

**David Hammer, M.A., M.F.T.**  
*Individual and Family Therapy*  
license # MFC 22942

# FOR MY NEW CLIENT: WELCOME!

I believe there are two kinds of people in the world - those who have problems - and those who **do something** about their problems! You show a lot of courage by coming to therapy today to **do something** about your situation. Here's some information you need to know about how this works. **Before the session I will ask you to initial the bottom of the third page.** Please take a copy if you want one.

## WHAT IS PSYCHOTHERAPY OR COUNSELING?

I subscribe to the theory that our past teaches us how to behave in everyday life *automatically* - without making true choices. That means we can learn to think, feel and act differently at any age. The work starts with looking inward and learning about the way we behave and the effect on our spirit. Because I am a family therapist, I also look at how the people in your family influence you, and if they can help you change, even if they aren't in session. Because I am trained in treating emotional trauma, I understand how it may have long-lasting impact. If you have experienced these things, I can usually help you find relief with a treatment called EMDR.

At some point in therapy for emotional or relationship problems, people may find themselves feeling angry toward the therapist, afraid, or another strong emotion. Talking this out together is a significant and healthy part of the therapy because it usually represents one of your main issues coming up in another way. **IT IS IMPORTANT** that you express your feelings rather than just drop out.

**RISKS OF THERAPY**- No therapy can guarantee results, however, if you put out your best effort, you have a great chance of succeeding. In any course of therapy, it is possible to initially feel worse as you begin to explore problems and their possible solutions.

In couples or family therapy, each person may have a different goal. While David Hammer will help to promote agreement on goals, and work toward each person's best interests, some outcomes of counseling may be desired by one party and felt to be unacceptable by another family member. Perhaps the most severe example is when only one member of a couple decides upon divorce.

## IS THIS CONFIDENTIAL?

**IN THERAPY** - What you say in therapy is *confidential with exceptions*: when a child has been abused; when a minor child is "sexting"; when a person views child pornography; when an elderly or dependent adult has been abused; when you are in danger of hurting others or yourself; when an adult has a gun who has a 5 year prohibition against possession; when you make your mental health an issue in court. If you make your mental health an issue in a legal proceeding, you might be giving up your right to confidentiality to the other side in the dispute. Ask me to explain more if this concerns you or pertains to your situation.

**IN COUPLES' OR FAMILY THERAPY** - Written permission of all adults attending is required for information to be released. David Hammer will help family members disclose any secrets to each other, in order to facilitate better family functioning.

**FOR YOUR INSURANCE COVERAGE** - In order for your health insurance to cover the costs of your psychotherapy, otherwise confidential information about you needs to be released to your insurance, managed care company, or EAP that is monitoring use of your benefits in order for them to determine that your benefits are "medically necessary." When you signed up for your plan, you authorized disclosure of all your information. That group might be a company separate from your insurance company. This information includes, but is not limited to: diagnosis of psychiatric illness, a full description of your psychological condition and personal problems, your life history, and relationships to family and friends. The plan could also obtain a copy of your records at any time for their review. **David Hammer is not responsible for how your plan uses your information, to whom they release it, or whether they place it in a network computer database.** Think carefully before you decide to use your insurance coverage. If you have concerns, you should ask your managed care company who has access and what additional uses they have for your information. I can give you an expanded notice of my privacy practices if you wish.

**IN EMERGENCIES** - For example: If there is an emergency in which I have concerns about you causing injury to yourself or someone else, I am permitted to talk to someone who can help, like the emergency contact person whom you listed on your information sheet.

**SOCIAL MEDIA** - I won't acknowledge clients on sites like Facebook as it would soon damage your confidentiality. I also don't text as this is impractical for my practice, but email or video counseling can be arranged.

## RECORDS

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Records are kept in a manner that facilitates the conduct of your therapy with David Hammer, MFT. They are not intended to be suitable for legal proceedings in which you are involved, nor are they intended to be written for the convenience of any third party reviewer. Another clinician, however, would find them useful in continuing your counseling. For your privacy, one part is an official summary and a second part is my notes. You can authorize in writing the disclosure of either part of your records, or a consultation between your therapist and another party. You have the right to review your records during office hours or receive a copy of them for a nominal fee. **(In couple's counseling your mate must also consent.)** You can also make a written request that I consider adding certain information to your record to correct errors. If electronic billing is involved, see the expanded "Notice of Privacy Practices," **where it explains you have consented to releasing information to your insurance company and the associated billing entities for business purposes.**

### **HOW MANY SESSIONS DOES IT TAKE?**

It depends first of all on how much change you want to make. Some people have short-term goals, like their managed care insurance plan does, for some relief of immediate symptoms. This might take 6 to 8 sessions. Other people want to address how the current crisis fits into larger life problems and make broader changes. In general, the more quickly the problem developed, the more likely that short-term therapy will help reduce the severity of symptoms. Consumer Reports reviewed the effectiveness of therapy. They determined that the longer people stay in counseling, the more benefit they get. Those who benefitted most, stayed with their therapy for more than 6 months. How consistently can you face your fears and frustrations in sessions? Can you persist when progress slows or stalls for a time? People find themselves coming up with all sorts of plausible excuses to drop out prematurely, without a word to the therapist, rather than overcome the obstacle. Finally, it is important how much effort you put in **between** sessions. Let me know how you apply what you learn in counseling. Tell me which part of your efforts succeed. Tell me when my suggestions don't seem to fit you.

