

Informed Consent for Psychotherapy

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General Information

The therapeutic relationship is unique in that it is a highly personal and at the same time, a contractual agreement. Given this, it is important for us to reach a clear understanding about how our relationship will work, and what each of us can expect. This consent will provide a clear framework for our work together. Feel free to discuss any of this with me. Please read and indicate that you have reviewed this information and agree to it by filling in the checkbox at the end of this document.

The Therapeutic Process

The therapy services I provide are evidence-informed. This means that the therapy techniques I use are developed through and supported by the most current research in the mental health and substance use disorder fields. Although there are no guarantees that therapy will work for you, I do want everyone to succeed in therapy and as such, will work with you to the best of my ability to make that happen, which may include making a referral for other resources if we find that therapy is not helpful for you.

Therapy also has potential emotional risks. Approaching feelings or thoughts that you have tried to not think about may be painful. Making changes in your thinking or behaviors can be scary and sometimes disruptive to relationships. I will work with you on an ongoing basis to evaluate the benefits, costs, and risks of discussed changes so ultimately you are the one who decides what changes to make in your thinking and/or behaviors.

It is important you understand that you can withdraw your consent for therapy services and discontinue treatment at any time. It is also integral to therapy to provide complete and accurate information so that I may best assist you.

Appointment Information

The first appointment is typically 45 minutes to an hour and we review what is going on in your life that is bringing you to therapy. More specifically, this includes discussing your current symptoms and functioning, as well as a comprehensive overview of your life (e.g., family status, family of origin, occupational status, educational background, medical history, major events in your life, substance use, social relationship, etc).

At the end of the first session we begin discussing what your treatment goals might look like. It is not until the second session that we typically create a specific treatment plan and start working on those goals that we developed.

Follow up sessions (i.e., sessions after the intake session) range in time from as little as 20 minutes to as long as 55 minutes. The typical therapy session length is 45 to 55 minutes and depends on your needs for that day. Follow up sessions typically occur once a week, sometimes more, sometimes less, again, depending on your needs. As people near the end of treatment, sessions occur less frequently, every three to four weeks.

Confidentiality

The session content and all relevant materials to your treatment will be held confidential unless you request in writing to have all or portions of such content released to a specifically named person/persons.

Limitations of such client held privilege of confidentiality exist and are itemized below:

1. If you threaten or attempt to commit suicide or otherwise conduct yourself in a manner in which there is a substantial risk of incurring serious bodily harm.
2. If a client threatens grave bodily harm or death to another person.
3. If the therapist has a reasonable suspicion that a client or other named victim is the perpetrator, observer of, or actual victim of physical, emotional or sexual abuse of children under the age of 18 years.
4. Suspicions as stated above in the case of an elderly person who may be subjected to these abuses.
5. Suspected neglect of the parties named in items #3 and # 4.
6. If a court of law issues a legitimate subpoena for information stated on the subpoena.
7. If a client is in therapy or being treated by order of a court of law, or if information is obtained for the purpose of rendering an expert's report to an attorney.

Occasionally I may need to consult with other professionals in their areas of expertise in order to provide the best treatment for you. Information about you may be shared in this context without using your name or other identifying information.

If we see each other accidentally outside of the therapy office, I will not acknowledge you first. Your right to privacy and confidentiality is of the utmost importance to me, and I do not wish to jeopardize your privacy. However, if you acknowledge me first, I will be more than happy to speak briefly with you, but feel it appropriate not to engage in any lengthy discussions in public or outside of the therapy office.

Social Media

Due to the importance of your confidentiality and the importance of minimizing dual relationships, I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc). I believe that adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our therapeutic relationship.

Using Insurance for Services

If you request that I bill your insurance company for services, you are giving me permission to release any information such as diagnosis, treatment plans, and Protected Health Information as necessary to obtain payment for services. In order to do this effectively, all relevant insurance information must be shared with me both completely and accurately, including any changes to your insurance coverage.

Although I will help you navigate your insurance benefits, ultimately you are responsible for understanding your benefits including limitations and/or exclusions, copays, yearly maximums, and authorizations for treatment as applicable.

