

# Jan Ford Mustin, Ph.D.

Psychologist

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A Professional Corporation

## The Therapy Process: How it works

### **Orientation Appointment:**

Your very first visit to the office is designed to introduce you to the office staff, meet with the office manager and become familiar with office procedures. This first "get acquainted" meeting usually lasts about one hour and is offered to you at no cost. During this time you will review with the office manager standard office policies, be given a tour of our facility and discuss the auxiliary services such as the peak performance training, the bookstore, and the educational video services which are available to you while you are a client in my practice.

The office manager will give you a packet of information which helps you understand the nature of services we provide, the manner in which appointments are made and the fees for professional services. She will also ask you to complete a confidential questionnaire in order to clearly state your concerns and your particular reasons for seeking therapy services.

During this orientation visit you are encouraged to ask the office manager any procedural questions you might have. She will be happy to answer them for you and encourage you to jot down any additional questions you may have for your therapist.

### **Initial Consultation Appointment:**

Your first session with a therapist will consist of obtaining detailed information about the situation which brings you to seek therapy. This session is designed to help the therapist get a clear picture of the circumstances surrounding the problems for which you seek relief. This session lasts approximately 45 minutes and is charged at our standard professional rate for clinical diagnostic appointments, \$235.

As you begin to gain in personal perspective you may start to develop new attitudes which will then lead to behavioral changes. Often it is possible to view the current symptoms or problems as merely dysfunctional coping mechanisms rather than random consequences. Once understood as such, it is possible to find more constructive alternatives. If appropriate, you will be given homework assignments to work on between appointments and your therapist may recommend reading material or audio and video tapes.

Throughout this process, we welcome your feedback in our work together. The therapists in this practice view the therapeutic process as a collaboration in which your progress and reaction to all aspects of your therapy are extremely important to us. Your feedback, whether positive or negative, will help us do our jobs better.

## **Duration of Therapy:**

The length of treatment is widely variable, ranging from just a few weeks to several years depending on many factors. Your therapist will be happy to discuss with you your progress and how near you are to your therapy goals as you progress through treatment. Ideally, completion of therapy is determined mutually, with both you and your therapist participating in the decisions which lead you to a successful conclusion together.

## **Resistance to Change:**

Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy. If you have questions about our procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise.

No discussion of therapy would be complete without mentioning the concept of "resistance." Just as there might be a tendency to avoid or procrastinate in one's preparation of an academic lesson, there are often strong feelings of resistance towards emotional issues. This is a very normal and necessary dynamic which is actually a healthy defense mechanism, sometimes called the approach/avoidance curve. As we approach our goals, often we experience rapid progress at first, and then, as we draw nearer to those goals, we may pull back and find any number of excuses not to proceed. As you learn new truths about yourself and others, it will be natural for you to let go of certain old ideas and beliefs in order to replace them with more realistic and healthy ones. It is as natural for us to find ourselves procrastinating about this task of letting go and moving forward as if we were putting off a household chore such as taking out the trash.

This approach/avoidance dynamic may take the form of your missing appointments, finding excuses to postpone appointments, finding financial reasons that therapy is no longer "feasible" or arriving any of a number of reasons to interrupt your therapy. Avoidance may be so strong that you may actually develop physiological symptoms such as headache, stomach upset or flu which interfere with your keeping your appointments. These "reasons" may seem perfectly valid on the surface and the ailments may be "real," but the unconscious motive of avoidance may be involved. Your therapist will help you spot these occasions of approach/avoidance, help you see them for what they really are, a normal part of your progress, and help you deal with your feelings of resistance to aspects of your personal growth in a manner which is productive and empowering for you.

Your therapist is trained to help you identify self-defeating behaviors such as avoidance. If you welcome expert assistance with these "bumps in the road" you will feel much more comfortable and more in charge of your feelings throughout the process. In fact, much of the benefit of therapy has to do with your learning about your own resistance to change and becoming more aware of self-defeating, dysfunctional responses. Once identified for what they

are, old maladaptive behaviors may be traded in for behaviors which promote greater self-esteem and effectiveness.

**Confidentiality:**

The relationship between you and your therapist is strictly confidential. and all aspects of your experience in this office are considered privileged. Our therapists and staff will treat your privacy and anonymity with the utmost respect. Only with your duly authorized written consent would any information about you be released to any other individual other than yourself, and then, only with your express direction and instruction.

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Your Signature

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Date

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Witness

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Date