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Welcome. The American Psychological Association requires this document to inform you about psychotherapy and my practice and to ensure that you understand our professional relationship. Please read this carefully and jot down any questions you have so that we can discuss them. When you sign this document it will represent an agreement between us.

Credentials and Licenses

I earned a doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Kansas in 1977. I am a licensed psychologist in the states of Kansas and Missouri. I have also been accepted into the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology. I am a member of the American Psychological Association and the Kansas and Missouri Psychological Associations.

Psychological Services

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personality of both the therapist and the patient and the particular problems that you bring. There are many different types of methods I may use to deal with the problems you hope to address. Another therapist might feel a different type of therapy would be more effective.

Psychotherapy is not like visiting a medical doctor, in that it requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like guilt, anger, sadness, anxiety, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. It often helps reduce distress, improve relationships, and resolve specific problems. But there are no guarantees about what you will experience.

My normal practice is to conduct an evaluation that will last from 1 to 3 sessions. During this time, we can both decide whether I am the best person to provide the services that you need to meet your treatment goals. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include. If you decide to continue, you should evaluate this information along with your own assessment about whether you feel comfortable working with me. Therapy can involve 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 to secure a consultation with another mental health professional. Of course, you always make your own decisions and conduct your life as you wish. I dislike and avoid telling clients what to do. **You may stop any session or our therapy relationship at any time.**

Meetings

If we initiate psychotherapy, I will usually schedule one 45 minute therapy session per week at a mutually agreed time. In some cases sessions may be more or less frequent. For example, you may wish to resolve problems more quickly. Once an appointment is scheduled, to avoid being charged for it you must change or cancel it 24 hours in advance.

Professional Fees, Billing, and Payments

My fee for a 45 minute session is \$155, payable at the end of each session unless we agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage that requires another arrangement. I also charge this amount on a prorated basis for other professional services that you may request such as report writing. I occasionally raise my fees, but I will notify you in advance.

Insurance Reimbursement

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources are available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health benefits policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. I will file your claim forms with your insurance company. However, since you, and not your insurance company, are responsible for full payment of the fee that we have agreed to, it is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers. When your insurance company sends you an explanation of their payment to me, be sure that you check that they have paid the correct amount for each session. They frequently make errors (usually in their favor), and it is your responsibility to ensure that you receive full benefits.

You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services. If you have questions, call your plan administrator and inquire. I will provide you with information from my experience with insurance companies. I will also help in deciphering the information you receive from your carrier. If necessary to resolve confusion, my billing service is willing to call your carrier on your behalf.

The escalation of health care costs and the resulting complexity in insurance benefits sometimes makes it difficult to determine exactly how much mental health coverage is available. “Managed Health Care Plans” such as HMO’s and PPO’s often require advance authorization before they will provide reimbursement for mental health services. These plans are often oriented toward a short-term treatment approach designed to resolve specific problems that are interfering with one’s usual level of functioning. It may be necessary to seek approval for more therapy after a certain number of sessions. While quite a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, many clients feel that more services are necessary after insurance benefits end.

Most insurance agreements require you to authorize me to provide a clinical diagnosis, and (occasionally) additional clinical information such as a case summary or treatment plan — in rare cases, a copy of the entire record. This information will become part of the insurance company files, and some of it will probably be stored in a computer. All insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, but once it is in their hands, I have no control over what they do with it. In some cases they may share information with a national medical information data bank. **Do you wish to file claims with your company under these circumstances? _____ (Please write Yes or No.)**

Once we have all the information about your insurance coverage, if you wish we will discuss what we can expect to accomplish with the benefits that are available and what will happen if the insurance benefits run out before you feel ready to end our sessions. You always have the right to pay for my services yourself and avoid the complexities that are described above.

Contacting Me

I am often not immediately available by telephone. While I am usually in my office between 9 AM and 5 PM, I usually will not answer the phone when I am with a client. When I am unavailable, my voice mail will answer my phone. I will try to return your call on the same day you make it with the possible exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please leave some times when you will be available. If you cannot reach me at the office, and you need immediate help for a crisis, call my cell phone 913-451-2843. If you still can’t reach me, you should call your family physician or the emergency room at the nearest hospital and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. Some of the Psychiatric Hospitals available include KU Medical Center (913) 588-5000, Research Mental Health Services (816) 246-8000 (after hours emergency # 816-966-0900), Several private psychiatric hospitals are also available, including Shawnee Mission Hospital (913) 676-2000, and Two Rivers Hospital 5121 Raytown Road (816) 356-5688 (after hours emergency # 358-HELP). In an extreme emergency dial 911.

Minors

If you are under 18 years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents the right to examine your treatment records.

Confidentiality

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

In most judicial proceedings, you have the right to prevent me from providing any information about your treatment. However, in some unusual circumstances such as child custody proceedings and proceedings in which your emotional condition is an important element, a judge may require my testimony if he/she determines that resolution of the issues before him/her demands it.

There are some situations in which I am legally required to take action to protect others from harm, even though that requires revealing some information about a client's treatment. If I believe that a child, an elderly person, or a disabled person is being abused, I am required by law to file a report with the appropriate state agency. If I believe that a client is planning to commit a serious crime or is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required to take protective actions, which may include notifying the potential victim, notifying the police, or seeking appropriate hospitalization. If a client threatens to harm him/herself, I may be required to seek hospitalization for the client, or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection. These situations have rarely arisen in my practice. Should such a situation occur, I will try to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

I may occasionally find it helpful to consult about a case with other professionals. In these consultations, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my client. The consultant is, of course, also legally bound to keep the information confidential. Unless you 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. As you might suspect, the laws governing these issues are quite complex and I am not an attorney. While I am happy to discuss these issues with you, should you need specific advice, formal legal consultation may be desirable. If you request, I will provide you with relevant portions or summaries of the applicable state laws governing these issues. **Do you understand that there are limits to your confidentiality?**

_____ (Please write Yes or No.)

If your physician referred you to me, he or she expects me to follow the standard medical practice of responding with a brief report of the psychological factors that could help him understand and treat your physical conditions. I do not charge for this report. So that I can help your physician treat you more effectively, please write Yes after the following question. **Do you want me to send this report?** _____

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have received a copy to keep.

Your signature also indicates that you have received and read or read online the Kansas Notice of Psychologist's Policies and Practices to Protect the Privacy of Your Health Information Form.

Signature

Date