Fees for Services Rendered

Charges that are not covered by your insurance company are your responsibility to pay and fees for services, including copays and deductibles, are to be paid at the time of service. A \$10.00 service fee will be charged for any checks returned for any reason.

Some services provided are not covered by insurance. The fees for these services must be paid in advance when possible. These services include: letter writing, court visits, copying records, phone calls beyond 10 minutes, and work release paperwork completion. You will be made aware of these fees before incurring any charges and will be provided the opportunity to consent prior to receiving these services. These services are billed at a rate of \$200 per hour and are prorated based on my time spent. (Letters written or work release paperwork completed that takes me less than 10 minutes to complete will not incur a charge.)

In Person vs. Telehealth Sessions

My primary modality for providing therapy is Telehealth as research supports that Telehealth sessions are no different from in person sessions in effectiveness of treatment. I do have the ability to provide in person sessions as clinically appropriate on an "as-needed" basis. Those who plan to attend an in person session must complete a COVID screening form prior to attending that appointment. If any issues arise from the COVID screening form or otherwise, sessions can always be converted from in person to virtual up until the moment of the appointment time. Please review the "Consent for Telehealth Consultation" for details related to the practice of Telehealth.

Arriving Late for a Scheduled Appointment

Of course it is ideal to show up (either in person or virtually) on time for your scheduled appointments in order to maximize the effectiveness of our time together, however, I do understand that weather and traffic are unpredictable at times. If you come late to an appointment, I will not have the ability to see you for longer than your scheduled appointment time as I likely will have another individual waiting for their appointment after you. If you arrive more than fifteen (15) minutes late to your appointment, I will not be able to see you for that appointment and we will need to reschedule (see "Missed Appointment Fees" section below.)

Missed Appointment Fees

A missed appointment is defined as a failure to show (either in person or virtually) for a scheduled appointment by fifteen (15) minutes into the scheduled time for the session. In other words, if you have a 9:00am appointment and do not show up until 9:20am, that is considered a missed appointment. If you show up at 9:10am for that appointment, I do not consider that a missed appointment. Missed appointment fees are charged at \$100.00 each and will need to be paid before or at the next scheduled session. Please note that insurance companies do not cover missed appointment fees.

Late Cancellations

I do not charge late cancellation fees and I would like to explain why. I fully understand that emergencies happen that are out of anyone's control. I, myself, could also come across an emergency situation where I may need to cancel an appointment last minute (e.g., one of my kids gets sick, I get sick, etc). I cannot expect to hold you to a standard that I cannot hold myself to. I always do my best to attend every appointment as scheduled and quite frankly, rarely reschedule sessions, but can not guarantee that I won't ever have to reschedule an appointment within 24 hours of that appointment due to something that has come up in my life.

As long as you contact me via email, phone call, or text prior to 15 minutes into your appointment time with the emergency/reason for late cancelling your appointment, I will just document that in your file, will not charge a fee, and we will reschedule that appointment. I do reserve the right to refer individuals out of my practice who abuse this policy, just like I would expect you to seek out another psychologist if I repeatedly cancel or reschedule your appointments.

Emergencies/Crisis Calls

Because I am a solo practitioner, I do not have 24-hour crisis coverage. As such, I cannot provide services to individuals who have had frequent bouts with suicidal thinking or behaviors. We can discuss this further in the first session to determine if my practice will be sufficient for you. I am available for brief between session phone calls, but do charge for these as noted above and prorate these fees based on the length of the call. I do not charge for phone calls that involve rescheduling an appointment or asking about upcoming appointment dates or times. If you experience an emergency that is life threatening, please call 911 or have someone take you to the nearest Emergency Room.

Electronic Communication

While technology is advancing daily, nothing is perfect and no technology can truly guarantee that only the intended recipient of a communication will receive it. While I take all of the standard precautions (e.g., highly complex passwords, antivirus software, etc), I ultimately cannot guarantee all data is unable to be hacked or breached. I generally will use emails and/or texts to schedule or change appointments. Please let me know if you would NOT like email or text used for communication. Also, let me know any other communication preferences you may have.

BY CLICKING ON THE CHECKBOX BELOW I AM AGREEING THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREE TO THE ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT. I UNDERSTAND THAT I CAN ASK QUESTIONS TO CLARIFY ANY ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.