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Professional Services Agreement

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and note any questions you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting. 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 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. In addition, as I gather a more complete understanding of your unique needs as a client, I may from time to time consult with other professionals and/or recommend referrals to other medical, or mental health practitioners, if we decide that this will best serve you and our work together. All disclosures in this manner will require your consent.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy may involve 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 engage in this service. 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 and thoughts about the issues that you have brought into therapy and we can then discuss a treatment direction. 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 select. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them 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 2 to 4 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 of 50 minutes duration) per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent if special circumstances arise.

CANCELLATIONS

Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it **unless you provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation**. If it is possible, I will always try to find another time to reschedule the appointment for another that same week, thus avoiding the cancellation fee.

Since we live in a climate with frequent snow and inclement weather my policy is to follow BVSD's school closure recommendation. Specifically, if BVSD cancels school due to snow or weather, then I waive my 24-hour cancellation policy for that day. If clients feel uncomfortable coming to session due to weather on a non BVSD closure day, I will try to reschedule you for another day that week, however, it may not always be possible.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

My hourly (50 min. session) fee is \$ 160.00. I may raise this fee in the future to offset increased costs related to doing business. Of course, all changes in fees will be discussed before an adjustment is made. I charge this amount for other professional services you may need, though I will break down the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. 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 even if I am called to testify by another party. [Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge \$ 160.00 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. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. In circumstances of unforeseen financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a temporary fee adjustment or payment installment plan.

If your account has not been paid for more than 30 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, I 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 patient's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

INSURANCE

I do not accept any third party payment from any health plans at this time. I feel strongly that psychotherapy is a process between the client and his/her clinician and third parties should not intrude on this relationship. Increasingly, health plans have not only reimbursed care but have tried to oversee and direct care. This is unacceptable to me, and I'm sure is unacceptable to many of my clients. I will, however, be happy to provide you with itemized bills, which you may submit directly to your health plan for reimbursement according to your policy provisions.

CONTACTING ME

I am sometimes not immediately available by telephone, however, I am usually able to return your call the same business day under normal circumstances. My confidential voicemail can be contacted 24-hours per day and I will return your call as soon as possible. If you are difficult to reach, please inform me of some times when you will be available. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you can't wait for me to return your call, contact your family physician, the nearest emergency room and/or 911. 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. You are entitled to receive a copy of your records. If you wish to see your records, I recommend that you review them in my presence so that we can discuss the contents in person. [I am sometimes willing to conduct a review meeting without charge.] Patients may be charged an appropriate fee for any professional time spent in responding to information requests.

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of the records within 15 business days. In addition you are entitled to personally review your records in my office within 5 business days unless I believe that seeing them would endanger the life or physical safety of you or another person. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. I recommend that you review them in my presence so that we can discuss the contents. Patients may be charged an appropriate fee for any time spent in preparing 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 respect the confidentiality of 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. I will also provide them with a copy of your records of your treatment when it is complete. 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 patient and a psychologist is protected by law, and I can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. But 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 raised by you or your attorney as an important issue, a judge may order my testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it.

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 patient's treatment. For example, if I believe that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused, I am mandated by state law to file a report with the appropriate state agency.

If I believe that a patient 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 the patient. If the patient threatens to harm himself/herself, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection. These situations have rarely occurred in my practice. If a similar 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 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.

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 at our next meeting. 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, and I am not an attorney.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

Patient Signature: _____ Date: _____

Therapist Signature: _____ Date: _____