

Diane Byster, LMFT, NCC, RYT

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Career Consultant, and Registered Yoga Teacher

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INFORMATION FOR CLIENTS

To help you make an informed decision to participate in therapy, the following is a description of my qualifications and practice. I encourage you to discuss with me any questions you have about these issues.

I am a state-licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT), National Certified Counselor (NCC), career consultant, and registered yoga teacher. I am also a certified teacher, clinical supervisor, and core training program teacher with the International Experiential Dynamic Therapy Association (IEDTA). I serve as adjunct faculty for the New Washington School of Psychiatry in Washington, D.C. I received a Master of Science degree in counseling from San Francisco State University, with a dual specialization in marriage and family therapy and career counseling. I am a member of the state chapter of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists.

As a psychotherapist, I specialize in individual, couple, and group counseling. I have experience with a variety of presenting concerns and therapeutic techniques including, but not limited to, helping clients:

- manage anxiety and depression
- interrupt cycles of procrastination; uncover true motivation
- regulate emotional reactivity
- dismantle unproductive beliefs, behaviors, and assumptions that interfere with life goals
- face grief, loss, and other transitions, such as death and divorce
- develop adaptive coping strategies to handle traumatic life events
- be more authentic in intimate relationships
- differentiate from family
- build effective self-observation and self-compassion skills to increase resilience
- increase clarity about life goals and develop the skills to actualize them

General Information / Process of Therapy:

Therapy is a collaborative effort between the client and therapist to help you in clarifying the specific problems that brought you to therapy and identifying the goals that are important to you. We work as a team, bringing the best of the two of us to understand what is causing your difficulties so we can determine the best treatment plan to help you reach your goals. Effective treatment involves specific tasks for both the client and the therapist. Therapy is designed to help you observe yourself more closely and accurately and develop a caring stance towards yourself so you can access and build on your own inner resources to solve challenges in your life.

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. For instance, psychotherapy can lead to a significant reduction of distress, improved physical symptoms, better relationships, new insights and self-understanding, more positive self-esteem, and the resolution of specific problems that drove you to seek therapy. In order to optimize success in treatment, your intention, commitment, and full effort toward yourself are essential, both during our sessions and between them. Risks sometimes include facing uncomfortable feelings and working with unpleasant life events. Consider whether you are willing to tolerate temporary discomfort to attain your goals. If you have concerns about the way therapy is progressing, I invite you to discuss them with me.

Intake and Assessment:

The first session (intake) is a longer meeting in which we: 1) discuss your presenting concerns, symptoms, current situation and relevant background; 2) establish goals that are important to you; 3) identify therapeutic tasks/activities, both in and out of session, to help you reach your goals; 4) understand what is causing your

difficulties so we can set up a preliminary treatment plan; 5) get to know something about each other, and assess whether I can treat the problems as presented; 6) determine appointment times, the number of sessions weekly or monthly, and the length of sessions, and discuss initial impressions about your experience of therapy and the degree of fit between us; 7) discuss any other recommendations, such as the need for a medical examination, psychological testing, psychiatric evaluation for medication, or records from past therapy.

Process of Career Counseling:

As a career consultant, I assist and guide clients in issues of career exploration, transition, and job search. Often, clients seek my services in order to:

- * understand sources of work dissatisfaction
- * assess skills, interests, values, beliefs and personal style
- * develop job and information interview skills
- * generate new career options, including alternative approaches to work
- * research the open and hidden job markets
- * discover how to generate and capitalize on unplanned events
- * learn effective decision-making strategies
- * manage self-esteem effectively during work transition
- * prepare application materials
- * handle workplace conflict
- * set appropriate goals; improve time management

Career counseling is similar to psychotherapy in that we work together as a team to identify the problems you want help with, then establish treatment goals and essential tasks to help you reach your goals. One difference is that career counseling more often involves action items done outside of consultation to make sessions more productive and help you reach your objectives. Often, concerns that bring people to career counseling touch personal adjustment issues. My dual training in career counseling and psychotherapy allows us to address these issues simultaneously. The number of visits will vary depending on the concerns you bring and your determination to reach your goals. This process requires a time commitment both within and outside of session.

Confidentiality:

Your privacy is of the utmost importance. The fact that you are coming to see me for therapy as well as the content of the therapy itself are held by me in strict confidence. The only exceptions to this are: a) situations where the law mandates that I reveal information (when I have reasonable suspicion that child or elder abuse has or may be occurring, or when I think you pose a danger of harming yourself, another person, or their property), b) where you have signed a release form permitting me to communicate to a third party about your therapy, c) when a bill remains unpaid and must be referred to small claims court or a collection agency, d) if you raise your mental status as an issue in a legal proceeding, or e) in sessions with my consultant. In consultation, I do not reveal the identity of my clients. The consultant is also legally bound to keep all information confidential. Unless you object, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I feel it is important to our work together.

