I receive your written permission no one else will have access to your files other than myself.

### **In Case of Emergencies**

I am generally available by telephone if I am not in a session with a client between the hours of 11 AM and 6 PM Monday through Friday. I am not a crisis therapist and do not generally take phone calls after hours or on the weekends. You are free to leave messages on my telephone if you can wait for a return call which might not happen until the end of the day or, if you call on a weekend, not until Monday morning. I generally check for messages first thing in the

morning, noon and in the late afternoon at 4PM. If you are having an emergency or emotional crisis and need help right away please call the Crisis Hotline at 1-800-273-8255. If you believe you or someone you know are in immediate danger of suicide or a danger to yourself or others **call 911 IMMEDIATELY.**

### **Your Responsibilities as My Client**

You are responsible for being on time for your appointments to take full advantage of the therapy session scheduled. You will bring payment in full for each session and present it at the beginning of the session. I request this for a specific reason, mainly because I view it as more advantageous for you to leave an emotional session and properly process and reflect on it without suddenly having to interrupt the feeling process and cutting it short by having to write a check.

If you are late to the session, we will still end at the designated ending time. If you do not come to a session that you previously arranged but do not cancel, you will still be charged for the session. I will need 24 hours advance notice for cancellations. This notice will properly be given by calling my office number (928)-202-1767 and leaving your name, date and time of the session, reason for canceling and another date that might work for you to continue with therapy along with your telephone number. I will be responsible for calling you to confirm the next session that I have available.

Exceptions will be made should you or someone you are directly responsible for have an unforeseen emergency or fall ill suddenly. When in doubt, please call me so that we can have a discussion about it. I do not want to jeopardize your work or our relationship for things that remain outside of your immediate control.

Fees may be paid either in cash or by check (I do not accept credit cards or PayPal) and made out to: **Elisa M. Thomas MA, LMFT.**

My fees are as follows:

- Individuals-50 minute session-\$85.00
- Individuals-110 minute individual session-\$170.00
- Couples -50 minute session-\$100.00
- Couples-110 minute sessions-\$200.00
- Family-50 minute session-\$100.00
- Family- 110 minute session-\$200.00
- Group participation fees (variable, please check current group materials)

Sessions that go beyond their standard times are charged at a prorated amount based on the fifty minute session rate.

Should a check you have given me in payment be returned by the bank for whatever reason, I will notify you by telephone and in addition to the stated fees for services, a \$15 bank fee will be charged to cover any fees that I have incurred as a result. Therapy services will not resume until these fees have been paid. No bartering for services will be allowed and balances will not be kept.

Telephone discussions regarding scheduling or insurance questions generally will not be charged to the client. Should telephone conversations take on a therapeutic nature and last longer than 10 minutes I will charge for my time at a prorated amount based on the normal \$85 per therapy hour individual rate.

As a part of your therapy I may suggest that you contact either your primary care provider or a psychiatrist in order for them to assess a need for medication which I believe would aid therapy and at least temporarily give you relief from symptoms you may be having that I see as getting in the way of your therapeutic progress. In this case, I will give you several names of doctors nearby if need be that might be able to help you, however I cannot guarantee that they will be able to see you as their client in an expeditious manner.

### **Potential Risks of Therapy**

Anytime emotional issues are discussed in therapy there is a potential risk for continued after effects that can not fully be anticipated. Often times a client will feel “worse” rather than “better” having processed deeply disturbing emotional issues. You may at times end a session in deep emotions, somewhat distracted and not able to give full attention to activities that deserve it, i.e. driving, cognitive analytical work, or taking care of someone else’s needs. In this case, I will act promptly to call this to your attention in order to guard against any further damage, suggesting that you take care of yourself, spend as much time as possible sitting in the waiting area until you feel grounded again and able to undertake the aforementioned tasks. It may be necessary in this case to call a friend or family member to drive you home in order to keep yourself safe. It is important that you leave enough time between the end of the session and other tasks you may have to do so that you can take this time without feeling pressured. It is important to respect the emotional process you have been through and give yourself the proper adjustment time needed.

### **Terminating Therapy**

When my clients feel they have accomplished the goals they have set out to achieve at the beginning of therapy, therapy usually ends. However, at times, clients may feel they would like to switch into a different form of therapy, attending groups for example as a way of practicing the skills they have learned in either individual or family counseling.

There are times however, when terminating therapy may be appropriate and in your best interest. If, for example, I believe that the work we are doing together is not benefiting you and that referral to another professional is in order, or that the issues you need to work on are beyond my competence, I will discuss this with you and begin the termination process. If you are experiencing financial difficulty and become financially unable to pay for your sessions it may become necessary to terminate therapy. I believe accumulating debt is counterproductive to a healthy therapy process, however if you are having trouble I encourage you to talk with me about your circumstances before we come to a conclusion about terminating your work. If you are not keeping agreements with me, for example, coming to sessions under the influence, not attending 12 step groups as agreed to, not seeing other professionals for recommended assessments for medications we have discussed, not completing homework assignments on a routine basis we may need to end therapy. I will discuss and initiate termination of therapy and refer you to other professionals as needed. I want you to have the best care possible, even if it means referring you to someone else.

You have the right to stop therapy with me at any time. Terminating therapy, however, is a critically important process and deserves appropriate time to be spent (usually 4 weeks) to allow for ample, healthy and respectful closure to the relationship and not a potential repetition of poor relationship patterns from the past.

Thank you for choosing me as your therapist and I look forward to a mutually beneficial relationship.

I understand the above information, have the capacity to consent and freely do consent to psychotherapeutic treatment under the above conditions. If the client is a child or adolescent, one or both authorized parents will sign below giving their consent. If parents are divorced, a parent given authorized custody by the court of the child will give their consent AND provide a copy of the divorce decree authorizing such custody provisions.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Client Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Custodial Parent's Signature/Guardian's signature (If applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name