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Informed Consent for Psychotherapy

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

You have taken a very positive step by deciding to seek therapy. The outcome of your treatment depends largely on your willingness to engage in this process, which may, at times, result in considerable discomfort. Remembering unpleasant events and becoming aware of feelings attached to those events can bring on strong feelings of anger, depression, anxiety, etc. There are no miracle cures. I cannot promise that your behavior or circumstance will change. I can promise to support you and do my very best to understand you and repeating patterns, as well as to help you clarify what it is that you want for yourself.

I like to acknowledge the potential difficulty of therapy ahead of time so that whenever it is starting to feel like “work,” or whenever it is bringing up some “stuff” that is difficult for you to be with, we can hopefully find a way to work through those tougher times in a way that is enriching, and ultimately really valuable to you in all of your relationships and in your overall

well-being. I like to encourage a culture of transparency in our relationship about these times that may come up in therapy, so that I can support you through those times in the most caring and attuned way possible, and so that we can move all the way through the hard stuff, attain each of your goals for therapy, and give you the very most value for your investment in therapy.

There may be times when it feels like there has been an “empathic break” in one of our sessions, i.e., times when I failed to see you in the way you needed to be seen, or to hear you or be with you in the way you needed. I may have even offended you or made you mad. I highly encourage talking about this together, even if it is difficult. This can be great practice for doing this in other relationships in your life if this is an area of difficulty for you in general. I want you to always advocate directly for your needs, though I don’t expect you to always know how to do it perfectly, and I am here to help out with that whenever you need. My promise to you is that I will hear any feedback or any thoughts or feelings you may have about any instance of ‘empathic break’ in our relationship with equanimity, compassion and professionalism. Though I will not always be as perfectly empathic as humanly possible, I do try, and I am committed to constant improvement, in general, and with regards to relating to each individual client. Whatever an empathic break brings up for you is actually really rich and valuable clinical data, for both of us, and it can be so rewarding to process it together.

At some point, you will begin to feel done with therapy. That’s wonderful! That’s the goal. I always encourage a “goodbye”/graduation/termination session so that we can process our work together, reflect on your progress, plan for future obstacles to maintaining that progress, and also so that I can reflect to you genuinely all of the wonderful gifts and charisms that I see in you. Many people have a hard time with goodbyes, or the ending of any kind of relationship. Therapy, at its best, should be a corrective experience, allowing you to have the experience of a positive “goodbye,” or a positive shifting of the frame of a relationship in a way that promotes the highest good of all.

On the other hand, you may begin to feel done because we are not jibing, or for other reasons, such as financial reasons. I also encourage transparency around this, so that no subject is taboo. I am committed to doing whatever I can to connect anyone who ever

reaches out to me or comes into my office to support/therapeutic services that make the most sense for them, on a personal and financial level. I am well-versed in sliding scale clinics and options in the Bay Area, and I know a lot of great therapists in San Francisco as well, and I am always happy to provide referrals, whatever the reason is that therapy with me is not feeling right for you or matching your needs (on any level) anymore. Additionally, we could always discuss going down to a temporary sliding scale fee for you within my practice if I have a sliding scale spot available and you would like to stay, but are going through a financial hardship. If, during or after our first session, you felt some kind of empathic break, or you felt we weren't jibing as people, I always encourage giving it four sessions before making a definite decision, just to feel it out, and especially to see how it feels after processing the empathic break with me. Though your participation in therapy is always 100% voluntary, it is my responsibility to you to do my best to see us through these times when your commitment to your therapeutic goals is flagging, for any number of reasons. It is also my ethical responsibility to ensure I have done everything possible to connect you to whatever support is most appropriate or financially doable for you at any given time if your therapeutic goals are still not met, and especially if you are in crisis or showing up with acute symptoms or difficulties. This is an ethical responsibility that I take very seriously.

Please see the 'What is Therapy Anyway?' page on my website, at <https://deeperwelltherapy.com> for a deeper dive into all of this.

Confidentiality

The session content and all relevant materials to the client's treatment will be held confidential unless the client requests 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:

- If a client threatens or attempts to commit suicide or otherwise conducts him/her self in a manner in which there is a substantial risk of incurring serious bodily harm.

