



**INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
& INFORMED CONSENT FOR TREATMENT**

Welcome to Psychotherapy Associates of Tampa Bay!

This document contains important information about Dr. Jessica Tommasi's professional services and business policies as of November of 2018. Please read it over carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have. You will notice that at the conclusion of this document is a place intended for your signature. Please be aware that upon signing this document, you are consenting to the conditions proposed wherein and it will represent a mutually consensual agreement.

Psychotherapy is a unique process that varies depending on many variables, including, but not limited to, the personalities of the therapist and client and the issues presented. There are many different methods that your provider may implement to help you deal with the issues you present. Unlike a visit to your medical doctor, your role in therapy is not a passive one. The process calls for a very active effort and involvement on your part and you may be asked to work on things discussed both in and out of your sessions.

While the goal of treatment is to benefit the client, it may also involve risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings such as sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, and/or hopelessness. Making changes in your beliefs or behaviors may be scary, and sometimes disruptive to the relationships you already have. You may find your relationship with me to be a source of strong feelings. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have benefits for those who are committed to the process. Therapy often leads to improved relationships, provides solutions to specific problems, and/or offers significant reductions in feelings of distress. However, there is no guarantee of what you might experience; therefore, it is important that you consider whether the potential risks are worth the benefits. Many people who do take these risks find that therapy is helpful.

The first few sessions of your therapy will involve an evaluation of your needs, as well as an opportunity to gather information about you. By the conclusion of the evaluation, Dr. Tommasi will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what your work together will include and a more detailed treatment plan (verbal and/or in writing if requested) will be developed should you wish to continue. You should evaluate this information, along with your own opinions, of whether you feel comfortable working with Dr. Tommasi. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, energy, and finances; therefore, you should be selective when choosing a therapist. If you have any questions and/or concerns about Dr. Tommasi's practices, they should be addressed as soon as they arise. If after discussing an issue and your doubts persist, Dr. Tommasi will be more than happy to refer you to another mental health professional that may better suit your needs.

Therapy is a relationship that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each individual involved. They are in place to ensure your safety and preserve your best interest. As a client who has made the choice to participate in psychotherapy, you have certain rights that are important for you to be aware of because this

is your treatment, whose sole purpose is your wellbeing. There are also certain limitations to those rights of which you should be aware. As your therapist, Dr. Tommasi is bound to abide by certain legal and ethical obligations as outlined below.

Dr. Tommasi's Obligations to You as Your Therapist

Confidentiality

Except for the following situations, you have the right to the confidentiality of your therapy. In general, this law protects the privacy of all communications between a client and a therapist, and Dr. Tommasi may only release information about our work to others with your written consent. Under the provisions of the *Health Care Information Act of 1992*, she may legally speak to another health care provider or a member of your family about you without your prior consent; however, she will not do so unless the situation is an emergency. Dr. Tommasi will always act to protect your privacy even if you do release her in writing to share information about you. You may instruct her to share information with whomever you choose, and you may change your mind and revoke that permission at any time. Also, you may request anyone you wish to attend a therapy session with you.

You are also protected under the provisions of the *Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)*. This law insures the confidentiality of all electronic transmission of information about you. Whenever Dr. Tommasi transmits information about you electronically (e.g., sending bills or faxing information), it will be done so with special safeguards in place to insure confidentiality.

If you choose to communicate with Dr. Tommasi by electronic mail (email) and/or text at some point during our work together, please be advised that such correspondence is not completely confidential and she cannot ensure your privacy. All emails are retained in the logs of the Internet Service Provider and while under normal circumstances no one looks at these logs; technically, they are available to be read by the system administrator.

****The following are the legal exceptions to your right to confidentiality. Dr. Tommasi will inform you of any time when she believes it may be necessary to put these into effect.***

1. If Dr. Tommasi has a good reason to believe that you may harm another person, she must attempt to inform that individual and warn them of your intentions. She must also contact law enforcement and request that they protect the potential victim.
2. If Dr. Tommasi has good reason to believe that you are abusing or neglecting a child or a vulnerable adult, or if you her information about another individual who is doing so, she must inform the appropriate state agency.
3. If Dr. Tommasi believes that you are in imminent danger of harming yourself, she may legally break confidentiality and seek hospitalization for you or contact your family members/others who may help provide protection on your behalf.

Please note that these situations do not occur often in Dr. Tommasi's practice. However, if a similar situation was to arise, she will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

Professional Records

The laws and standards of my profession require that Dr. Tommasi keep and maintain all treatment records. Under the provisions of the Health Care Information Act of 1992, you are entitled to receive a copy of your records at any time. You also have the right to request that she correct errors in your file. The records she keeps for her clients are very brief, noting only that you have been seen, what interventions were used in the session, and the topics discussed. It is your right to request that she makes a copy of your file available to any other health care provider at your written request.

Clients will be charged an appropriate fee for any professional time spent in responding to information and/or for correspondence requests.