Videotaping:

The purpose of videotaping sessions is to provide you with the best possible treatment. Videotaping helps make counseling/therapy more effective and efficient because I can observe very carefully how you respond, moment-to-moment, to interventions I use. This helps me understand precisely what to do more of or less of during each visit to move the counseling forward. On occasion, I may seek consultation from a designated colleague if, in my professional discretion, doing so would add expertise that would benefit you. Some clients have requested to watch portions of their videotapes in therapy session to help understand themselves better and make progress toward their goals. The use of videotaping is recommended to achieve the best results possible, and is completely confidential. If you decide you would like to allow videotaping, there is a separate consent form to sign.

Scheduling and Cancellation:

Scheduling of appointments will vary depending on the problems you seek my help with and your treatment goals. Some clients prefer a weekly 50-minute session, while others find it more helpful to meet in a longer format, either 65 or 80 minutes, which can be weekly or bimonthly. Clients who travel from further distance, often prefer a half- or full-day block format.

Scheduling of an appointment involves reserving a time specifically for you. As a result, *a minimum of 48 full business hours of notification (650-391-8759) is required* to cancel or reschedule an appointment without charge. With shorter notice, there will be an *automatic charge of one-half the session cost* for each missed or late cancelled appointment, due the same week as the appointment. No exceptions. If you have a longer session scheduled, the amount of the cancellation fee would be prorated. *Cancellations must occur by voice mail only.*

Payments and Insurance Reimbursement:

My fees are due, in full, on the day you receive service. I accept cash, personal check, cashier's check, or money order. Please have your check ready *before* you arrive to session. Phone consultations, site visits, report writing, and application-material editing will be charged at the same rate, unless agreed otherwise. I assess my fees annually. If I raise my fee, I will give you a month notice prior to doing so.

In the event you carry insurance that covers our office visits, I collect fees for service from you, up front, and can prepare a monthly statement for you to submit to your insurance carrier for reimbursement. Some insurance carriers have limited benefits that may affect how long you can remain in treatment. Should benefits terminate before treatment goals are attained, I can continue to provide further consultation according to a revised and mutually acceptable plan.

If a check payment bounces, you will be responsible for bank charges, and I will accept only cash, cashier's check, or money order for subsequent visits. Should you default on payment, if there is no agreement on a payment plan, I reserve the right to use legal means (court, collection agency, etc.) to obtain payment.

Referral:

I work only within the scope of my practice and abilities. Some circumstances warrant referral to another professional. For instance, some of your treatment goals may fall outside the scope of my practice. Sometimes it is difficult to foresee the need for a referral in advance. Should the need arise, I will discuss this with you and make every effort to arrange for a smooth transition.

Should our work together indicate a need for medical attention, I cannot prescribe drugs or offer any medical advice. I can, however, refer you to a physician or psychiatrist should this become necessary.

Contact Information:

My voice mail can be reached 24 hours a day, and I check messages often throughout the week. Feel free to leave me a message at any time. I attempt to return calls either on the day they are received or at least within 24 hours of receiving them. If you are in a crisis, I will try to arrange to be more available to you.

Mediation and Arbitration:

All disputes arising out of or in relation to this agreement to provide psychotherapy/career consulting services shall first be referred to mediation, before and as a pre-condition of the initiation of arbitration.

The mediator shall be a neutral third party chosen by agreement of Diane Byster and client. The cost of such mediation, if any, shall be split equally, unless otherwise agreed. In the event that mediation is unsuccessful, any unresolved controversy related to this agreement should be submitted to and settled by binding arbitration in Santa Clara county, in accordance with the rules of the American Arbitration Association.

Conclusion of Therapy:

We will periodically review our work together and your progress towards treatment goals. This will help us know when it is time to conclude therapy or to make changes in the therapy contract. Termination will occur either when treatment goals have been achieved or therapy becomes counterproductive. The decision to stop treatment is usually a mutual decision, but can be initiated by either you or me. I recommend that you schedule *at least one* termination session when you decide to end therapy. The closing session(s) are among the most important parts of therapy. Termination sessions provide an opportunity to tie up loose ends, assess the work that has been accomplished, discuss future options, and say a proper “goodbye.” I believe these sessions allow for an ending that will protect and preserve the therapeutic work that has been accomplished. I encourage you to ask any questions that come up during the course of therapy and career consulting, and I look forward to working with you. The results of therapy cannot be guaranteed.

One Year Follow-up:

You will be invited to meet for one session, free of charge, a year after our formal counseling relationship has ended to check in, see how you’re doing, and discuss how the therapy has impacted you and your life. Some clients periodically like to receive an occasional counseling “tune-up” in order to address a particular concern that might arise after the counseling has wrapped up; others use counseling as an occasional touchstone when going through an important transition in their lives.

Indication of Acceptance

I acknowledge that I have read, understood, and agree to the provisions of this “Information for Client” document. I have had my questions answered adequately at this time, and accept the agreed-upon fee of \$_____ per 50 minutes.

Client(s):

(signature)

(print name here)

(signature)

(print name here)

(address line 1)

(date signed)

(address line 2)

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Therapist signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(address line 3)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Diane Byster

\_\_\_\_\_  
(phone)

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