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CLIENT SERVICES CONTRACT

This document contains important information about the professional services that I offer and about my business policies. Please read it carefully. If you have any questions about it, we can discuss them at our next meeting. After you have read this document, I will ask you to sign a page that states that you have read and that you understand this Client Services Agreement; it will represent an agreement between us.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. Its nature varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and client and the particular issues that are brought to therapy. There are a variety of different methods that I may use to help you cope with the issues you present in therapy. Unlike a visits to a medical doctor, psychotherapy sessions call for an active effort on your part.

Psychotherapy may have benefits and risks. Since therapy can involve discussing aspects of your life which you may consider unpleasant, it is possible that you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for people who utilize it. Although there are no guarantees of what you will experience, therapy often leads to obtaining better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of this evaluation, I will be able to offer you some impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow. It will be important for you to evaluate this information, and also to evaluate whether you feel comfortable working with me. Therapy involves a commitment of time, money, and energy, so it is important that you are careful about your choice of therapist. If you have questions about my procedures, it will be important that we discuss these concerns whenever they arise. If

concerns persist, I will to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion or a referral.

MEETINGS

I will usually schedule one psychotherapy session (one appointment hour of 45-50 minutes duration) per week at a time we agree upon. Sometimes sessions may last longer or may be scheduled more often. If you need to cancel or to change your appointment time, I ask that you provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation. If another appointment time can be scheduled within the same week, I will not charge for the missed session. If you do not reschedule within the same week, there will be a charge of \$45 (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control). This charge is not covered by insurance.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

My fee for the initial intake appointment is \$120. My hourly fee is \$90. In addition to weekly appointments, I will charge this fee amount for other professional services you may need. These charges will be adjusted, if I work for periods of less than one hour. These other services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, my attendance at meetings you have authorized with other professionals, 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 even if I am called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge \$200 per hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding. Charges such as these are not covered by insurance.

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage which requires another arrangement. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan.

If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, I will have the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only

information I release regarding a client's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

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. This office will fill out forms and provide you with assistance in helping you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; however, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of fees. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers.

It is important that you carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services. If you have questions about the coverage, it is best to call your plan administrator. Of course, this office will provide you with whatever information we can and we will be happy to help you in understanding the information you receive from your insurance company.

Due to the rising costs of health care, insurance benefits have increasingly become more complex. It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how much mental health coverage is available. "Managed Health Care" plans such as HMOs and PPOs often require authorization before they provide reimbursement for mental health services. These plans are often limited to short-term treatment approaches designed to work out specific problems that interfere with a person's usual level of functioning. It may be necessary to seek approval for more therapy appointments after a certain number of sessions. While a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, some clients feel that they need more services after insurance benefits end. Some managed-care plans will not allow me to provide services to you once your benefits end. If this is the case, I will do my best to find another provider who will help you continue your psychotherapy.

You also should be aware that most insurance companies will 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 will probably be stored in a computer. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, I have no

control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. In some cases, they may share the information with a national medical information databank.

CONTACTING ME

Often I am not immediately available by telephone. Though I am usually in my office between 9 AM and 5 PM, I do not take phone calls when I am with a client. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by a confidential voice mail system that I monitor frequently, or by my office staff who know how to reach me. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If there is an urgent need, there is a 24-hour service that can connect you with a therapist on call. If it will be difficult to reach you, please inform me of some times when you will be available. If you are experiencing an emergency, please call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. If I will be unavailable for an extended time (e.g. to attend a conference), I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if the need arises.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of your records, or I can prepare a summary for you instead. Because these are professional records, there is the potential for them to be misinterpreted or for them to be upsetting to untrained readers. If you wish to see your records, I recommend that you review them in my presence so that we can discuss the contents. Clients will be charged an appropriate fee for any time spent responding to information requests.

MINORS

If you are under eighteen years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents the right to examine your treatment records. It is my policy to request an agreement from parents that they agree to give up access to your records. If they agree, I will provide them only with general information about our work together, unless I feel there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or someone else. In this case, I will notify them of my concern. Before giving them any information, I will discuss the matter with you, if possible, and do my best to handle any objections you may have with what I am prepared to discuss.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, the privacy of all communications between a client and a psychologist is protected by law, and I can release information about our work to others only with your written permission. However, there are a few exceptions.

In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent me from providing any information about your treatment. In some proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may order my testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it. There are situations in which I may be required to provide treatment records.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if I have to reveal some information about a client's treatment. For example, if I believe that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused, I must file a report with the appropriate state agency.

If I believe that a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for you, the client. If you threaten to harm yourself, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for you or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

These situations have occurred rarely in my practice. If such a situation occurs, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

I may occasionally find it helpful to consult with other professionals about a case. During consultations, I make every effort to avoid revealing any information about the identity of clients. Any professional with whom I would consult is also legally bound to keep this information confidential.

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. I will be happy to discuss these issues with you if you need specific advice, but formal legal advice may be needed because the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex.

MISCELLANEOUS

Therapy is a unique type of relationship in which the work that will be done is accomplished through talking about your thoughts and feelings. As in other relationships, at various times (e.g. during holidays) a client may feel like giving a gift to his or her therapist. However, gift giving within the therapeutic relationship can lead to ethical problems. It is my general policy to talk about thoughts and feelings, but not to receive actual material gifts.

STATUS AS AN INDEPENDENT MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER

As you know, I work with a group of independent mental health professionals, under the name Center for Family and Individual Counseling (CFIC). This group is an association of independently practicing professionals who share certain expenses and administrative functions. Though the members share a name, office space, and the services of office staff, I want you to know that I am completely independent in providing you with clinical services, and I, alone, am fully responsible for those services. My professional records are separately maintained and no member of the group can have access to them without your specific, written permission.