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INFORMED CONSENT

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please take a moment to read this form and ask for additional information or clarification, if needed. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Psychological Services

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending upon the personalities of the psychologist and client, and the particular problems you bring forward. There are many different methods I may use to help you cope with and resolve the difficulties you wish to address. Therapy calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for therapy to be most successful, you will need to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home. The ultimate goal of therapy is to help you relieve distress, gain insight, learn and utilize healthy coping skills, and ultimately become your own therapist!

Risks and Benefits of Therapy

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable levels of sadness, anxiety, anger, or frustration. People often report feeling worse before feeling better. However, these reports are a normal part of the therapeutic process when people are making important changes in their lives. While you consider the risks, you should also understand the benefits of therapy. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reduction in feelings of distress. In therapy, you have the opportunity to voice your feelings, gain insight into factors that may contribute to and maintain a problem, learn, as well as practice, techniques that may help you to improve coping skills or to resolve problems altogether. However, there can be no guarantees of what you will experience in this process.

In the first few sessions we will work as a team to gather as much information as possible regarding the problem(s) you wish to resolve. We will then discuss the best course of action and I will offer you some first impressions of what our work will include. Please evaluate the information I provide you, along with your own opinions, as well as your comfort level in working with me. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, energy and money, so it is wise to put a lot of consideration into the psychologist you select. If you have any questions or concerns, please voice them to me as they arise and we will work together to resolve them. If you decide we are not a good “therapist/client match,” I will be happy to provide you with referrals to other mental health professionals.

Appointments

I am available for appointments between the hours of 11:00 A.M. and 7:00 P.M. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. We will typically meet for a 60-minute session once per week, then less frequently. Once we have set an appointment, I prefer to keep it consistent, meaning, on the same day and at the same time. An appointment is a commitment to our work. We agree to meet here and to be on time. If I am ever unable to start on time, I ask for your understanding and assure you that you will receive the full 60 minutes. If you are late, I may not be able to meet for the full time, as it is likely that I will have another appointment after yours. **If you need to cancel an appointment, please provide 24 hours notice or there is a full fee for the missed session. Of course, if you have an emergency or we both agree that circumstances were beyond your control, there will be no fee.** I will make every effort to reschedule your appointment as soon as possible.

Contacting Me

You may leave a confidential message at any time on my office phone 410-554-0099 or cell at 443-622-6876. If I am with a client and you leave a message, I will contact you as soon as I am free.

I check email and texts regularly and will respond to voicemails as soon as I am able and always within 24 hours if it is a non-emergency. If you need to reach me quickly, it is best to text me or call me on my cell phone.

If you have a clinical emergency and are unable to reach me, please call 911 and go to your nearest emergency room.

Please be aware that e-mail and texts are not necessarily confidential or secure. Your use of e-mail or text constitutes your acknowledgement of these confidentiality and security limitations. These methods of communication are best kept for scheduling or providing brief information for our next session. It is not possible for me to make an assessment of your situation or provide clinical guidance via text or e-mail.

Emergencies/Crisis Management

If you are in crisis and unable to reach me, please call 911 and go to your nearest emergency room. Additional resources include:

Grassroots Hotline- 410-531-6677

Crisis Text Line- www.crisistextline.org

Maryland Crisis Hotline- 1-800-422-0099

Lifeline Crisis Counselor- 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – call 1-800-273-8255

Fees

My fee is \$160.00 for a sixty (60) minute session. The initial intake may be as long as 90 minutes. If we agree ahead of time that we will meet for 90 minutes, the fee will be \$225. My fee includes time spent with you in session, as well as time following sessions completing notes, formulating a treatment plan, conceptualizing your difficulties and how to best help you. **Payment for services is due following each session unless we agree otherwise. Payment can be made by check and cash only.**

Again, please know that you will be charged full fee for a missed appointment, unless you call 24 hours in advance or we agree that you were unable to attend because of circumstances beyond your control. According to law and ethics code, I have the right to turn over unpaid bills to a collection agency. If this should occur, I will provide you with the opportunity to pay and will notify you if I contact an agency.

