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PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please read the following information carefully. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us. It is revocable by you at any time in writing. The revocation is binding on us unless we have taken action in reliance on it; if there are obligations imposed on us by your health insurer in order to process or substantiate claims made under your policy, or if you have not satisfied incurred financial obligations.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient, and the particular problems you bring forward. There are many different methods I may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home. We will discuss with you the different methods we may use to help you with your problems.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you choose. If you have questions about my procedures you should discuss them with me whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

SESSIONS

I normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 1 to 2 sessions. During this time, we can both decide if I am the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If psychotherapy is begun, I will usually schedule one 50-minute session (one appointment hour = 50 minutes duration) per week at a time we agree on, although

some sessions may be longer or more frequent. We may recommend other therapies such as group therapy, family or couple counseling as well as referrals to other health professionals such as psychiatrist, family physician, neurologist, as well as to treatment agencies or facilities. Once an appointment session is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control [such as unpredictable emergency or crisis]. If it is possible, I will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

There are different fees for different services such as individual, couple, and group therapy, phone consultations, and workshops. The fees can be found in the Office Policies section of our website. They will be broken down into the hourly or less than hourly fees as low as 15 minute increments. Other services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other service you may request of me. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for my professional time in increments of 4 hours, which would include preparation and transportation costs, even if I am called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge \$350 per hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding.

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise. Check, credit card, and cash are accepted as payment for our services. If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payments have not been agreed upon, I have the option of using legal means to secure payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency which will require me to disclose otherwise confidential information. In most collection situations, the only information I release regarding a client's treatment is hi/her name, the nature of services provided, and amount due. If such legal action is necessary, those costs will be included in the claim.

INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. However, you are responsible for full payment of fees at time of service. I do not accept assignment of insurance payments. Since I am not a participating provider with insurance panels, I am designated as an "out-of-network" or "non-network" provider. I will provide you with a superbill which includes psychological information to assist you in receiving your entitled benefits.

It is important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers. You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services. If you have questions about the coverage, call your plan administrator. Of course, I will provide you with whatever information I can based on my

experience and will be happy to help you in understanding the information you receive from your insurance company. If it is necessary to clear confusion, I will be willing to call the company on your behalf.

You should also be aware that if your bill is submitted to your health insurance company they will often require you to authorize me to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes I have to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of the entire record (in rare cases). This information will become part of the insurance company files and I have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. It will become part of your Permanent Health Record. I will provide you with a copy of any report I submit, if you so desire.

CONTACTING ME

I am often not immediately available by telephone due to seeing clients. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by voice mail that I monitor frequently. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you call and have not heard from me within 24 hours of your call, I may not have received your initial message. Please call back in that case! If you are unable to reach me and feel that you can't wait for me to return your call due to a mental health emergency contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call, the Holly Hill Hospital Respond Line at 919-250-7000, or call 911 emergency services. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep treatment records. Except in unusual circumstances that involve danger to yourself and/or others or the record makes reference to another person (unless such other person is another health care professional) and I believe that access is reasonably likely to cause substantial harm to such other person, you are entitled to examine and/or receive a copy of your Clinical Record, if you request it in writing. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. I recommend that you review them in my presence, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional so you can discuss the contents. I am allowed to charge a copying fee per page (and for certain other expenses). If your request for access to your records is refused, you have a right of review, which I will discuss with you.

LIMITS ON CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist is protected by law, and I can only release information about our work to others if you sign a written Authorization form that meets certain legal requirements imposed by HIPAA. But there are a few exceptions. There are other situations that require only that you provide a written, advance consent. Your signature on this Agreement provides consent for those activities, as follows.

- I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my patient. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I feel that it is

important to our work together. I will note all consultations in your Clinical Record (which is called “PHI” in my Notice of Psychologist’s Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information).

- I may have contracts with an accountant, malpractice carrier, and attorney. As required by HIPAA, I would have a formal business associate contract with these businesses, in which they promise to maintain the confidentiality of this practice data except as specifically allowed in the contract or otherwise required by law.
- If I believe that a client presents an imminent danger to his/her safety or health, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her, or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

There are some situations where I am permitted or required to disclose information without either your consent or authorization:

- If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information concerning the professional services I provided to you, such information is protected by the psychologist-client privilege law. I cannot provide information without your written authorization, or a court order. If you are involved in or contemplating litigation, you should consult an attorney to determine whether a court is likely to order me to disclose information.
- If a government agency is requesting the information for health oversight activities, I may be required to provide it to them.
- If a client files a complaint or lawsuit against me, I may disclose relevant information regarding that client in order to defend myself.
- If I am treating a client who files a worker’s compensation claim, I may, upon appropriate request, be required to provide otherwise confidential information to your employer.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, I may have to reveal some information about a client’s treatment. These situations are unusual in my practice.

- If I have reason to suspect that a child under 18 or a disabled individual is being abused or neglected I am required to report this information to protective services. In addition, I may be required to provide additional information.
- If I believe that one of my client’s presents a specific and immediate threat of serious bodily injury regarding a specifically identified or reasonably identifiable victim and he/she is likely to carry out the threat or intent, I am

required to take protective actions including initiating hospitalization, warning the potential victim, or contacting the police.

If such a situation occurs, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have now or in the future. The laws governing confidentiality are quite complex and I am not an attorney. In situations where specific advice is required formal legal advice may be needed.