

---

## **WHAT IS PSYCHOTHERAPY?**

---

Often times, when we seek out the services of a therapist, it may be because we are going through some difficult situations in our lives and are looking for added support. Psychotherapy can be viewed as a process of change. It is one way we can increase understanding and awareness of our emotions/feelings and how they impact our choices, decision making and behaviors. As we increase awareness and insight into ourselves and what motivates our behaviors, we can be empowered to make changes to those behaviors or ways of being, that no longer suit us or that may be negatively impacting our quality of life.

Sitting with a therapist and sharing parts of who you are, your life experiences, emotions and dreams, can at times feel overwhelming and confronting. It can also feel really good. It is a very intimate and sacred space that is created between you and your therapist. This is why it is so important that the space and relationship that is created between therapist and client is a safe one. Without safety, the process of therapy is hindered. Part of what makes it a safe space is confidentiality, boundaries and no judgment.

---

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

---

Confidentiality means that whatever is discussed between you and your therapist is not discussed outside of that room. The only time this confidentiality is broken is if you share with the therapist that either your or someone else's safety is in danger. That means if you are thinking of hurting yourself or someone else or you give the therapist information that indicates there is child or elder abuse going on, then therapists, as mandated reporters, are required under the law to let the appropriate authorities know. Apart from these conditions, your therapist will maintain your right to confidentiality and privacy. Without your verbal or written consent, a therapist is not allowed to discuss information about your therapy with others.

---

## **BOUNDARIES**

---

Boundaries are also important in developing a safe space. As you and your therapist sit together and talk about things, there is a trust that is built between you. As such it is critical that the therapist not engage in behaviors that will betray or take advantage of that trust. This would be very harmful and damaging. There are very clear guidelines within the law that therapists must follow in terms of how they interact with their clients. The reason the law is so clear on this is because it can be easy to confuse the closeness of the therapeutic relationship with other feelings. That's when things get messy. So to keep it simple and clear, the extent of the relationship between therapist and client, exists within the limits and bounds of your regular sessions, and should never include sexual or romantic involvement of any nature. These laws have been created to ensure that the relationship between therapist and client is a safe one. Unfortunately, there have been instances when the trust within that space has been abused, betrayed and/or broken. If this happens you have the right to contact the Board of Behavioral Sciences to discuss your options for addressing sexually inappropriate behavior by your therapist. (B.B.S. #: 916-574-7830)

Here is the link to the BBS booklet "[Therapy Never Includes Sexual Behavior](#)"

---

## **NON-JUDGEMENT**

---

Another part of what makes therapy a safe space is that there is no judgement on the part of the therapist about any of the information you share with them. Rather it can be viewed as an opportunity to learn about you - your struggles, triumphs, accomplishments, hopes and dreams. Over the course of your therapeutic relationship, by engaging openly and honestly you will further develop your awareness of who you are, your self-esteem, self confidence and skills that will foster a greater sense of empowerment when coping with your life circumstances and situations.