



Welcome to Doll & Associates, Agnesian HealthCare Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinic. This document contains important information about our professional services. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so that they can be discussed with your provider.

Psychological Services

Behavioral Health services are not easily described in general statements. They vary depending on the personalities of the patient and the provider, and the particular problems you present with. There are many different methods used to deal with the problems commonly presented including medication management and psychotherapy. If medication is recommended for you your physician will provide specific information to you regarding what can be expected. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things talked about both during and outside of sessions. People who can talk and listen reasonably well, who are reasonably comfortable being alone with another person, and who are willing to pay attention to their own feelings, thoughts, and motivations probably will do well in psychotherapy. Being involved in psychotherapy takes commitment on your part to come to scheduled sessions and do the work suggested. Often, psychotherapy can be enhanced by medications designed to decrease depression or anxiety symptoms. If so, your therapist will discuss this with you.

During the initial sessions the focus will be on identifying your strengths which will be used to assist in addressing your needs. At the end of this period, some first impressions of what treatment may involve will be discussed and you will be asked for input in developing a treatment plan if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with your provider. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about any procedures, you should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, the provider will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

What benefits can I expect?

Research has shown that most of the common approaches to therapy are about equally successful. A number of benefits are available from participating in psychotherapy. In general, the typical psychotherapy patients are better off after therapy than they were before it, and they are better off after therapy than 80% of untreated persons. Therapy often leads to a better understanding of yourself and your personal goals and values, improve relationships, development of solutions to specific problems, and a significant reductions in feelings of distress. There are no guarantees of what you will experience. Often it is helpful just to know that someone is listening and understands. Therapy can provide a fresh perspective on a difficult problem or point you in the direction of a solution. The benefits you obtain from therapy depend on how well you participate and put into practice what you learn. Therapy can also help you overcome specific problems by assisting you in finding solutions to the issues or concerns that led you to seek therapy in the first place. Some people find that participating in psychotherapy results in changes that were not expected or intended at the outset.

Psychotherapy has been shown to help people who are passive to become more assertive, and to feel better because more of their needs are met. It has been shown to help people with high anxiety to feel calmer and to become more able to calm themselves down. People who are depressed often are helped a great deal, especially to identify and change the ideas and beliefs that may contribute to their depression. Many who find therapy beneficial have changed behaviors and

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lifestyles that keep them unhappy or stuck. Of course, none of these people are helped if they do not pay attention to their actual feelings and thoughts and talk them over candidly with the therapist. People who are helped by psychotherapy typically report that they feel less unhappy, that their physical sense of well being is improved (for example, their appetites improve, their sleep habits improve, they have more satisfying sexual lives, and often their general health improves). Psychotherapy can also help with marriage and relationship problems. People with chronic pain problems may not have less pain, but they often report feeling more able to live productively despite the pain and to not be so distracted by it. Sometimes, especially when they use additional tools such as biofeedback, they find that even their level of pain might decrease at least some.

What are the risks of therapy?

Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life or recalling and talking about unpleasant aspects of your history or your present situation, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt or shame, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. Some individuals feel worse, experiencing some level of anxiety or discomfort as the therapy progresses because they are finally discussing events and feelings that were previously covered up and now they are feeling the pain associated with the topic. Although it may be necessary to talk about painful or embarrassing subjects, the role of the therapist is to be nonjudgmental and understanding.

It is very important to let your therapist know how you are experiencing the therapy. If it seems to be making you feel worse, maybe it is. Telling your therapist allows you to look closer at what is happening, so you can decide whether the worsening is to be expected or whether the therapy is moving too fast.

Therapy can complicate your life. After all, you may discover that you have feelings about issues that you never realized you had. You may want or need things you had overlooked, and may not have access to them yet. You may have had experiences in the past that must be reconciled, and sometimes that is burdensome.

Of course, the fee you must pay for therapy can pose a risk to you financially. You should carefully consider the fee and your ability to pay it over the entire estimated course of therapy before you begin, lest you find halfway through that you cannot pay the fee. If you do not stay focused on the goals of treatment you might be wasting time and money, and perhaps becoming worse.