

EXPRESSIONS THERAPY

Website Copy Sample

Home

At Expressions Therapy, we seek to create not only a safe space but a brave one. Our practice couples empathy and compassion with a variety of therapeutic modalities for individuals, groups, and couples, allowing them to tap into undiscovered reserves of resiliency. As D.C. residents, we understand the unique pressures of the times we're living in, and we can help you to process through not only historical traumas, but the ongoing stressors related to quarantine, social justice, and the current political climate. Together, we can navigate through these traumas to build a more hopeful future.

How it Works

At Expressions Therapy, we strive to create a safe space that encourages bravery and fosters resilience. We believe that connection and a sense of belonging are among the most important things a human being can have in life, and we want to encourage you to speak openly and honestly about your experiences. We want you to come as you are, and we will meet you where you are. ~~Our specialities include:~~

- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer Identity issues**
 - As a member of the LGBT community, and as someone who holds degrees both in psychology and LGBT Health

and Policy, I couple an academic understanding of the unique disparities that come with these identities with a profound personal knowledge of them in my own life. Not all patients have had positive experiences with the medical community, so it is my hope that my education and bisexual identity will serve my patients in a way that makes them feel both heard and seen. I also recognize that our identities can be static, or they can be fluid, and that the coming out process isn't something we do just once: we do it over and over again.

- **Transgender, Nonbinary, Genderqueer, Gender Non-conforming issues**
 - I do not personally identify as cisgender, and so I approach the issues facing the transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming communities with deep empathy and personal understanding. From fluidity to transitioning, hormone replacement therapy, to writing letters for surgery, I am committed to supporting my clients on their journeys. Not everyone experiences their own gender in the same way, so the discussion of gender as a construct and societal gender norms is at the forefront of our discussions in working through the big mess that is gender.

- **Navigating Ethical Non-Monogamy**

- Open relationships, polyamory, and ethical non-monogamy have become hot-button topics, but can be deeply misunderstood, and are often viewed as taboo. I understand that not all relationships look the same, and that not all people want the same things. Families look different, and that is something to be celebrated. I am actively staying abreast of the most current research on these topics so that I can help you to navigate their stigma while maintaining the happy, healthy bonds you have with your partners.

- **PTSD and Trauma**
 - Trauma surrounds us all, especially in the current climate, and it can take on many forms. I work specifically with both PTSD and CPTSD in a manner that will allow us to begin to untangle the buildup of trauma over time. I believe it is my job to help you to develop the skills and understanding you need to live a full life with the diagnosis of PTSD or CPTSD. Navigating my own CPTSD has given me an appreciation for how vital therapy is to managing the symptoms associated with these conditions.

- **Chronic Illness**
 - For individuals with invisible chronic illnesses, hiding your pain all the time becomes exhausting. With a chronic health issue, you don't get to choose when

you're in pain and when you're not, and as such, I keep my cancellation policy flexible so that I can best support you. There is often a great deal of shame surrounding chronic illness, and significant stigma as well, both from the medical community and society at large. This can lead to depression and anxiety, both medical anxiety and social anxiety. I want to work with you to ensure that your chronic illness does not completely shape your mental health. I work with a lot of cancer patients, and understand the complexities and complications that can go hand in hand with that type of diagnosis.

- **Depression and Anxiety**

- I am passionate about working with anyone who has experienced depression or anxiety and who wants to take a deeper look at how these painful thoughts and feelings developed, and how they shape their daily lives. I strive to give my patients a myriad of coping skills and therapeutic tools that will allow them to deftly navigate the world's everyday stressors, and ask them to look introspectively at their own expectations and biases as together we resist heteronormative patriarchal structures.

- **Borderline Personality Disorder**

- If you have received a diagnosis of BPD, then you know that mitigating your varying moods is critical to leading a full and happy life. I am committed to working with my patients so that they can develop a complete understanding of their own patterns and behaviors so that they can learn to anticipate when a shift might be coming, and what they can do to make that shift a little softer. This is a condition that also bears a lot of stigma, and I hope to create a judgement-free space where my patient feels emboldened to express themselves openly and honestly.

About Dr. Shelley Marfori (She/Her, They/Them)

I was born and raised in Columbia, South Carolina, before earning my B.A. from the University of South Carolina and my Psy.D. from George Washington University, where I was dually enrolled in GWU's LGBTQ Health and Policy Program. After graduating, I worked as a Postdoctoral Fellow at Therapy Group DC. As a doctoral student, I worked at The Center Clinic, helping socioeconomically-challenged patients from all walks of life. I completed my APA accredited internship at the University of Illinois at Chicago where I worked at UIC's Student Counseling Office, which serves one of the most diverse student bodies in the country. I couple my educational background with immense passion for the work: I became a psychologist because I believe

deeply in the transformative impact of therapy, because I have witnessed first-hand just how life-changing it can be.

