



**2985 Cherokee Street
Kennesaw, GA 30144
(770) 218-9005
www.fountaingate.com**

Information for Clients

This information has been prepared to help you know more about our counseling services. When possible, we will e-mail this information to you ahead of time. **Please print out a copy of this information and read it carefully. Bring this to your first appointment, along with your intake material.** We will be asking you to sign the Counseling Agreement saying that you have read the information contained here.

Because you will be putting time, money and energy into therapy, you should choose a therapist carefully, one with whom you can feel comfortable and secure. Research has shown that the most important predictor of therapy success is a good working relationship between a client and therapist.

It is important to us that you have a clear idea of how we will work together and for you to be hopeful about therapy. Your counselor will review this information with you at your first appointment. If at any time you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask them. We welcome your questions and believe that they help the therapeutic process.

About Fountain Gate Counseling Services

Fountain Gate exists to provide counseling from a Christian perspective for individuals, couples, families and groups. The services of Fountain Gate are available to all persons in the community, regardless of race, age, ethnicity, disability or religious affiliation. Our counselors are Master's level clinicians from accredited counseling programs who work to integrate faith and psychotherapy. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate Counselor, and we are here as His instruments to help you, the client, attain personal wholeness and peace of mind. You should be aware that, with your desire and permission, we may wish to explore issues of spirituality together.

About Psychotherapy

Dallas Willard, in his book, Renovation of the Heart, wrote: "We live from our depths---most of which we do not understand." There are many reasons why people decide to meet with a counselor. Examples include physical or emotional health issues, life stressors, loss of some kind, a broken relationship, or patterns of thinking or behaving that have led to disappointing choices. With any problem a client brings, my primary objective is to try to understand as fully as possible the things that have brought you to therapy, and the background and underlying factors behind them. I will then suggest treatments that have been validated by research and clinical experience.

I see counseling as a strong partnership between us, and believe that therapy will require very active involvement on both our parts. You and I will work to explore and understand what brought you to this point in your life. You define the problem areas to be worked on; I use some specific knowledge to help you make the changes you want to make. In this way, psychotherapy can be described as an individualized educational experience that can help you change and grow. Change will sometimes be easy and quick, but more often it will be slow, and may require firm effort on your part to keep working

at it. You must understand that there are no instant, painless cures and no “magic pills.” However, you can learn new ways of looking at your problems that will be helpful for changing your feelings and reactions.

In general, most of our time together will involve exploring and processing through talking. However, there may be times when I will suggest other tasks to deepen your learning. Examples of these might be readings from books, watching a video or movie clip, or using creative expressions via art, writing or music. If it seems appropriate, I may ask if I can pray with you. I often suggest homework assignments for you to do outside of our sessions. I will always ask permission from you before engaging in any of these therapeutic techniques. You will always have a voice and a choice in our sessions.

The Benefits and Risks of Therapy

Psychotherapy is a positive overall experience for most people, but as with any powerful treatment, there are some risks as well as many benefits. You should think about both the benefits and the risks when making any decisions about treatment. For example, in therapy, there is the risk that clients will, for a time, have uncomfortable levels of sadness, guilt, anxiety, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, or other negative feelings. Clients may recall unpleasant memories. These feelings or memories may bother a client at work or in school. Some people in your community may mistakenly view anyone in therapy as weak or perhaps as seriously disturbed or even dangerous.

Also, clients in therapy may have problems with people important to them. Family secrets may be told. Therapy may disrupt a marital relationship. Sometimes, too, a client’s problems may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment. Most of these risks are to be expected when people are making important changes in their lives. Finally, even with our best efforts, there is a risk that therapy may not work out well for you.

While you consider these risks, you should know also that scientists in hundreds of well-designed research studies have shown the benefits of therapy. People who are depressed may find their mood lifting. Others may no longer feel afraid, angry or anxious. In therapy, people have a chance to talk things out fully until their feelings are relieved or the problems are solved. Client’s relationships and coping skills may improve greatly. 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 persons, in their close relationships, in their schooling, and in the ability to enjoy their lives. I do not take on clients I do not think I can help. Therefore, I will enter our relationship with optimism about our progress.

Counseling Phases to Expect

1. Assessment: The assessment process usually takes one to three sessions. For an individual, I will schedule our first session for 50 minutes. For couples, I generally see the two of you together for the first session, which lasts 80 minutes. I will then schedule our next session so that I see each of you separately for 40 minutes each. Sometimes certain questionnaires may be a part of the assessment process. The purpose of assessment is to enable your counselor to get to know you, to understand your problems and concerns, and to establish goals of counseling.

2. Intervention: In the third or fourth session, I will give you feedback about your situation, including your strengths and the challenges you face. Together we will set goals, and I will make recommendations about what you can do to overcome your problems. Once goals are clearly identified, the intervention phase focuses on helping you deal with and resolve your problems and concerns, on improving coping strategies and skills, on learning to make healthy decisions and on growing, both personally and relationally. The intervention phase can last from two to six months; each counseling

session will last for 50 minutes. We will evaluate progress periodically and decide together whether further intervention is necessary, or whether we can begin decreasing our sessions. Some issues can take extended periods of time to resolve. We will discuss these things together as necessary.