- If a client threatens grave bodily harm or death to another person.
- 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.
- Suspicions as stated above in the case of an elderly person who may be subjected to these abuses.
- Suspected neglect of the parties named in items #3 and # 4.
- If a court of law issues a legitimate subpoena for information stated on the subpoena.
- 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.

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.

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT I WILL ABSOLUTELY NEVER DISCLOSE INFORMATION RELATED TO YOUR IMMIGRATION OR NATURALIZATION STATUS, and will not even include information about immigration or naturalization status in psychotherapy notes or in any kind of private documentation related to my work with you.

ALSO, PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THERE MAY BE ADDITIONAL, RARE INSTANCES WHERE DISCLOSURE MAY BE ALLOWED OR ENFORCED BY LAW, SUCH AS:

- If there is a coroner's investigation into the death of someone who had been my client, I am obligated by California state law to turn over the mental health records of the deceased person.
- Per federal law, if there is a National Security Investigation into any client of mine, federal investigators can come to me and demand that I turn over the mental health records for that client. In such instances, not only do I have to turn over the records, but I cannot tell the client that I have done so.

Telehealth

Technology has provided new opportunities for you to receive therapy even when you can't make it in to my office. I provide services via phone and secure video conferencing to clients for whom telehealth services are a good fit.

Benefits of telehealth services include convenience and accessibility. Risks include the risks inherent to technology use, such as data being intercepted, or others at your end of the conversation overhearing. I encourage you to make sure that you have a quiet, private space for our scheduled telehealth sessions.

While research has generally been supportive of telehealth for the treatment of a variety of individual diagnoses, there is little research to date on the effectiveness of telehealth for couple- or family-based services, and as such, these services are best categorized as experimental in nature.

In the event of an emergency, the best way to contact me is via my private phone number at 949-533-4651. If I am not immediately available, please call 911, or the SF 24-hour Crisis Line at 415-781-0500, or any of the other emergency resources listed on my Practice Policies document.

Should you attempt to reach me between scheduled telehealth sessions, please allow up to 24 hours for a response, as I may be busy with other clients.

I do make Telehealth available to my clients as an option at any time during our work together. I am able to provide HIPAA-compliant Telehealth through the secure practice management system that I use (which includes streamlined audio and video conferencing on a secure platform). I will always email the link to you in advance, and the process is designed to be as simple and straightforward for you as possible. Please be aware that not all insurance companies cover Telehealth, and as such, I may not be able to provide it to you, depending on whether you are seeing me through your insurance or not. Telehealth is a great option if you are unexpectedly unable to make it to a scheduled appointment due to becoming sick or feeling under the weather. Also, please be advised that platforms like Skype are not HIPAA-compliant, and I will send you a link to your video session through my secure platform, should you ever require or request one.

Social media

I do not accept “friend” requests or similar connections with clients, or their family members or friends, on social media. This is to protect your confidentiality and privacy. If you would like to “Like” my professional Facebook page or “Follow” me on Twitter, you may do so at your own risk.

This is not at any time a way to contact me for therapy-related discussion, even in an emergency.

If you would like me to review your (or your child’s) social media interactions as part of our therapeutic work, please print what you would like me to review and bring it with you to session. Even if your or your child’s social media accounts are public, I will not examine them without your specific consent and direction.

Please note that any social media apps you use may seek to connect you with me or with other visitors to this office, through a “people you may know” or similar feature. I have no control over apps that may intrude on the privacy of your treatment in this way. If you would like to minimize the risk of others becoming aware of your connection to me or this office, please make use of the privacy controls available on your phone. Turning off a social media

app's ability to know your location, and refusing it access to your email account and the contacts and history in your phone, protect your privacy and confidentiality.

Emotional Support Animal letters

Under limited circumstances, I will issue Emotional Support Animal letters to clients under my care who, in my judgment, would benefit from such an animal. ESAs are not the same as service animals, and you do not have the same legal rights with an ESA that owners of service animals do. ESAs are primarily recognized in air travel and housing contexts. If you are interested in obtaining an ESA letter, please let me know so that I may conduct a proper assessment. Not everyone qualifies for an ESA letter. My fee for an ESA assessment is \$175, and includes everything you need to fly and live with your pet. My fee for writing and delivering the ESA letter, if I determine that you qualify, is \$0 (so, \$175 total).

