

# *Martha de Laveaga Stewart*

Marriage and Family Therapist --- M.S. MFC 31729  
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## **CLIENT INFORMATION AND OFFICE POLICIES**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

My orientation is existential, which means I ask my clients to look at what they are doing with the basic fact and miracle of their having life. I also see that each of us are human beings, which means that I regard each human as valuable and as having the potential for greater fullness of living. In my work with clients, I explore family of origin and developmental issues as well. Furthermore, I see each of us as created beings of God, and believe that God desires healing for each of us. This spiritual dimension enters into the work according to a client's interest.

### **WHO I AM**

MARTHA DE LAVEAGA STEWART, M.S., M.F.T. I hold a California professional license: Marriage and Family Therapist (MFC31729). I have two graduate degrees. I received a Masters of Science in Counseling Psychology from Dominican College in 1992. I also received a Masters in Christian Studies from New College Berkeley, a graduate school affiliated with the Graduate Theological Union in 1986.

### **BUSINESS AND RELATED ARRANGEMENTS**

I have come to obtain certain policies about how I conduct my practice. I spell them out here to insure our mutual understanding. They are, of course, always open to discussion, but I have adapted them in many circumstances, and I feel that are generally fair and workable.

### **TELEPHONE CALLS**

Any time that it is important for you to get in touch with me, please call 925-254-8538. My confidential voice mail will record your message, and I will return your call as soon as possible. If you are unable to reach me and you are in crisis, please call your primary care physician, 911, or the local crisis line at 800-833-2900.

### **EMAIL**

My email address is Marty@marthastewartmft.com. Email may be used to communicate thoughts between sessions, or while one of us is on vacation. Email may not be used to make appointments, or to cancel them. All appointments must be made and cancelled via telephone.

### **SPECIAL CHARGES**

No charge is made for brief telephone conversations. Longer calls (in general, more than ten minutes) are subject to a charge based on the length of the call. In the same way, if it is necessary to have special sessions (after-hours, Saturdays, Sundays, or holidays), I charge at one and one-half the usual fee to compensate for the loss of my necessary private time.

### **CANCELLATIONS**

Canceled appointments are a mutual problem to both of us. To try to be fair both ways, my policy is this: No fee is assessed if you give me 24 hours or more notice. You may leave a message for me 24 hours a day. The fee will not be charged if we are able to reschedule an appointment for you within that week at a time that works for both of us. Full fee is charged, if you notify me less than 24 hours before the starting time of your appointment or if you are a no show for the hour. This is not a penalty; it's simply the reality that there is little likelihood of my being able to fill the time on less than a full day's notice, and I don't want to be penalized either.

**PAYMENTS**

I prefer that you pay for each session at the beginning of the hour. If you have your check ready in advance, you will not need to use your session time preparing it.

**RETURNED CHECKS AND INSURANCE**

You are responsible for any bank charges due to a returned check. If you intend to use insurance, you are responsible to pay me, and I will give you monthly statements for you to file with insurance company. My relationship is with you, however, and not the insurance company. This means that you are responsible for keeping your account current, and for submitting the necessary forms for reimbursement.

**SESSION LENGTH AND FREQUENCY**

Sessions are 50 minutes long. Your cooperation and understanding on this will be appreciated. I have found that once or twice a week sessions are the most effective. Every other week sessions limit the work tremendously, and I do not recommend it. Often when working with couples, I suggest an hour and half session. You may discontinue treatment at any time, but please discuss any decisions with me. I always prefer to have a final session for termination.

**RECORD KEEPING**

A clinical chart is maintained describing your condition and your treatment and progress in treatment, dates of and fees for sessions, and notes describing each therapy session. Your records will not be released without your written consent, unless in those situations as outlined in the Agreement for Services. Medical records are locked and kept on site.

**VACATIONS**

At this point in my career, I take several weeks off throughout the year. If you desire a therapist that is available year round, I am happy to give you a referral. Most clients manage well with the break and often have times of growth in their lives while I am away.

**MY PERSPECTIVE**

My relationship with my clients is an important part of my life. I seek to be open to their needs while maintaining realistic awareness of my own. For the most part, this perspective leads to little conflict. When differences do arise, I hope that my clients will know my genuine readiness to explore openly all matters between us.

I feel fortunate to be trusted by so many people with a share in the vital undertaking of their trying to reclaim and enrich their living. I cannot promise the outcomes of our work together, but I can pledge my best efforts to bring my knowledge, my sensitivity, and my skills to the support of that undertaking.

Martha de Laveaga Stewart, MFT