Other Rights

Dr. Tommasi encourages her clients to ask questions about anything that occurs in therapy. She is always willing to discuss how and why she has decided to do what she is doing, and if necessary, examine better alternatives. Please feel free to request that she try something that you believe may be helpful. You have the right to ask questions related to her training for working with your concerns, and if necessary, request that she refer you to a different clinician if you determine that she is not the appropriate therapist for you. You are also free to discontinue your treatment at any time you may deem necessary.

In most cases, the patient is the one who decides when therapy will end, with three exceptions. If you have contracted for a specific short-term course of treatment, therapy will be completed at the end of that contract. If Dr. Tommasi does not believe that her skills and/or qualifications are sufficient or appropriate to help you, she will inform you of this fact and will refer you to another therapist who may be better suited to meet your needs. If you threaten or commit violence, either verbal or physical, to her, to her office staff, or to her family, she reserves the right to immediately terminate your treatment.

Education, Professional Training & Therapeutic Approach

Dr. Jessica L. Tommasi, LMHC established her private mental health counseling practice, Psychotherapy Associates of Tampa Bay, L.L.C. in July of 2008 following her four-year term as a psychotherapist on staff with the University of South Florida's Psychiatry Center. Dr. Tommasi has been a Florida Licensed Mental Health Counselor (License # MH 8137) since 2004 and is also designated as a Qualified Clinical Supervisor by the State of Florida Board of Health to oversee the formal postgraduate clinical training of registered interns who are in the process of applying for state licensure in mental health counseling. Dr. Tommasi is proud to be a lifetime member of Psi Chi National Honor Society as well as a professional member of other professional mental health organizations.

Dr. Tommasi's academic credentials include a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in psychology from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in psychology from Boston University, as well as a second Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology (C.S.P.P.) in San Diego, and a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in counseling psychology degree from Argosy University.

A few of Dr. Tommasi's clinical specialties/areas of interest include treating mood disorders, anxiety disorders, bereavement/grief, adjustment to chronic medical illness, codependency, pet loss grief support, Emotional Support Animal Evaluations, stress management, aging issues, self-esteem, anger management, etc. While her approach to counseling and means of conceptualizing cases is largely cognitive-behavioral and solution-focused in nature with a client-centered emphasis, she draws from several theoretical orientations and employs various treatment interventions depending on her clients' presenting issues, needs, as well as personal preferences.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy is a philosophy that examines the direct relationship between one's negative ways of thinking and viewing the self, others and the world, and how those cognitions have an adverse effect on how one feels and behaves. When a person tends to maintain a negative worldview, and is often pessimistic in their expectation about outcomes, this facilitates uncomfortable emotions, such as depression, anxiety, and the like. Because of feeling this way, a person is likely to engage in a set of behaviors that may be maladaptive and serve to perpetuate the unhealthy cycle. This self-defeating relationship between feelings, thoughts and behaviors sets the stage for an unhealthy cyclical pattern that often makes a person feel stuck in a negative situation. If Dr. Tommasi proposes a specific therapy technique that may have special risks attached, she will inform you of such in advance, and discuss with

you the risks and benefits of what she has suggested. She may suggest that you consult with your medical care provider regarding somatic treatments that may help your problems. She may also suggest that you consider participation in a therapy or support group as a supplement to your work with her. If another health care professional is working with you, she may require a written release of information from you so that she may communicate freely with that individual about your care. Again, you have the right to refuse any treatment recommendation. Please note that Dr. Tommasi does not have social or sexual relationships with current or former clients as not only would that be unethical and illegal, it would also be an abuse of her professional role and responsibilities as a therapist.

Office Policies, Procedures & Related Business Matters

Appointments

Dr. Tommasi typically conduct an initial evaluation that will last approximately 60 minutes. Following your first meeting, you and she will decide if she is the appropriate professional you need to help you attain your treatment goals. Early in treatment, she may recommend scheduling one 50-minute session (referred to as an “appointment hour”) per week, although you may opt to schedule your sessions less frequently if you prefer. You are responsible for arriving for your appointment on time and at the time scheduled. If you are late, your appointment will still end at the time scheduled and will not run into the next client’s session. Once an appointment is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24-hour notice of cancellation. This also applies should you miss a session without cancelling. Dr. Tommasi cannot bill missed sessions to your insurance company; therefore, you will bear the responsibility of payment in these situations. An exception to the policy is if it is mutually agreed upon that you were unable to keep your appointment due to circumstances beyond your control (e.g., illness or emergency). In these cases, Dr. Tommasi will try to reschedule you as soon as possible.

