

Informed Consent & Service Agreement for psychotherapy services

Welcome to my practice

This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please take the time to read this agreement as it contains information relevant to psychotherapy services and your rights. 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. Read our Notice of Privacy Practices policy for detailed information about your privacy rights and limitations. The remainder of this document will focus on informed consent for receiving psychotherapy services from me.

When you sign the acknowledgement, it will represent an agreement between us and indicate your consent for receiving services as defined in this document. If at any time during your therapy you have any questions, please speak with me so that I may satisfy your concern.

Counseling is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in therapy, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. You have the right to privacy, to establish goals for your therapy, and to terminate the therapy relationship. You have the right to terminate services with me at any time and for any reason. I reserve the right to terminate services at any time that I determine I am unable to provide the level or type of service you require, insufficient progress is being made, or when other factors affect my ability to provide you with services. Should this be required, I will provide you with appropriate referrals. You have the right to decline or accept a referral.

Your rights and responsibilities are further described in the following sections.

Goals of Psychotherapy

There are many reasons for the counseling relationship and in all cases therapy goals guide treatment. Some goals are short-term to address immediate concerns such as symptom relief and implementing concrete behavioral change. Longer-term goals can address on-going or persistent problems that can improve overall quality of life. Whatever your goals are for therapy, they will be set by you, according to what you want to work on in therapy. Your therapist can help you clarify your goals, and may recommend a particular course of treatment, but you have the right to accept or reject these recommendations. Determining your goals and treatment plan are a collaborative process.

Risks/Benefits of Psychotherapy

Therapy is an intensely personal process which can bring up unpleasant memories or uncomfortable emotions. Progress may occur at a slower pace than desired and some clients may fall back to old patterns after a time. While there are no guarantees, psychotherapy can produce tangible and desired outcomes. Therapy can help develop coping skills, make behavioral changes, reduce distress and symptoms, gain insight and understanding, better manage anger and negative emotions, overcome barriers and improve overall quality of life to name a few common benefits.

Therapy is an interactive process between client and therapist. I will guide you to build insight, skills, implement change, and improve resiliency. I do assign "homework" which may include practicing a new skill, trying a new strategy, exploring options or opportunities. As you make effort in applying what we

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cover in session to your life outside of sessions, the benefit of therapy increases accordingly. I will compassionately support you, encourage, teach, and guide you with each step.

Appointments

Therapy sessions are 40-55 minutes in duration, depending upon insurance billing guidelines and medical necessity. Appointments are scheduled on a regular basis at a mutually agreed upon time. The time scheduled for your appointment is reserved exclusively for you. If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I require that you provide me with 24 hours' notice. If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel with less than 24 hours' notice, you will be charged a late cancel/no show fee. [unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control] It is important to note that insurance companies do not provide reimbursement for missed sessions. The fee is \$45 for a first missed appointment and is \$60 for a subsequent missed appointment. In addition, you are responsible for coming to your session on time; if you are late, your appointment will still need to end on time and you may not be seen if there is not enough time for a full session. A pattern of missed appointments and late arrivals will be addressed and may result in termination of services. Regular attendance is crucial for effective therapy.

Confidentiality

Your personal information and what you discuss during therapy sessions is considered confidential. When you wish to have information released, you will sign an authorization form before such information is released. There are some limitations to confidentiality to which you need to be aware.

In accordance with the provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA") and regulations promulgated under HIPAA including the HIPAA Privacy and Security Rules confidential information may be disclosed in some situations without a release.

1. If I have good reason to believe that you will harm another person, I must attempt to inform that person and warn them of your intentions. I must also contact the police and ask them to protect your intended victim.
2. If I have good reason to believe that you are abusing or neglecting a child or vulnerable adult I am required to report it to the Florida Department of Children and Families.
3. If I believe that you are in imminent danger of harming yourself, I may call the police or the county crisis stabilization unit. I may explore other options with you before I take this step. If I do so, and you appear unable to take steps to guarantee your safety, I would call the crisis unit.

Insurance

If you choose to use insurance, be advised that diagnosis and clinical information acquired in the course of your therapy may be disclosed to insurance companies for the purpose of collecting fees and authorizing services. This information becomes part of the insurance company files. Refer to our Notice of Privacy Practices for more detailed information regarding your rights.

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Confidentiality and Group Therapy

The nature of group therapy creates a challenge to maintain confidentiality. If you choose to participate in group therapy, be aware that your therapist cannot guarantee that other group members will maintain your confidentiality. However, your therapist will make every effort to maintain your confidentiality by reminding group members of the importance of keeping what is said in group confidential. Your therapist also has the right to remove any member from the group when discovered that the member has violated the confidentiality rule.

Record Keeping

Brief progress notes are recorded for each session identifying the date of the session and include information related to the focus or topic of the session, goals, progress toward goals, interventions, clinical assessments, and plan. Progress notes are a part of your medical record, and as such is subject to confidentiality and sharing of information in accordance with our Notice of Privacy Practices. Records will be kept for a minimum of 7 years but may be kept longer. In addition to progress notes I may at times keep psychotherapy notes that are separate from your formal medical record to assist me in providing quality services to you. Records will be kept either electronically using secure technology or in a paper file and stored in a locked cabinet in a secure environment.

Professional Fees

Payment is expected at the time of service. If you use your health insurance, co-pays and any deductibles are expected at time of service. If you are not using health insurance, the full fee is required at time of services. Method of payment may be cash, check, or credit card. For your convenience we place your credit card information on file using secure password protected software.

If I choose to use insurance, I authorize Guiding Change Psychotherapy LLC and my therapist to release information acquired in the course of my therapy to my insurance company. Some insurance companies require preauthorization for behavioral healthcare, and it is the client's responsibility to obtain this prior to receiving services. Insurance coverage is a relationship between the client and the insurance company, and the client has ultimate responsibility for payment of charges incurred. We reserve the right to charge re-billing and financial charges related to any overdue balance, and in the event of non-payment, the client will be responsible for collection and/or court costs and reasonable legal fees.

If I am not a participating provider for your insurance plan, I can provide you with a receipt for services that you can submit to your insurance company for reimbursement. I am set up to file out-of-network claims for some insurances and may be able to submit claims as a courtesy and convenience for you. Please note that not all insurance plans have an out-of-network benefit.

Inactivity

It is fairly common that people will seek and receive therapy services for a period of time to address a particular need and then decide to terminate services. This typically happens because a particular short-term goal is achieved that satisfies an immediate need and no further services are needed at that time. The person may decide to return to therapy at a later time to address another concern and goal. Or

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maybe the person decides to return at a later time to address a long-standing problem that they've been dealing with for far too long.

It is my policy to automatically transfer clients who have not been seen for 4 months into inactive status with the understanding that you may return for services at any time that is right for you. Returning clients will complete new client paperwork and re-evaluation.

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 on my confidential voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible. Many times, I'm able to respond in the same day, but it could take a day or two for non-urgent matters. If you are in a crisis, call 911 or go immediately to your local hospital emergency room. If you are having thoughts of suicide you should call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-271-8255.

If you would like to receive appointment information via email or text you can authorize its use for this purpose. Be advised that mail and text are not recommended for transmitting clinical information because they are not guaranteed to remain private. If you have any questions, or require clarification, please ask me to further explain about secure communications.