Insurance

I do not participate with insurance plans. It may be important for you to check whether your policy allows for “out of network” benefits. I will provide you with a billing statement following each session that will contain all codes necessary for reimbursement. If you forward this to your insurance company you will likely receive partial reimbursement. On average, most of my clients receive about 50 to 60 percent back once the deductible is met for the year. Please note that if you have an HMO policy you will likely not receive reimbursement. Most PPO plans provide partial reimbursement.

Additionally, to receive reimbursement of any amount, most insurance companies require you to authorize me to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. If you do not meet criteria for a diagnosis, you may not receive partial reimbursement. Once information is released to an insurance company, I cannot manage their policy procedures, but all companies have confidentiality policies that they must abide.

Important questions to ask your insurance: Do you have out of network mental health benefits? What is your deductible? Does your insurance reimburse for 60 minute sessions (code 90837) or only 45 minute sessions (code 90834)?

If you have difficulty getting answers from your insurance company, I am happy to assist you.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is vital to treatment progress. I will take great care with all information you share with me. It is your legal right that our sessions and my records about you be kept private. On occasion, I will ask you to sign a release of information form so that I may talk with another professional or someone involved in your care. In all but a few rare situations,

your confidentiality is protected by state law and by the rules of my profession. Here are several situations in which confidentiality is not protected:

- 1) If you are a victim of child abuse, I am required by law to report this to the appropriate authorities.
- 2) If you are a victim or perpetrator of elder or dependent adult abuse, I am required by law to report this to Adult Protective Services or other appropriate authorities.
- 3) If you threaten harm to yourself, someone else, or the property of others, I may be required to notify the police and potential victim(s), or take other reasonable steps to prevent the threatened harm.
- 4) If ordered by the court, I may have to testify or release your records.

There are two other situations in which I may discuss part of your case with another psychologist. I ask now for your understanding and agreement to let me do so under these two circumstances. First, if I am on vacation for a long period of time (more than one week), I have a trusted fellow psychologist who “covers” for me. This therapist will be available to you in emergencies only. Therefore, she needs to know about you. Of course, she is also bound by the same laws and rules as I am to protect your confidentiality. Second, I sometimes consult with other psychologists about my clients. This helps me provide a high level of treatment and care. These persons are also required to keep your information confidential. Your name will never be given to them, and they will be told only as much information as they need to understand your situation.

Treatment with Minors

In treating children or adolescents, I prefer to maintain their confidentiality as much as I can to keep their trust and protect the therapeutic relationship. However, I do realize that you are the parent or guardian and have a legal right to this information. Before we begin treatment, we will work together to come to an agreement. It is also important to understand that when working with families, I will not keep “secrets.”

Professional Records

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep treatment records. You are entitled to request a copy of your records. In some cases I may prepare a summary for you instead. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. Therefore, you and I will discuss the most appropriate way of providing you with information about your treatment. Clients will be charged an appropriate fee for any professional time spent responding to information requests and for copies of documents.

Ethical guidelines require that the records of adults be kept for a minimum of 7 years after termination of therapy services, and for minors, 7 years after the minor turns 18.

Complaints

I intend to fully abide by all the rules of the American Psychological Association and by those of my state license. As with any other relationship, problems can arise in our relationship. If you are not satisfied with any area of our work, please raise your concern with me at once. I will make every effort to hear, address, and resolve your concerns. It is my hope that we resolve any misunderstandings that may arise. However, you have the right to contact my state board of psychology at any time. The address and telephone number is as follows:

Board of Examiners of Psychologists
4201 Patterson Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21215
(410) 764-4787

Ending Treatment

You may decide to end treatment or take a break from treatment at any time. I encourage you to discuss this with me. We will discuss the reasons for discontinuing treatment, your progress, and situations in which you would return for treatment. In addition, I may provide you with other referral information.

Waiting Room Etiquette

Our waiting room is small, so we ask that if you do need to speak, that you keep conversations to a whisper. Talking loudly in the waiting room disrupts sessions that are in progress. Please do not speak on your cell phones, but go downstairs to the 2nd floor if you need to make or receive a call. Bathrooms are located on the 2nd floor and keys are on the bulletin board in the waiting room. Please be sure to return keys. Parking in both lots is free, along with parking on Roland Avenue or Upland Rd. If you are here for an appointment during lunch or dinner hours, the lots are likely to be full and we recommend planning ahead to find street parking. Thank you.
