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Informed Consent for Psychological Services

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services, the risk of benefits of psychological treatment, and the potential for referral of alternative treatment. Please read it carefully so that we can discuss it and I can address any questions that you may have when we meet. This information applies if I will be seeing you or you with your partner, spouse or family member.

Nature of Psychological Services

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychotherapist and the patient, and the particular problems you are experiencing. During the course of our work together, I will use various psychological approaches depending upon the problem(s) being addressed and my assessment of what will benefit you. In general, my approach can be described as "psychodynamic." A psychodynamic approach essentially means that I will view your difficulties in light of how you view yourself, and how you view yourself in relation to other people, in the context of your past, your present circumstances, and your wishes for the future. Sessions will typically focus on whatever thoughts, feelings, and descriptions of behavior you express, and entail detailed exploration and clarification on your experiences. Within this general approach, I may emphasize the use of certain techniques such as cognitive, interpersonal or specific problem solving. Emotional support, suggestions, educational comments, specific communication skill development, reflection on your spiritual life and understanding your dreams may also be a part of what we do together. In addition, exploration of your feelings about your relationship to me may become an important part of your coming to understand yourself and other people who are important to you, and to resolve your difficulties. For couple therapy, I emphasize communication skill development, interpersonal problem solving, appropriate conflict resolution, improving intimacy, increasing pleasurable time together, and as appropriate, the exploration and therapeutic working through of emotional wounds.

As a result of our work together, it is expected that you will become better at making choices in your life in a way that will help ameliorate your distress, cope with various stressors, manage your life more adaptively, provide you with greater sense of security, and assist in your emotional and interpersonal growth. You are responsible for the following treatment recommendations, completing therapeutic assignments if applicable, and communicating about your progress. If you have any questions about my approaches, their possible risks and benefits, or my skill in using them, please ask me and I will address them as fully as possible.

Psychological Benefits

The majority of individuals who obtain therapy benefit from the process. Benefits may include relief of specific symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression and fears), improved interpersonal relationships, greater self-confidence, easier decision making, and improvement in the specific concerns that led you to seek psychotherapy. Success may vary depending on the particular problems being addressed as well as your consistency and motivation. Psychotherapy involves active participation, self-exploration, gaining new insights about yourself and others, finding ways of dealing with problems, and learning new skills. Typically, the length of psychotherapy is determined by your collaborative discussion and agreement as we work together. However, we can agree on a predetermined number of sessions or length of time at the outset. The length of psychotherapy needed usually depends upon the extent and severity of your specific problems, practical considerations that may impact your ability to commit time and financial resources, any preference that you may have and my professional recommendation.

Psychological Risks

Although research and clinical experience indicates that psychotherapy is typically beneficial, there are some risks. While the benefits of therapy are well known, you may have unwanted experiences such as disruptions in your interpersonal relationships, negative experiences in your immediate work life, unhappiness, anxiety, fear, anger, guilt, frustration or insomnia. These are often a natural part of the therapy process and typically provide the basis of change. Important personal decisions are often a result of therapy. These decisions, including changing behavior, exploring employment options, substance use patterns, schooling, relationships, are likely to produce new opportunities as well as unique challenges. Sometimes a decision that is positive for one family member is viewed quite negatively by another family member. There are no guarantees that therapy will produce positive or intended effects. However, commitment to the process and motivation towards positive change will most likely assist in a helpful outcome, Changes are sometimes made easily and quickly, but sometimes change is a slow and frustrating process.

Referrals

If you could benefit from interventions that I do not provide, I am ethically obligated to assist you in obtaining those services. Although discussion of any physical problems that you might have may become a focus, and your physical self-care may improve as a result of our work together, I do not specifically treat physical illnesses, and that it is your responsibility to have these treated by your physician. If at any point in therapy I decide that I am not being effective in helping you make progress toward your therapeutic goals, I am obligated to discuss it with you and, if necessary, end the therapy. Also, you may end the therapy at any time, although I prefer that we discuss your intentions in a session or two before we end. In either case, I would give you appropriate referrals and, if you request and authorize me in writing, I can talk with the doctor/therapist of your choice to ease the transition to that professional. On very rare occasions, a conflict of interest may develop regarding a business or personal matter that would require me to end the therapy. The exact reasons for such termination may not necessarily be explained to you so that all parties involved can remain protected.

Within the first meeting or two, I will assess whether I can be of help to you. If, in my opinion, I cannot be of help to you, I will give you appropriate referrals for you to contact. Psychological assessment in the form of testing can also help us understand why behaviors occur and I may recommend it. Initial impressions about treatment plans, suggested procedures, and goals will be discussed by us. In the beginning of our work together, and periodically along the way, we will discuss your goals and revise them as needed, and discuss how long therapy will be expected to last to meet your goals. Your own feelings about whether you are comfortable working with me is an important part of the process. Feel free to discuss these issues with me any time. If you have any questions about the services being provided at any time, you may ask for clarification. I will help you secure an appropriate consultation with another mental health professional whenever necessary.

Acknowledgment of Informed Consent

In signing below, you are acknowledging that you received all the information in this document, you have had ample opportunity to discuss it with me, and you have had any questions answered to your satisfaction. In so doing, you are making an informed decision about engaging me for services. Your signature(s) indicates that you voluntarily consent to participate in psychotherapy. Your signature(s) does not mean that you have waived any rights.

Print name of Patient:

Signature of Patient:

Print name of Spouse/Partner/Family Member:

Signature of Spouse/Partner/Family Member:

Today's date: