

Message to my clients – March 14, 2020  
from Melany Morrison, Spring Marriage and Family Therapy

As you probably are aware, Montgomery County, Texas, has declared a disaster relating to COVID-19, and President Trump just declared a National Emergency.

After a lot of reflection and consultation with my colleagues, I am writing to inform you that I will be moving to video sessions as of Monday March 16th 2020. This means I will not be seeing clients at my office. This change will be in effect until the end of April, at which time I will re-evaluate the situation.

There are several reasons for this change. First and most importantly, it is for your health and safety. As you know, I have a small home office and there are a lot of clients coming and going each day. There is no way to be sure who has been in contact with others who have been exposed to COVID-19. Everyone sits on the same couch, and because it is not a medical office, it is difficult to maintain the CDC's recommended precautions.

Secondly, while I do not believe I have been exposed to the coronavirus, I cannot guarantee that I have not or will not be in the future.

Thirdly, I cannot guarantee your confidentiality in the event that even ONE person I see gets the virus due to CDC regulations and compliance with reporting to keep our city safe.

Considering all of these things, I feel I am making a prudent decision at this time. I truly care about my clients and I apologize for any inconvenience this change may cause you.

For those who are willing to try video sessions with me, I think you will be pleasantly surprised at how effective and convenient they can be. As a counselor I was initially skeptical about it too, because in this profession we are so used to having our clients in the therapy room with us. However there is some good evidence that clients may be even more comfortable and open during virtual counseling sessions. This has also been my experience with it.

Having video sessions will allow me to expand the days and times I am available for appointments over the next month. I also have self-scheduling, so you will be able to go into the client portal and book whatever slot(s) work best for you.

I will be using the video service offered through my HIPAA compliant practice management provider, Doxyme.com. <https://doxy.me/patients>

I am attaching a "getting started" guide from TherapyNotes and I think you'll find it straightforward and easy to use. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJf9N9sjDLI>

For clients who do not wish to do video sessions, I will also still offer telephone sessions. Just let me know your preference.

If you have any concerns whatsoever, please call me before your next scheduled session to discuss. If you need to cancel sessions due to being sick or other issues relating to (or not) the COVID-19 situation, I will appreciate a text or phone call as usual BEFORE the appointment. And if you decide you prefer to suspend or terminate your counseling with me at this time, please also call me to verify that, so I can refer you to other providers as needed.

Thank you so much for your understanding. These are never easy decisions to make, and it is my intention to provide you with continuity of mental health care as we navigate our way through the current situation.

Sincerely,

Melany Morrison

How to access your client portal: I will send you an email to access your portal. Please text me if you do not get this portal instruction. There will be a new, revised HIPAA form that includes the following:

### **The Privacy Rule and Public Health**

The Privacy Rule recognizes 1) the legitimate need for public health authorities and others responsible for ensuring the public's health and safety to have access to PHI to conduct their missions; and 2) the importance of public health reporting by covered entities to identify threats to the public and individuals. Accordingly, the rule 1) permits PHI disclosures without a written patient authorization for specified public health purposes to public health authorities legally authorized to collect and receive the information for such purposes, and 2) permits disclosures that are required by state and local public health or other laws.