As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community (Bisexual, Questioning, Fluid), a trauma survivor, and someone with a chronic pain disorder, I approach the work that I do from a place of empathy and personal understanding. It is my belief that our identities, both what we show the world and who we are on the inside, are a mosaic of memory and experience that begins in early childhood and continues throughout our lives. In a therapeutic relationship, we can uncover the patterns of behavior that are a result of these experiences while we differentiate between behaviors that serve us and behaviors that hinder us. Through the power of connection and communication, we can heal old wounds and face moments of pain together as we seek to accomplish any goals you may have set for yourself when you decided to seek therapy.

My educational background is steeped in psychodynamic theory, identifying patterns from childhood, and working to break through harmful paradigms. However, I am dedicated to meeting my clients where they are, and I can bring a number of therapeutic modalities into our sessions, including Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Trauma Based Approaches, Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT). These varied interventions have proven invaluable to my psychotherapeutic work and have shown me the importance of a flexible, multidisciplinary approach.

I am married to my partner Elizabeth, and we live in DuPont Circle with our three cats, Lenin, George, and Indy, and my

service dog, Arrow. Arrow is a standard poodle who was extensively trained to help me with intermittent chronic pain, joint instability, and adrenal function. He provides deep pressure therapy (not unlike a weighted blanket) and is attuned to me and what's going on inside of my body, which allows me to pay more attention to my patients and focus less on what's going on internally. With attunement to me comes attunement to others, and often, when patients are feeling an intense emotional experience, Arrow will seek to comfort them (always asking permission first!) He is very open to responding to other people asking for help, and his presence is calming, allowing them to feel safer and more open to discussing difficult topics.

Consulting

With my experience and educational background, I am able to provide training and guidance for companies and individuals who are interested in learning more about the issues that the LGBTQIA+ community faces, as well as HR policies that can be put in place to be more inclusive. My trainings include:

- Safe Zone Training
- Trans, Nonbinary, Bisexual Training
- Ethical Non-Monogamy Training

Expressions Therapy offers a wide array of therapeutic modalities for individuals, groups, and couples. We are a Queer practice that seeks to create a brave space for members of traditionally marginalized communities, such as the LGBTQIAP+ community, BIPOC, Kink Community, Polyamorous Community, and individuals dealing with chronic health conditions and trauma.

Our approach is eclectic and flexible, founded in empathy and curiosity, where your unique needs and goals are centered. We are a practice that understands that support is vital even outside of prescribed session times, and while healthy boundaries are established and respected, so is an atmosphere of support and radical acceptance.

Anxiety and trauma can live in our bodies. Together, we will create a relationship that fosters dynamic and lasting growth, tapping into undiscovered reserves of resiliency that will allow you to navigate through the traumas of the past and build a more hopeful future.

Our areas of speciality and interest include:

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer issues
- Transgender, Nonbinary, Genderqueer, Gender Non-conforming issues
- Navigating Ethical Non-Monogamy
- PTSD and Trauma

- Chronic Illness
- Depression and Anxiety
- Borderline Personality Disorder

Q: What can I expect from the first session?

A: Relationships are powerful and transformative, and we will begin building ours on Day 1. Many people I've worked with in the past have had negative experiences with the medical community, so it's important to me that I create a supportive atmosphere that doesn't abide by heteronormative White ideology. The first session is about building trust and rapport, so that I can get an idea of what you're comfortable with, what your goals are, and what structure of support you need. I approach each patient differently, making sure that I meet you where you are.

Q: How do I know you're the right therapist for me?

A: I am a part of a number of the communities I strive to serve: a Queer therapist and trauma survivor with a chronic health condition, I come to my work from a place of profound understanding and empathy. I also deeply believe in therapeutic relationships as a means through which we can reach our fullest potential. My passion for my profession sprouted from my own experiences with therapy, and while therapy is my work, it is also my calling. I believe that my patients' mental health improves when I am open with them: I have worked through my own issues and found resiliency through that work. I go to therapy; I believe in it whole-heartedly.

Q: What are your qualifications?

A: I am a psychologist who is a licensed psychology associate. I have an LGBTQIAP+ Certificate in Health and Policy from George Washington University, as well as a Doctorate in Psychology (Psy.D). I have done independent studies in open relationships and ethical nonmonogamy, bisexuality and the therapy practice room, and creating a training program for businesses that increases their understand of nonbinary employees and patients.

Q: Do you accept insurance? How much do you charge?

A: While I do not accept insurance, I will file your out-of-network reimbursement claim for you. I charge \$250 for a 60-minute session, and \$215 for a 45-minute session. I am open to negotiating those costs on a case by case basis.

Q: What is your cancellation policy?

A: I have a very flexible policy that is founded in mutual respect and understanding. Please keep the lines of communication open.