

Appendix A: Practice Policies & Technical Standards

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This was adapted with permission from Dawn McBride, DPS.

1. “If we’re meeting online, what happens if the internet cuts out?”

- I take internet stability seriously and I’ve invested in a stable setup, including a dedicated LAN line.
- If we lose the connection **due to my internet setup**, I’ll offer a **pro-rated reduced rate or a free reschedule**. If the disruption is **on your end**, the **session fee still applies**, but I’ll stay available for the full hour to try and reconnect.

2. “Can I talk with you if I’m outside of Japan?”

- No. We both need to be physically in Japan for our sessions. If you travel, we’ll pause until you return. If you move away permanently, I’ll gladly help you connect with a new therapist. I hold myself to this exact same standard: I won’t conduct sessions while I am outside the country.

***FYI: Did you know laws governing counselling change the moment you cross a border?** Many countries, as well as individual provinces, states, etc., require a local certification or license to practice on their soil. Because I don’t know the laws of every foreign jurisdiction, keeping our work strictly within Japan is the only honest way to ensure I am practicing safely, ethically, and simply.*

3. “How often should I talk to you?” / “How long can I keep my file open?”

- To begin, I generally recommend meeting every one to two weeks. That said, some folks prefer a different frequency. We can adjust to what best supports you.
- **Closing file:** If we don’t connect for a new session **within two months**, I’ll consider our current work complete and close your file to make room space for working with others. This would mark the end of our current chapter, but it doesn’t mean you can’t reach out again.
 - If your file isn’t open any longer and **you wish to work together again, please email me directly**. I’ll let you know my current availability or help you find another path forward.

4. “What happens if our conversations run over time?”

- **The "End-of-Session" Rush:** It is very common to realize at the very end of an hour that there’s a heavy topic you still want to dive into. If that happens, we will aim to "park" it safely so we can unpack it fully during our next meeting.
- **If John loses track of time:** Keeping an eye on the clock is my responsibility. If I take us over our scheduled time, my strict practice is that you’re not charged for those extra minutes.
- **If you request an extension:** If you feel we are in a spot where you explicitly want to keep going, and I have the time to extend our session, I am happy to do so and will prorate the extra time based on our standard fee.

5. “Is our digital connection actually secure?”

- **Secure Tools & Cross-Border Storage:** My standard practice is to protect your privacy by using encrypted, professional-grade business platforms (rather than specialized medical software) whose secure cloud servers may be located outside of Japan. By choosing to work with me, you consent to this secure cross-border storage, which I’ve chosen to align with both Japanese privacy and Canadian ethical (CCPA) frameworks. When we meet, I’m very happy to talk more about the specific tools I use and how I work to keep your information safe.

- I use **secure, encrypted communication and documentation tools** that meet high standards for privacy and data protection. While these are professional business platforms rather than specialized medical software, I have chosen them for their strong security features. When we meet, I'm happy to talk more about the specific tools I use and how I work to keep your information safe.
- To keep your file complete, **I'll include copies of any relevant email exchanges in your clinical notes** if you share something that moves our work forward.
- **Note on Email:** *While my system is encrypted, standard email is not 100% secure. Please avoid sending highly sensitive details in the body of an email, and let's save those for the conversation.*

6. "Do you talk to anyone else about our work?"

- To continue becoming the best therapist I can be for you, **I'll occasionally chat with other professionals** in a confidential group or one-to-one. This may include calling a supervisor for a fresh perspective.
- I leave out names and identifying details that would give away who you are. The focus is on our collaboration and how I'll better support your journey.

FYI: Did you know therapists are ethically required to consult with others in the field? A requirement for Canadian Certified Counsellors, like me is to seek peer consultation throughout our careers so we don't get stuck in our own echo chambers. My policy is to keep these discussions strictly anonymous, meaning I leave out all identifying details about my clients to safeguard your privacy.

7. "Will you record our conversation? Can I record?"

- No, I won't record our conversations.
- No, you don't have my permission to take photographs or to make audio or video recordings of me, other people I am connected to (familial or social connections), or of my property (e.g. documents, office items).
- If I learn you have made such recordings without my written permission, it may lead to an immediate end to our professional relationship.

8. "What do you write at the end of our conversations? Do you take notes?"

- At the close of each session, I may invite you to co-create a brief record of what stood out to you. I strive to keep these notes minimal and focused, so they reflect your voice and support our ongoing work together.

FYI: Did you know that therapists keep notes for continuity, safety, and accountability? In my notes, I value including your insights, take-aways, skills, abilities, and resources for getting through hard times. I also record your intentions and goals, any safety or risk concerns, what I did to help, and your progress. Whenever possible, I avoid recording details of past or current wrongdoings.

9. "How are my records handled, and what are the legal realities in Japan?"

- **The Note Style:** My notes are brief, professional summaries of our work (goals, progress, key themes, relevant context, safety details, your take aways) rather than comprehensive transcripts.
- **Storage & Destruction:** In line with professional standards in Japan, I keep my session notes for a minimum of **seven years after our last meeting**. After that time, your records are securely and

permanently destroyed by years' end. My goal is to maintain a record that supports your progress while respecting your long-term privacy.

- I don't retain in-session notes, and I tend to **delete those in-session notes as soon I finish** writing the formal session note.
- **Legal Disclosures:** Document orders from Japanese courts are rare but legally possible. If a third party ever compels access, my selective recording style is designed to protect your privacy, and avoid an invasive, detailed account of your life.

***FYI: Did you know therapy notes are selective by design?** A clinical note is a snapshot of our work together to help us remember where we left off. But it is not comprehensive, and might reflect my professional perspective, as well as your brief summaries or take aways.*

10. "What if I want to see the records from our sessions?"

- Since you lead the way in our work, you have the right to review the records I keep. However, preparing a formal copy of your file involves ensuring the privacy of any third parties mentioned and organizing the documents, and therefore, takes significant time outside of our scheduled sessions.
- Because of this, I charge a **pro-rated session fee** based on the time required to prepare the file.

11. "What if we run into each other in public, or know the same people?"

- Japan's international community can be quite small, and there's a chance we might cross paths at an event or have mutual friends. To protect your privacy, if we see each other in public, my strict practice is to **follow your lead**. I won't acknowledge you first, but if you choose to say hello, I'm happy to return the greeting. We can talk about how to navigate these 'small world' moments to make sure you support your comfort.

***FYI: Did you know that you are the only person in our relationship who has the right to talk about it in public?** I'm bound by a code of silence to protect your privacy, but you aren't. In public, you decide who knows we are working together, and I am committed to remaining silent on my end to support that choice.*

12. "How do you handle free consultations? And what happens to my data in this process?"

- **Administrative Fit-Check:** A free 25-minute consult is a low-pressure meeting to test our relational fit, not a clinical therapy session. Requesting or completing a consult does not establish a formal client-therapist relationship or open an active clinical file.
- **30-Day Routine Purge:** If we choose not to work together, all initial contact form entries, consult notes, and email threads are quietly purged within 60 days of inactivity to protect your privacy and honor Japanese data rules (APPI).
- **Crisis Boundaries:** My contact form and administrative emails are not monitored for emergency care. If you are experiencing an immediate crisis, please connect directly with local Japanese emergency services (119/110) or TELL Lifeline (0800-300-8355).