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## **CLIENT SERVICE AGREEMENT**

This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. It also contains summary information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), a federal law that provides privacy protections and patient rights about the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) for the purposes of treatment, payment, and health care operations. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you understand them. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. We can discuss any questions you have when you sign them or at any time in the future.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Therapy is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in psychotherapy, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. There are also legal limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. I, as your therapist, have corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness. The process of psychotherapy often requires discussing the unpleasant aspects of your life. However, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for individuals who undertake it. Therapy often leads to a significant reduction in feelings of distress, increased satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, greater personal awareness and insight, increased skills for managing stress and resolutions to specific problems. But, there are no guarantees about what will happen. Psychotherapy requires active effort on your part. In order to be

most successful, you will have to work on things we discuss outside of sessions.

The first 1-4 sessions will involve a comprehensive evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what our work might include. At that point, we will discuss your treatment goals and create an initial treatment plan. You should evaluate this information and make your own assessment about whether you feel comfortable working with me. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to refer you to another mental health professional.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

Appointments/sessions will ordinarily be 50 minutes in duration, unless we agree on a different amount of time per session and frequency, based on your needs. Often couples/family therapy requires a bit more time and can run from 60 to 75 minutes. The date and time scheduled for your appointment is assigned to you and you alone. If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I ask that you provide me with **24 hours'** notice. If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel with less than 24 hour notice, my policy is to collect the amount of your session (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control). If it is possible, I will try to find another time during the week to reschedule the appointment. For couples or families, our session will begin when all members are present, unless we have made other arrangements for that session.

I do my best to be on time, however do to the nature of therapy, it is not always possible to end every session on schedule.

## **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

My fee for the initial intake appointment is \$\_\_\_\_\_ (typically 1 hour) and each subsequent appointment is \$\_\_\_\_\_ (50 minutes). You are responsible for paying at the time of your session unless prior arrangements have been made. Payment must be made by check or cash; I can also process credit/debit cards charges as payment, however I will add a 3% fee to cover processing charges. Any checks returned to my

office are subject to an additional fee of up to \$50.00 to cover the bank fees that I incur. I ask that all clients sign a payment authorization form that I will keep on file. If you refuse settle your balance within ninety (90) days, I reserve the right to use an attorney or collection agency to secure payment.

In addition to appointments, I use the rate of \$160.00 per sixty minutes (1 hour) on a prorated basis (15 minute increments) for additional therapy, as well as, other professional services that you may ask for, such as telephone conversations that last longer than 15 minutes, attendance at meetings or consultations which you have requested, or the time required to perform any other service which you may request of me. If you anticipate becoming involved in a court case, I recommend that we discuss this fully before you waive your right to confidentiality. If your case requires my participation, you will be expected to pre-pay for the estimated professional time required even if another party compels me to testify.

## **PROFESSIONAL RECORDS**

I am required to keep appropriate records of the psychological services that I provide. Your records are maintained in a secure location. I keep brief records noting that you were here, your reasons for seeking therapy, the goals and progress we set for treatment, your diagnosis, topics we discussed, your medical, social, and treatment history, records I receive from other providers, copies of records I send to others, and your billing records. Except in unusual circumstances that involve danger to yourself, you have the right to a copy of your file. Because these are professional records, they may be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, I recommend that you initially review them with me, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional to discuss the contents. If I refuse your request for access to your records, you have a right to have my decision reviewed by another mental health professional, which I will discuss with you upon your request. You also have the right to request that a copy of your file be made available to any other health care provider at your written request.

## **PARENTS & MINORS**

While privacy in therapy is crucial to successful progress, parental

involvement can also be essential. It is my policy not to provide treatment to a child under age 14 unless s/he agrees that I can share whatever information I consider necessary with a parent/legal guardian. For children 14 and older, I request an agreement between the client and the parents allowing me to share general information about treatment progress and attendance, as well as a treatment summary upon completion of therapy. All other communication will require the child's agreement, unless I feel there is a safety concern, in which case I will make every effort to notify the child of my intention to disclose information ahead of time and make every effort to handle any objections that are raised.

## **CONTACTING ME**

I am often not immediately available by telephone. I do not answer my phone when I am with clients or otherwise unavailable. At these times, you may leave a message/text and your call/text will be returned as soon as possible, however it may take a day or two for non-urgent matters. If, for any number of unseen reasons, you do not hear from me or I am unable to reach you, and you feel you cannot wait for a return call or if you feel unable to keep yourself safe, 1) go to your Local Hospital Emergency Room, or 2) call 911 and ask to speak to the mental health worker on call. Also, I will make every attempt to inform you in advance of planned absences.

## **OTHER RIGHTS**

If at any time you have questions, concerns, or complaints about what is, or is not happening in therapy, I hope you will talk with me so that I can respond to your concerns. Such comments will be taken seriously and handled with care and respect. You may also request that I refer you to another therapist and are free to end therapy at any time. You have the right to considerate, safe and respectful care, without discrimination as to race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, or source of payment. You have the right to ask questions about any aspects of therapy and about my specific training and experience.

## CONSENT TO PSYCHOTHERAPY

Your signature below indicates that you have read this Agreement and the Notice of Privacy Practices and agree to their terms.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Patient or Personal Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Patient or Personal Representative

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Therapist