A drawing of a face

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Dear client,

I am really pleased to be able to go back to offering some in person meetings from X September 2020. Online meetings via Zoom have worked well as a way of continuing to offer family mediation to clients during the challenging pandemic conditions but I have always been conscious that some of you would prefer to meet in person. It has always been my intention to go back to offering physical meetings as soon as possible, but to only do this if I could ensure meetings could be offered with the least risk possible to both you and your family, and me and my family. Meetings online via Zoom will continue to take place and it will always be your choice whether you meet in person or online.

Your in person meeting will be the same safe space to find resolutions, tailored to you and your family, that it has always been, but there are a few changes that are designed to keep us all as safe as we can be. I ask you to read, and be clear about, the following important information.

1. **There is no way to offer physical meetings completely risk free.** Meeting in person does represent a small risk of infection with COVID-19 to all of us and it’s important that you are aware of that. The guidance is designed to minimise that risk.
2. **If you have any of the following symptoms, or anyone in your household has any of the following symptoms (even if you do not believe they are because of coronavirus), then you need to contact me to re-arrange your appointment**. I will not be levying cancellation charges for any appointment cancelled or re-arranged at short notice due to any party (or someone in their household) having symptoms of coronavirus. It may be possible to move your appointment online, or we can re-schedule the in person meeting as soon as we are able to. Those symptoms are:

* **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
* **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
* **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

**Please be assured that in the event of me, or anyone in my household, having any of these symptoms I will contact you to offer you an online or later appointment. If you should develop the symptoms set out above (or someone in your household should develop the symptoms) within 14 days of your appointment then please ensure you let me know. I will let all clients know if I develop any of the above symptoms within 14 days of an appointment or if I become aware that someone who attended an appointment in the 14 days before you developed symptoms.**

1. When you arrive at the Atrium please let the receptionist know that you have arrived and she will let me know. The reception area is set up to ensure there is social distancing and there is hand sanitiser for you to use on your arrival. If it is an initial meeting I will come and collect you at the time of your appointment, if it is a joint meeting I will collect you both either when both of you are present, or at your allotted appointment time (if this is later). If you wish to wait in separate areas then please let me know prior to the appointment. There is a one way system in operation through the Atrium and I will ensure that we are socially distanced from other building users on the way to my office as much as is possible.
2. Once in my office you will find further hand sanitiser for your use. There will be a space for each of you on the table with your own hand sanitiser, paper, pen and tissues. Please take any paper you use with you (otherwise it will be disposed of). The pens will all be cleaned prior to your arrival. If you open the individual packet of tissues then please take them away with you. If they are unopened then they will be left sealed and the outside of the packet will be cleaned.
3. There will be clear screens on the table between us. I hope that they will not be intrusive but will provide a layer of additional protection for us all.
4. In order to offer mediation in a more COVID secure way I have moved offices to a bigger space on the ground floor. The ground floor means that I have a window that will remain open during our meeting to allow for a greater flow or air. Because of it’s location away from the outside seating and café, there should not be people outside my office. But if this is something that concerns you, please speak to me prior to the meeting. You may wish to bring an extra layer in case it is cold in the office because of the open window. I will also not be offering tea, coffee or water but please feel free to bring your own drinks with you such as a water bottle or hot drink.
5. You are not required to wear a face mask to come to the meeting and I shall not be wearing a face mask. If you would feel more comfortable wearing a mask then please feel free to wear one. If you would prefer me to wear a face mask then please discuss this with me prior to the meeting.
6. The following groups of people are considered to be at high risk from coronavirus and accordingly if you are in this category, or you live with, or look after someone, in this category, I would strongly suggest that you continue to mediate online.

* have had an organ transplant
* are having chemotherapy or antibody treatment for cancer, including immunotherapy
* are having an intense course of radiotherapy (radical radiotherapy) for lung cancer
* are having targeted cancer treatments that can affect the immune system (such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors)
* have blood or bone marrow cancer (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma)
* have had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant in the past 6 months, or are still taking immunosuppressant medicine
* have been told by a doctor they have a severe lung condition (such as cystic fibrosis, severe asthma or severe COPD)
* have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID or sickle cell)
* are taking medicine that makes them much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppressant medicine)
* have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

1. People in the following group are considered to be at a greater (but not high) risk from coronavirus. Accordingly if you are in this category, or you live with, or care for someone in any of these categories, then I would again invite you to consider whether it would be better to continue to mediate online.

* are 70 or older
* have a lung condition that's not severe (such as asthma, COPD, emphysema or bronchitis)
* have heart disease (such as heart failure)
* have diabetes
* have chronic kidney disease
* have liver disease (such as hepatitis)
* have a condition affecting the brain or nerves (such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy)
* have a condition that means they have a high risk of getting infections
* are taking medicine that can affect the immune system (such as low doses of steroids)
* are very obese (a BMI of 40 or above)
* are pregnant

1. I will ensure that all surfaces and particularly contact points are properly cleaned after each meeting. In order to do this I will only be offering a certain number of in person meetings in each week. There may therefore be a longer wait time for an in person meeting.
2. It is inevitable with children returning to school that we may end up in a situation where I am forced to self-isolate because of having coronavirus symptoms. I ask you to please bear with me in this situation. I will always offer an online meeting if I am in a position to do so, or a meeting in person once I am able to do so. I ask for your patience in recognising this situation even though it may be frustrating.

**Louisa Whitney – 4th September 2020**