Recording devices

My devices

I have a number of smart devices that have microphones, including my cell phone, laptop, and other devices that may be in the office. These devices generally have voice control turned off, and so are not recording. However, for any device (such as a smart speaker) that is voice controlled, recorded snippets of conversation may be sent to the device manufacturer.

Your devices

If you bring a smart device (such as a modern cell phone) to session, that device likely has the option of voice control built in. If voice control on your device is enabled, the microphone may be always on, and snippets of conversation may be recorded and sent to the device maker. If you prefer not to take this risk, please disable voice control on your devices while in session.

Recording sessions

On occasion, you may find that you would like to record a portion of our session, to refer back to later. Please discuss this with me at the time, so that together we can select what will be most helpful for you to have a record of. If you are here for couple or family therapy, everyone present must agree to the recording in order for recording to occur. Please be advised that I am much less likely to approve of recording sessions for couples.

Therapist emergency or incapacitation

In the event of my unexpected absence, I maintain a Professional Will that appoints a colleague to make contact with you on my behalf. This colleague is only granted access to your file or contact information in the limited instance that I become unexpectedly absent from practice and am unable to make contact with you myself to arrange for continued care. Measures have been taken to ensure the very best continuity of care, along with support for processing any necessary transitions in care, should I become unexpectedly absent for any reason.

Threats, Harassment, and Intimidation

If you engage in threats, harassment, or intimidation toward me or others in this office, this may be grounds for immediate termination of therapy. You also grant permission for me to share information about any threatening behavior with law enforcement and/or others as I believe necessary to protect my safety and that of others.

Non-Payment of Fees

If you have been unable to pay for your session for a session or two, I will bring it up with you directly and non-judgmentally in order to discuss the reasons for non-payment. The reason for this is that I have never sent a client to collections, and I plan to never send a client to collections in my career. I would rather begin to discuss the issue openly as soon as it arises and determine together the best next steps to ensure the continuity of your care, whether it is moving to a sliding scale fee with me or being referred to a lower fee clinic. Please be advised that I cannot guarantee that I will be able to accommodate a sliding scale fee at any given time.

About the therapist

I have a Masters in Philosophy from Trinity College Dublin, and a Masters in Clinical Social Work from USC, and have worked in the mental health field since 2013, mostly with children, adolescents and adults with trauma, depression, anxiety, and sometimes with eating disorders and substance use disorders. I take a very client-centered and relationship-centered approach, as I believe each individual I work with is entirely unique, and has their own unique healing process— I see it as my work to facilitate that process rather than to impose any one specific formula or modality, although my work is highly trauma-informed and does integrate cognitive behavioral techniques, inner child work, and internal family systems approaches, as well as somatic- and depth-informed approaches (integrating the Somatic Experiencing orientation of Peter Levine, and the dream work techniques of Carl Jung and Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes). Additionally, I am trained to utilize EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), an evidence-based treatment for trauma, and can utilize this treatment protocol if we both feel it is appropriate, after the initial phase of therapy (mostly devoted to assessing and relationship building). I also bring a social justice lens and an ecological (person-in-environment) lens to the work. Additionally, I sometimes use oracle cards (like the original Tarot, and others), astrology, hypnotherapy and art to help clients cultivate their intuition and self-knowing, and to help seed progress and improvements at a deep, powerful, implicit level. I am honored to have the opportunity to do this work and I look forward to meeting and forging a relationship with each of my clients.

Statement of Personal Values

I value creativity, courage, kindness, freedom, cognitive liberty, service, compassion, laughter, spiritual growth, and connection. I value the free choices of all people, as long as the intention is not to do harm to anyone. I value spaces that allow people to connect at a deep and authentic level. I value the continual progress of society in the direction of greater acceptance, inclusiveness, peace, emotional literacy, kindness and understanding. I value the safety and well-being of children, and if you are a parent, I may challenge you to do something that feels difficult or uncomfortable for you, in order to support, uphold and

protect the safety and well-being of your children. In general, I prioritize strategies that promote the highest good and well-being of all individuals involved.

BY CLICKING ON THE CHECKBOX (or physically signing) BELOW I AM AGREEING THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREE TO THE ITEMS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT.

Signature:

___ Date: