

## **AGREEMENT FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES**

Welcome. This Agreement contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Included is a document titled, "Notice of Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information," a notice required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), a federal law that provides privacy protections and patient rights with regard to the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI). The law requires that I obtain your signature acknowledging that I have provided you with this information. By signing this document, you will be acknowledging that you have received the privacy notice. You will also be agreeing to the terms in this Agreement. You may revoke this Agreement at any time. That revocation will be binding unless I have already taken action in reliance on it, there are claim related obligations on me by your health insurer, or you have not satisfied all financial obligations.

### **PSYCHOTHERAPY**

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the therapist and patient, and the particular issues you are addressing. There are different methods I may use to help address different issues. Psychotherapy is not like a typical health care provider visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work in and outside of our sessions.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, or helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have many benefits. Therapy often leads to improved relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees on what you will experience.

### **THE PROCESS OF THERAPY/EVALUATION**

During our first meetings, I will assess whether I can be of benefit to you. I do not accept clients who I believe I cannot be helpful to, and if this is the case, I will refer you to others who work well with your particular issues. Within a reasonable period of time after starting treatment, we will discuss my working understanding of your issues, my proposed treatment plan, therapeutic objectives and possible outcomes of therapy.

### **TERMINATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

Deciding when to stop our work together is meant to be a mutual process. Before we stop, we will discuss how you will know if or when to come back or whether a regularly scheduled "check-in" might work best for you. I recommend that we have closure on the therapy process with at least two termination sessions.

Non-compliance with treatment recommendations may necessitate early termination of services. I will look at your issues with you and exercise my educated judgment about what treatment will be in your best interest. Your responsibility is to make a good faith effort to fulfill the treatment recommendations to which you have agreed. If you have concerns or reservations about my treatment recommendations, I strongly encourage you to express them so that we can resolve any possible differences or misunderstandings.

If during our work together I assess that I am not effective in helping you reach your therapeutic goals, I am obliged to discuss this with you and if appropriate, terminate treatment and give you referrals who may be of help to you. Should you request it and give me written permission, I am more than willing to talk with the therapist of your choice in an effort to aid the transition. I am also willing to assist you in finding another qualified therapist with whom to consult if at any time you want another therapist's professional opinion. Failure or refusal to pay for services after a reasonable time is another condition for termination of services. Please contact me any time your financial situation changes.

## **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

My general individual session fee of 60 minutes is \$190 (the initial Intake appointment is \$300), group sessions are \$60 and couples sessions are \$200. In addition to appointments, I charge for other professional services as well, though I will break down the hourly fee for periods of less than one hour. Examples of other services include report writing, frequent or lengthy telephone conversations, consulting with other professionals with your permission, and preparation of records or treatment summaries.

If you become involved in legal proceedings that may require my participation, you will be expected to pay for my professional time, including preparation and transportation costs, even if I am called to testify by another party. I will not agree to court appearance unless we have discussed the matter thoroughly and both agree that such appearance will not interfere with the treatment relationship and that I will be able to participate in the legal proceedings without unreasonable bias.

## **CONTACTING ME**

Due to the nature of my work, I am often not immediately available by telephone. While I am usually in my office during regular business hours, I do not answer the phone when I am in an appointment. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by confidential voice mail that I monitor frequently. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day.

If you find yourself in an urgent situation, make a judgment about the prudence of waiting for my call versus calling your primary care physician, 911, or the Southcentral Counseling Center's 24-hour crisis line (563-3200) on whom I rely for emergency coverage when I am not immediately available.

## **BILLING AND PAYMENTS**

Payment may be made by check, credit card or cash. You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise. In most cases, as a courtesy, I will be glad to file your insurance. In that case, you would only pay your deductible, co-payments, and amounts not covered by insurance. As the insured, you are ultimately responsible for determining what services are covered and to what degree.

## **CANCELLATIONS AND LATENESS**

Missed and cancelled sessions pose some issues for both of us. First, the work of psychotherapy is sometimes challenging and when we hit a difficult place together, it can feel easier to want to avoid coming in for treatment. I would prefer we speak about this with each other rather than you cancelling sessions. Also, I hold your scheduled appointment time specifically for you and you alone. I see a limited number of clients and so am able to give you the focus and attention you deserve. It is extremely difficult for me to fill cancelled session on short notice. I therefore **charge full session fee** for appointments cancelled **with fewer than 48 hours notice** unless we can find another time that week that works for us both. If we are able to do so before the weekend, I will allow you to reschedule at no extra fee.

