



## **Office Policies & General Information Agreement for Psychotherapy Services-Informed Consent for Psychotherapy**

**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 written permission except where disclosure is required by law.

**WHEN DISCLOSURE IS REQUIRED OR MAY BE REQUIRED BY LAW:** Some of the circumstances where disclosure is required or may be required by law are: where there is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent, or elder abuse or neglect; where a client presents a danger to self, to others, to property, or is gravely disabled; or when a client's family members communicate to Nancy that the client presents a danger to others. Disclosure may also be required pursuant to a legal proceeding by or against you. 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 Nancy. In couple and family therapy, or when different family members are seen individually, even over a period of time, confidentiality and privilege do not apply between the couple or among family members, unless otherwise agreed upon. Nancy will use his/her clinical judgment when revealing such information. Nancy will not release records to any outside party unless s/he is authorized to do so by all adult parties who were part of the family therapy, couple therapy or other treatment that involved more than one adult client, unless he/she is required by law. While I will do my best to seek your authorization to release the requested information regarding our psychotherapy from you first, in some situations a judge can order the release of the records of your psychotherapy with me or may order me to testify in regard to our therapeutic work.

**EMERGENCY:** If there is an emergency during therapy, or in the future after termination, where Nancy becomes concerned about your personal safety, the possibility of you injuring someone else, or about you receiving proper psychiatric care, she will do whatever she 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, she may also contact 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 Nancy to only the minimum necessary information will be communicated to the carrier. Nancy has no control over, or knowledge of, what insurance companies do with the information she submits 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 capacity to obtain health or life insurance or even a job. The risk stems from the fact that mental health information is likely to be entered into big insurance companies' computers and may be reported to the 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 hacking and unauthorized access. Medical data has also been reported to have been legally accessed by law enforcement and other agencies, which also puts you in a vulnerable position.



**LITIGATION:** Sometimes patients become involved in litigation while they are in therapy or after therapy has been completed. Sometimes patients (or the opposing attorney, in a legal case) want the records disclosed to the legal system. Due to the nature of the psychotherapeutic process and the fact that it often involves making a full disclosure with regard to many matters, clients' records are generally confidential and private in nature. Patients should know that very serious consequences can result from disclosing therapy records to the legal system. Such disclosures may negatively affect the outcome of custody disputes or other legal matters and may negatively affect the therapeutic relationship. If you or the opposing attorney are considering requesting Nancy's disclosure of the records, Nancy will do her best to discuss with you the risks and benefits of doing so. As noted in this document, you have the right to review your own psychotherapy records anytime. (See also relevant section above: "WHEN DISCLOSURE IS REQUIRED OR MAY BE REQUIRED BY LAW")

**CONSULTATION:** Nancy consults regularly with other professionals regarding her clients; however, each client's identity remains completely anonymous and confidentiality is fully maintained.

**E-MAILS, CELL PHONES, TEXTS, COMPUTERS, AND FAXES:** It is very important to be aware that computers and unencrypted emails, texts, and e-fax communications (which are part of the clinical records) can be rather easily accessed by unauthorized people and, hence, can compromise the privacy and confidentiality of such communications. Emails, texts, and e-faxes, in particular, are vulnerable to such unauthorized access due to the fact that servers or communication companies may have unlimited and direct access to all emails, texts and e-faxes that go through them. While data on Nancy's laptop is encrypted, emails, texts and e-faxes are not. It is always a possibility that e-faxes, texts, and emails can be sent erroneously to the wrong address and computers. Nancy's laptop is equipped with a firewall, a virus protection and a password, and he backs up all confidential information from his computer on a regular basis onto an encrypted hard-drive. Also, be aware that phone messages are transcribed and sent to Nancy via unencrypted emails. Please notify Nancy if you decide to avoid or limit, in any way, the use of email, texts, cell phones calls, phone messages, or e-faxes. If you communicate confidential or private information via unencrypted emails, texts or e-faxes or via phone messages, Nancy will assume that you have made an informed decision, will view it as your agreement to take the risk that such communication may be intercepted, and he will honor your desire to communicate on such matters. Please do not use texts, emails, voice mails, or faxes for emergencies.

**RECORDS AND YOUR RIGHT TO REVIEW THEM:** Both the law and the standards of Nancy profession require that she keep treatment records for at least 7 years. Please note that clinically relevant information from emails, texts, and faxes are part of the clinical records. Unless otherwise agreed to be necessary, Nancy retains clinical records only as long as is mandated by Arizona law. If you have concerns regarding the treatment records, please discuss them with Nancy. As a client, you have the right to review or receive a summary of your records at any time, except in limited legal or emergency circumstances or when Nancy assesses that releasing such information might be harmful in any way. In such a case, Nancy will provide the records to an appropriate and legitimate mental health professional of your choice. Considering all of the above exclusions, if it is still appropriate, and upon your request, Nancy will release information to any agency/person you specify unless Nancy assesses that releasing such information might be harmful in any way. When more than one client is involved in treatment, such as in cases of couple and family therapy, Nancy will release records only with signed authorizations from all the adults (or all those who legally can authorize such a release) involved in the treatment.