Availability & Means of Contact

Dr. Tommasi is accessible via telephone on a 24/7 basis to meet her patients’ needs; however, she is unable to function as a crisis hotline. While she is usually in her office between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays, she does not answer her phone when in session with a patient. When she is unavailable, all incoming calls will go to directly to her confidential voicemail. She will make every effort to return any message left on her voice mail within 24 business hours, with the exception of on weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please let her know when and at what number is best to contact you. If Dr. Tommasi is going to be unavailable for an extended period (e.g., vacation), she will notify you of such in advance and will provide you with alternative resources you may access if the need arises during her absence.

In the event of an emergency that cannot wait for a return phone call from me within 24 hours, please immediately call 911, 211 (Tampa Bay Cares Crisis Hotline), or report to the nearest hospital emergency room for assistance.

Professional Fees

Dr. Tommasi’s hourly rate for self-pay clients is \$150 for individual sessions and \$175 for couples. In addition to office appointments, she may charge you this amount for other services that you may request, though she will prorate the hourly cost if she works for periods less or more than one hour. Other services might include report writing, written correspondence, telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals on your behalf that you have preauthorized, preparation of treatment records, etc. If she becomes involved in legal proceedings that require her participation, you will be expected to pay for my time even if she is called to testify on behalf of another party. Because of the difficulty inherent to legal involvement, I charge \$300 per hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceedings.

Billing & Payments

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time of service, unless you and Dr. Tommasi has mutually agreed otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage that requires another arrangement. In these cases, any copayment or deductible that is applicable will also be required at the time of service. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed upon when they are requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, she may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installation plan. Please note that she does not accept barter arrangements for therapy.

Please note that Dr. Tommasi does not allow clients to run a balance on their account. For your convenience, she accepts all major credit cards (e.g., Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express), personal checks, and cash for payment. Any overdue balances will be charged a 10% interest fee per month. If your account has not been paid for a period more than 90 (ninety) days and payment arrangements have not been agreed upon, Dr. Tommasi has the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, all associated costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information that will be released regarding a client's treatment is his or her name, the nature of services provided, and the balance due.

Insurance/Managed Mental Health Care Reimbursement

In order to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some degree of coverage for mental health treatment. Dr. Tommasi's professional billing service, Innovative Billing Solutions, will complete and submit claims on your behalf to help you receive your entitled benefits; however, you (not your insurance company) are ultimately responsible for full payment of fees incurred if your insurance does not pay.

If a third party such as an insurance company is responsible for paying a portion of your bill, Dr. Tommasi is typically required to provide a clinical diagnosis to that third party to receive payment. Diagnoses are technical terms that describe the nature of your issues and whether they are temporary or more long-term. All of diagnoses are found in a manual titled the *DSM-V*; Dr. Tommasi keeps a copy in her office and will be glad to let you review it to learn more about what it says regarding your diagnosis.

Please be also aware that if your treatment is being paid in full or in part by managed care, there are usually further limitations to your rights as a client imposed by the contract in place. These may include their decision to limit the number of sessions available to you, to decide on a period within which you must complete your therapy, etc. If Dr. Tommasi is not regarded as one of your insurance carrier's preferred, in-network providers, they may instruct you to find another therapist that is contracted under their plan. Often, insurance companies require detailed reports of your progress in therapy and in some cases, may ask for a copy of the entire file. While Dr. Tommasi does not have the means to control these rules, she will do all that she is able to maximize the benefits by filing necessary forms, obtaining authorizations for treatment, etc.

You should carefully read the section of your insurance booklet that describes your mental health (which is also sometimes referred to as behavioral health) coverage. If you have any questions regarding your coverage and require further clarification, please contact your plan administrator.

Grievance Policy

Should you become dissatisfied with what is happening in your treatment, Dr. Tommasi encourages you to please talk discuss it openly with her so that she may be given the opportunity to address your concerns and respond appropriately. If you have reason to believe that she has been unwilling to listen and respond, or that she has behaved unethically/illegally, you may direct your complaint verbally or in writing to:

The Florida Department of Health
4042 Bald Cypress Way
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3251
Phone: 850-488-0595 & Fax: 850-487-9626

You are also free to discuss your complaints about Dr. Tommasi with anyone you wish, and do not have any responsibility to maintain confidentiality about the issue(s) discussed, as you are the individual who exercises the right to decide what information you wish to remain confidential.

Client Consent to Psychotherapy

I have fully read this statement, had sufficient time to be sure that I considered it carefully, asked any questions that were necessary and obtained sufficient clarification, and understand its terms completely. I consent to the use of a diagnosis for billing purposes, and to the release of that information and other information necessary to complete the billing process. I agree to pay in full the fee of \$150 per 50-minute session should insurance not cover the services provided. I understand my rights and responsibilities as a client, and my therapist’s responsibilities to me. I agree to participate in therapy with Dr. Jessica L. Tommasi, LMHC. I am aware that I may terminate my treatment at any time I wish for any reason I feel necessary and that I may refuse any requests or suggestions made to me by my therapist. I attest that I am at least 18 years of age.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information contained in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

Thank you.

Signature of Patient

Date