3. Termination: The process of ending therapy, called “termination,” is also a 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, I ask that you agree now to meet for at least one additional session to review our work together. We will 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 we can discuss this, and explore ways to make the most of your experience while you are away.

Consultations

If you could benefit from a treatment I cannot provide, I will help you to get it through the community resources or a referral to another specialist. You have a right to ask me about such other treatments, their risks, and their benefits. Based on what I learn about your problems, I may recommend a medical exam or suggest the use of medication under the supervision of your medical doctor. If I do this, I will fully discuss my reasons with you, so that you can decide what is best. If you are treated by another professional, including your medical doctor, I will coordinate my services with them.

If for some reason our counseling is not going well, I might suggest you see another therapist or another professional. As a responsible person and ethical therapist, I cannot continue to treat you if my treatment is not working for you. 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 her or her with the information needed. Please understand however, that according to my ethical guidelines, I cannot see you for ongoing therapy if you are getting therapy for the same problem from another therapist. This could be confusing for you and not in your best interest.

What to Expect from Our Relationship

As a professional, I will use my best knowledge and skill to help you. This includes following the rules and standards of the National Board for Certified Counselors, the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT), and the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS). In your best interest, these governing organizations put limits on the relationship between a therapist and a client, and I will abide by these. Let me explain these limits, so you will not think they are personal responses to you.

First, the background and training of our therapists are in Marriage and Family Therapy and/or Professional Counseling, not in law, medicine or any other profession. I am not able to give you advice from these other professional viewpoints.

Secondly, Georgia State laws and the rules of the above counseling organizations require me to refrain from telling anyone else what you tell me, except in certain limited situations. I explain what these are in greater detail below in “What You Should Know about Confidentiality,” and also in the GEORGIA NOTICE FORM and the Patient Notification of Privacy Rights that you must read and sign. I will take great effort to maintain your privacy. This means that if we meet on the street, at church, or other social situations, I may not say hello or talk to you very much unless you approach me. I will not talk about private matters with you in a public setting. My behavior is not a personal reaction to you, but a way to maintain the confidentiality of our relationship.

Thirdly, in your best interest, and following ACA, AAMFT, and CAPS ethics and standards, I can only be your therapist. I will not have any other role in your life. I will not, now or ever, be a close friend or socialize with any of my clients. I cannot be a therapist to someone who is already a friend. I

can never have a sexual or romantic relationship with any client during or after the course of therapy. I cannot have a business relationship with any of my clients other than the therapy relationship.

What You Should Know About Confidentiality in Therapy

I will treat what you tell me with great care. My professional ethics (that is, my profession's rules about moral matters) and the laws of this State prevent me from telling anyone else what you tell me unless you give me written permission. These rules and laws are the way our society recognizes and supports the privacy of what we talk about---in other words, the "confidentiality" of therapy. However, I cannot promise that everything you tell me will *never* be revealed to someone else. There are some times when the law requires me to break confidentiality, and I want you to understand clearly what I can and cannot keep confidential. You need to know about these rules now, so that you don't tell me something as a "secret" that I cannot keep secret. These are very important issues, so please read these pages carefully and keep this copy. At our next meeting, we can discuss any questions you might have.

1. When you or other persons are in physical danger, the law requires me to tell others about it.

Specifically:

a. If I come to believe that you are threatening serious harm to another person, I am required to try to protect that person. I may have to tell the person or the police, or perhaps try to have you put in a hospital.

b. If you seriously threaten or act in a way that is very likely to harm yourself, I may have to seek a hospital for you, or call on your family members or others who can help protect you. If such a situation does come up, I will fully discuss the situation with you before I do anything, unless there is a very strong reason not to.

c. In an emergency where your life or health is in danger, and I cannot get your consent, I may give another professional some information to protect your life. I will try to get your permission first, and I will discuss this with you as soon as possible afterwards.

d. If I believe or suspect that you are abusing a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person, I must file a report with a state agency. To "abuse" means to neglect, hurt, exploit, or sexually molest another person. I do not have any legal power to investigate the situation to find out all the facts. The state agency will investigate. If this might be your situation, we should discuss the legal aspects in detail before you tell me anything about these topics. You may also want to talk to your lawyer.

2. If you become involved in a court case or proceeding, you can prevent me from testifying in court about what you have told me. This is called "privilege" and it is your choice to prevent me from testifying or to allow me to do so.