**TELEPHONE & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:** If you need to contact Nancy between sessions, please leave a message or text at (928)707-1841 and your call will be returned as soon as possible. Nancy checks her messages a few times during the daytime only, unless she is out of town. If an emergency situation arises, indicate it clearly in your message and if you need to talk to someone right away call Psychiatric Emergency Services. Prescott: 877-756-4090 for 24-hour crisis line or the Police: 911. Please do not use email or faxes for emergencies. Nancy does not always check her email daily.

**PAYMENTS & INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT:** Clients are expected to pay the standard fee of \$125 per 60 minute at the end of each session. Telephone conversations, site visits, writing and reading of reports, 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 upon otherwise. Please notify Nancy if any problems arise 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 insurance companies. Copays and deductible payments will be collected at the time of service unless other agreements have been made ahead of time. 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 dealt with in psychotherapy, are reimbursed by insurance companies. It is your responsibility to verify the specifics of your coverage. If your account is overdue (unpaid) and there is no written agreement on a payment plan, Nancy Gerlach can use legal or other means (courts, collection agencies, etc.) to obtain payment.

**THE PROCESS OF THERAPY/EVALUATION AND SCOPE OF PRACTICE:** 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 your thoughts, feelings, and/or behavior. Nancy 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 you experiencing considerable discomfort or strong feelings of anger, sadness, worry, fear, etc., or experiencing anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc. Nancy may challenge some of your assumptions or perceptions or propose different ways of looking at, thinking about, or handling situations, which 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, Nancy is likely to draw on various psychological approaches according, in part, to the problem that is being treated and her assessment of what will best benefit you. These approaches include, but are not limited to, behavioral, cognitive-behavioral, cognitive, psychodynamic, Somatic Experiencing, developmental (adult, child, family), Internal Family Systems or psycho-educational. Nancy **provides neither custody evaluation recommendation nor medication or prescription recommendation nor legal advice**, as these activities do not fall within her scope of practice.



## **SOMATIC EXPERIENCING TOUCH**

Nancy may also incorporate non-sexual touch as part of psychotherapy. Sexual touch of clients by therapists is unethical and illegal. Nancy will ask your permission before touching you and you have the right to decline or refuse to be touched without any fear or concern of a negative response or reaction from your therapist.

Touch can be very beneficial but can also unexpectedly evoke emotions, thoughts, physical reactions, or memories that may be upsetting, depressing, evoke anger, etc. Sharing and processing such feelings with the therapist, if they arise, may be a helpful part of therapy. You may request not to be touched at any time during therapy without needing to explain it, if you choose not to, and without fear of a negative response or reaction from your therapist.

**TREATMENT PLANS:** Within a reasonable period of time after the initiation of treatment, Nancy will discuss with you your working understanding of the problem, treatment plan, therapeutic objectives, and your view of the possible outcomes of treatment. If you have any unanswered questions about any of the procedures used in the course of your therapy, their possible risks, Nancy's expertise in employing them, or about the treatment plan, please ask and you will be answered fully. You also have the right to ask about other treatments for your condition and the risks and benefits.

**TERMINATION:** As set forth above, after the first couple of meetings, Nancy will assess if she can be of benefit to you. Nancy does not work with clients who, in her opinion, she cannot help. In such a case, if appropriate, she will give you referrals that you can contact. If at any point during psychotherapy Nancy either assesses that she is not effective in helping you reach the therapeutic goals or perceived you as non-compliant or non-responsive, and if you are available and/or it is possible and appropriate to do, she will discuss with you the termination of treatment and conduct pre-termination counseling. In such a case, if appropriate and/or necessary, she would give you a couple of referrals that may be of help to you. If you request it and authorize it in writing, Nancy 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, Nancy will give you a couple of referrals that you may want to contact, and if she has your written consent, she will provide her or him with the essential information needed. You have the right to terminate therapy and communication at any time. If you choose to do so, upon your request and if appropriate and possible, Nancy will provide you with names of other qualified professionals whose services you might prefer.

**SOCIAL NETWORKING AND INTERNET SEARCHES:** I do not accept friend requests from current or former clients on social networking sites, such as Facebook. I believe that adding clients as friends on these sites and/or communicating via such sites can compromise their privacy and confidentiality. For this same reason, I request that clients not communicate with me via any interactive or social networking web sites.

**AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING:** Unless otherwise agreed to by all parties beforehand, there shall be no audio or video recording of therapy sessions, phone calls, or any other services provided by Nancy.

**CANCELLATION:** Since the scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, a minimum of 48 hours (2 days) 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. If you miss more than 2 sessions without giving appropriate notice, Nancy has the right to discontinue therapy depending on the circumstances.



Nancy Gerlach LCSW, SEP

I have read the above Office Policies and General Information, Agreement for Psychotherapy Services or Informed Consent for Psychotherapy carefully; I understand them and agree to comply with them:

**Client's Name (print)** \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Client's Name (print)** \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Psychotherapist's Name (print)** \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_