



## **Appointment and Attendance Policy, Processes and Fees Reasoning**

The Appointment and Attendance Policy, Processes and Fees have been made in consideration of the following factors:

- It is not possible to offer an ongoing private psychology service unless most clients who book sessions, attend them. This is an unfortunate, but accurate, commercial reality for all private psychologists. Unlike a GP who can see multiple people in an hour, only one client can be booked per hour per psychologist. The number of clients a psychologist can see in a day, or even over a week, is nowhere near as high as many other types of professions. This is because therapy is cognitively, emotionally and (often) physically challenging. I love it, but it's not in clients' interests for their psychologist to book as many clients as they have hours in the day, every day, simply because they don't know whether enough clients who have booked sessions will actually keep them and attend. It's unlikely a psychologist who overbooks as a business risk management strategy would be able to maintain the quality of their service in the long-term (and burnout rates are high within the profession and something I want to avoid if I can for me and for my clients).
- The time for a confirmed appointment has been allocated for a particular client whether the client is there or not. If the client who confirmed the appointment is not there, it is not generally possible for another client to attend that time. This is because existing clients already have appointment times booked, so they generally don't need additional times to be offered. In the rare situation where they might, clients generally aren't available in these times anyway (because of the late notice and their own pre-existing commitments). It is not ethical to simply try and fill non-attended appointment times with new clients. This is because those clients need regular future appointment times too and these will not be available when the cancelling client cancels one session but keeps their other future session times booked. If I offered each non-attended session to a new client, it wouldn't be long before I have more clients than available session times and that is neither fair nor reasonable for new clients (or existing



- clients who, when they come to the end of the pre-scheduled appointments, cannot get further appointments with me). In addition, adding an unexpected (whether existing or new) client adds more time (that I don't generally have) in preparation for that client before they attend.
- There are many ongoing costs involved in being a clinical psychologist (ongoing training and supervision costs, registration costs, insurance costs, professional association costs, IT subscriptions costs, facilities costs, admin costs etc) and in addition to these outgoings there is a lot of unpaid work around sessions that clients aren't necessarily aware of. For example, I write an intake, formulation, and treatment plan for each client. I write session plans (and notes after) for each client's sessions, and I review each client's notes before the day of their session. I communicate with GPs (and where relevant, other health professionals) in my own time. I also often perform research about clients' presenting difficulties to ensure evidence-based treatment and that I am able and prepared to meet clients' needs (and obtain more learning/skills/supervision outside of sessions that I generally pay for to assist with this when necessary).
- If I have already provided the service and not been paid for it, it doesn't make sense for me to invest more time and money in chasing payment for the service and such costs will be payable by the non-paying client.
- Genuine, unexpected, events are sometimes going to happen which means clients are going to need to provide late notice that they will not be attending. I don't think clients should be unduly negatively impacted by these. This is in terms of both the amount of the Late Notice or Nonattendance Fee and the ability for clients to return to sessions as easily as possible (due to future session times continuing to be available). This is why I am not setting the Late Notice or Nonattendance Fee at the rate of the full appointment fee (unlike many other practices).
- I recognise that occasionally I am going to need to cancel or reschedule sessions at late notice due to genuine and unexpected events in my life too (such as an accident or illness). My approach to this is to offer



- appointments again as soon as possible. If necessary and possible I also add days/times to make sure my clients can see me as soon as possible again to make up for my absence. I also think your time is valuable and needs to be respected as much as mine, and as possible. To demonstrate this, in situations where I have to provide less than two business days' notice to cancel or reschedule the day of our session, I will reduce that's client's next session fee by 20%.
- Late notice changes or nonattendance of bookings made by clients are commonly reported (by them) to be a result of therapy interfering thoughts, feelings and behaviours. For example, ambivalence, resistance to, or anxiety, about attending therapy in the lead up to the appointment with an ultimate decision to not attend to reduce these uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. It's really important for clients to attend with those thoughts, feelings and impulses and for us to work through them together to continue working on their therapeutic goals (therapy is hard, I completely understand and not coming when you have planned is actually going to make it harder, not easier). Many clients have told me knowing they have to pay a fee if they do not attend their session has gotten them over the line to attend (and that when they attend, they are glad they did) and that not wanting to pay a fee has been a useful motivation for them to attend when they have booked.

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