It is conceivable, however, that in some situations a judge or court may require me to testify regardless of your non-consent and in spite of my repeated legal objections on the basis of confidentiality. Examples of such situations might be:

a. In child custody or adoption proceedings, where your fitness as a parent is questioned or in doubt;

b. In cases where your emotional or mental condition is important information for a court's decision;

c. During a malpractice case or an investigation of me or another therapist by a professional group;

d. In a civil commitment hearing to decide if you will be admitted to a psychiatric hospital;

3. Children and families create some special confidentiality issues.

a. When I treat children under the age of 12, I must tell their parents or guardians whatever they ask me about the child's treatment. For those between the ages of 12 and 18, my policy is to treat most of the details of therapy as confidential. However, parents or guardians do have the right to general information, including how therapy is going. They need to be able to make well-informed decisions about therapy. I may also have to tell parents or guardians some information about other family members that I am told by the child or adolescent. In cases where there may be drug or alcohol abuse, an eating disorder, self-harm (e.g., cutting), pregnancy or any other secret being held by the child or adolescent, I will work with the child or adolescent to make these issues known to the parent or guardian, and together we will work through solutions. I will not hold in confidence secrets that are harmful to the child or others.

b. The same confidentiality exception rules described above (see part 1) apply to children and adolescents. If I learn that your child is thinking of harming him or herself or another person, or if I suspect that the child has been abused, I will always talk to the parent or guardian in detail about these matters. Depending on the particular issue, I may be required by law to make a report to legal authorities. I will always explain this before taking further action.

c. In cases where I treat several family members (parent, children or other relatives), the confidentiality situation becomes more complicated. I may have different duties toward different family members. At the start of our treatment, we must all have a clear understanding of our purposes and my role. Then we can be clear about any limits on confidentiality that may exist.

d. At the start of family treatment, we must also specify which members of the family must sign a release form for the common record I create in the therapy or therapies.

4. Couple's Counseling

a. If you tell me something that your spouse does not know, please understand that I will not keep a secret. In the case of couple's counseling, I consider confidentiality to be with the couple and not the individuals involved. If you tell me something your spouse does not know, I will work with you to disclose to your spouse; otherwise, we will have to discontinue our couple's counseling.

b. If you are in couple's counseling in the State of Georgia, both participants in therapy have the rights of privilege to the communication that occurs in therapy. This means that both partners are required to sign a waiver of their right of privilege of information before I am able to release my notes to another person.

c. If you or your spouse have a child custody dispute, or if there is a forthcoming court hearing for child custody, I will need to know about it. I do not do custody evaluations, and I do not testify in court against either spouse I have had in couple's counseling. Please do not ask me to take sides in these situations.

d. If you are seeing me for marriage counseling, you must agree at the start of treatment that if you eventually decide to divorce, you will not request my testimony for either side. We have had a therapeutic relationship together; please understand that I will not be biased toward either spouse.

4. A few other points:

a. I will not record our therapy sessions on audiotape or videotape without your written permission.

b. If you want me to send information about our therapy to someone else, you must sign a release form. I have these on hand if necessary.

c. Any information you share outside of therapy, willingly and publicly, will not be considered protected or confidential by a court.

Counseling Fees

Fountain Gate desires that no person be excluded from needed counseling because of a lack of financial resources. Our fee is based on your income and the number of people in your family, and is coordinated with current federal poverty guidelines. At your first appointment, I will have you fill out a financial statement form and discuss your counseling fee.

Once your fee has been determined, we ask that payment be made by check or cash at the conclusion of each counseling session. We will provide you with a receipt indicating the types of services performed. Should the fee not be paid for two sessions, no further sessions will be scheduled until the balance is paid. Should counseling be terminated all outstanding fees must be paid in full upon termination. Fountain Gate does not submit bills to insurance companies at this time.

Client Name: _____ My Counseling Fee is: _____

Please make checks payable to: **Fountain Gate Counseling Center**

Please note:

- In the rare event that I am asked to testify in your behalf due to a court proceeding, I charge your regular counseling fee per hour for any preparation and for attendance at the proceeding, including travel time.
- I will charge your regular counseling fee for any telephone calls over 10 minutes.

About Our Appointments

Your appointments are held exclusively for you. We agree to meet and to be on time. If you are late, we will probably not be able to meet the entire time, as I will likely have another client after you. If for some reason I am late beginning our session, you will receive your full scheduled time.

Please try not to miss sessions if you can possibly help it. A cancelled appointment delays our work. If you must cancel your appointment, please phone your counselor at least **24 hours** in advance of your scheduled appointment, and by Friday for a Monday appointment. A charge of the regular fee will be made for any appointment that is missed or cancelled without 24 hour notification.

Telephone Calls

My Counselor's name is: _____

Fountain Gate Voice Mail for my counselor: **770-218-9005 Ext.** _____

Should you need to contact me by telephone, call and give your name, a phone number where you can be reached, the best times to call, and a short message. I will attempt to return your call within 24 hours, but usually within that business day.

Life Threatening Emergencies

If you are having life-threatening psychological emergency, you may call the office number and leave a message for our counselor on call. However, our counselors use a voice message system, and it is possible that you may not receive a call back right away. If you need immediate assistance, please go to your nearest emergency room for care, or contact 911.



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Counseling Agreement

The signatures here signify that we each have read, discussed, understood and agree to abide by the information and stipulations presented in the “Information for Clients” document, including “What You Should Know About Confidentiality in Therapy.”

Client Signature: _____
Client, or parent/guardian acting for client

Printed Name: _____

Client’s Printed Name (if minor): _____

Client Signature: _____
Spouse or additional adult participating in therapy

Printed Name: _____

Therapist signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____