### **HOW OFTEN DO WE SCHEDULE?**

Although once a week is the most helpful at the start, it can be economical to spread out appointments farther during the later stages of your therapy. Plan with me on how to spread them out. **You can call me if you need an emergency appointment.** Discounted sessions - through insurance or my sliding scale - start 10 am to 3:00 pm weekdays. Please note that about 2 times a year, I may be away for about 45 - 60 days, traveling or counseling military families. During that time, we can arrange for telephone or video sessions or for you to see a substitute therapist, according to your preference. Email counseling is also a choice.

**Please do not try to text me or send messages through social media like Facebook or LinkedIn.**

### **HOW LONG ARE THE APPOINTMENTS?**

I usually recommend a 55 minute session but you\* can choose 40 minutes of therapy, including payment and scheduling. Sometimes EMDR sessions are 90 minutes to achieve maximum trauma relief. If you put out effort for that amount of time, you'll find that either you are worn out, or that you have plenty to think about and do. We may be able to extend the length of a session, but as always, I ask that you pay for my time. **\*Please note that insurance reimbursement may limit us to 40 minutes.**

### **WHO IS MY THERAPIST?**

Possibly the most important thing for your success in therapy is the feeling that we can work as a team together. Let me know if the "rapport" doesn't seem right to you. It is no one's fault if it doesn't seem right with the first therapist you try.

I am a solo practitioner not associated with any other business or therapist. Here are more facts about my professional background. Feel free to ask me other questions, especially regarding my philosophy and treatment techniques, so that you are comfortable.

**I have been licensed for independent practice since 1987 and am a member of four professional associations in my field.** My experience comes from a variety of settings besides my private practice:

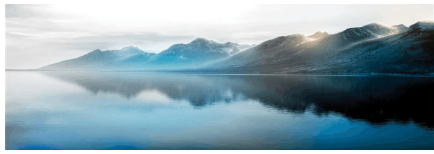
#### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TREATMENT**

I worked for our local Family Violence Program, first as a counselor, then as the Counseling Center Coordinator. I trained and supervised counseling staff, volunteers and student interns. I structured the counseling program we provided for both the victims of violence, as well as the perpetrators of domestic violence.

#### **COUNSELING FOR THE POOR**

I conducted marriage, family, individual and children's therapy in a non-profit low-cost Family Service Agency.

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My graduate internship was in a community mental health center in a poor neighborhood.

**MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS**

About every 8 - 12 months, I work at a military base somewhere in the world for 6 to 8 weeks and give brief counseling to service members and their families on the stresses of combat deployment and re-integration, relationship issues, parenting issues, relocation stresses and more.

**PLAY THERAPY FOR CHILDREN**

I co-facilitated play therapy groups for child sexual abuse victims ages 5 to 7.  
I also facilitated play therapy groups for children aged 3-13 at an emergency shelter.  
Organized and led outdoor challenge groups in rock climbing, rappelling, caving and backpacking for first-time offender youth.  
Brief family counseling with youth and their families.

**ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ADDICTION**

Family and group therapist for chemically dependent adolescent in-patients & their families.  
As a drug hotline Training Director, I trained and evaluated volunteers for 24-hour drug hotline: subjects included crisis intervention, pharmacology, communication skills, and suicide prevention.  
Earlier, I served as a hotline volunteer and answered phone calls for drug overdoses, adverse reactions and emotional crises.

**EXPERIENCE WITH PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS**

Co-facilitated rehabilitation group for former psychiatric in-patients in transitional living setting.  
Psychiatric Aide in a hospital for adult inpatients.

**WHAT ABOUT EMERGENCIES?**

Of course, you should call 911 if your safety is in danger. If you are so distressed that you need to hold a session over the phone or arrange to come in immediately, call and leave a brief message (press \* to bypass the outgoing greeting). Then, **CALL BACK A SECOND TIME and press the number "5" to key in your phone number** so I will know it is an emergency and where to call you. If you can't wait for my call, you could phone the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or the Sacramento Suicide Prevention hotline at 916-368-3111. Fees for emergency counseling - on the phone or after hours - are not discounted from the full rate.

**WHAT FINANCIAL AGREEMENTS ARE WE MAKING?**

My FEE of \$145 is discounted to \$130 per 55 min. session when paid at the time of service. You can purchase a package of 6 sessions at \$120 X 6. Note that most other service, such as telephone or video counseling, as well as e-mail counseling and written reports, are charged at this rate. If you have insurance, it may cover some or all of your "face to face" counseling, since I am a licensed therapist, but your plan reserves the right to decide on any reimbursement. **Insurance reimbursement policies usually limit sessions to 40 min.** If you have a smaller income and insurance doesn't apply, ask about my SLIDING FEE SCALE. If you need to delay payments, a FINANCE PLAN can be arranged. My fees generally double for time with court matters. A LATE FEE of \$30 will be charged each month that a minimum payment of \$50 is not received by the end of that month. Also as part of our agreement, RETURNED CHECKS are subject to a \$40 charge. Failure to keep our fee agreements seriously interferes with your therapy, and non-payment would end it. I refer accounts to a collection agency when my bills are ignored. **Remember you need to pay for an appointment when you fail to cancel a day ahead of time.** This policy is standard since it takes a minimum of 24 hours to fill the appointment time that I reserved for you. It also encourages facing those difficult emotional and relationship problems which make us anxious.

**TERMINATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

Good therapy ends by planned discussion in the office, not by voice-mail message. To get the most out of your efforts, discuss the termination of therapy in person with me. I will not be offended whenever you want to stop. It is my practice to make a follow-up contact after therapy has ended. Be sure to let me know if you **do not want me to call** or if you **do not want me to send a follow-up** survey to your home or by email.

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