



MELBOURNE
INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Informed Consent Form/Outpatient Services Contract

(Rev. October, 2016)

Welcome to my practice! Before you start counseling there are some things you ought to know. Legally, this information is called “Informed Consent.” Informed consent will help you understand better what to expect from your effort at this office, and it will explain some of the limitations to what we will be doing here. Please read it carefully and let me know if you have any questions. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

About Psychotherapy: The Benefits and Risks

You should know that psychotherapy is not always easy. You may find yourself having to discuss very personal information. You could find our conversations difficult and embarrassing, and you might be very anxious during and after such conversations. As you learn more about yourself, you may encounter increased conflict with friends, coworkers, and family members. Therapy may disrupt a marital relationship and sometimes may even lead to a divorce. Sometimes, too, a client’s problems may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment. Most of these risks are to be expected when people are making important changes in their lives.

While you consider these risks, you should know also that the benefits of therapy have been demonstrated in hundreds of research studies. People who are depressed may find their mood lifting. People who are anxious, may find they are able to transcend these feelings. Clients’ relationships and coping skills may improve greatly. They may get more satisfaction out of their relationships. Personal goals and values may become clearer, and you may grow in many directions. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience. I do not take on clients that I know I cannot help. Therefore, I will enter our relationship with much optimism about our work together.

Confidentiality & Limits of Confidentiality

All of our work together—our conversations, your records, and any information that you share with me—is protected by something called privilege. That means that the law protects you from having information about you given to anyone without your awareness and permission. Our office respects your privacy, and we intent to honor your privilege. However, there are some limits to your legal privilege, some exceptions you should understand before we start.

First, if we believe that there is a risk that you might harm yourself or someone else, we are obligated to take action. If you are intending to harm yourself, I must seek hospitalization for you or contact a family member or others who can help provide protection to you. These situations have rarely occurred in my practice. If such a situation occurs, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action. Also, I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm. If I believe that you are threatening serious bodily harm to another person and I determine that you are likely to carry out the threat, I may take action such as notifying the potential victim, contacting the

police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient. Finally, if I have reason to suspect, on the basis of my professional judgment, that a child is or has been abused, I am required to report my suspicions to the Department of Children & Families. Similarly, if I suspect that an older adult is in need of protective services, I must report this to the appropriate agency.

If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for your records or about the professional services we have provided you, such information is privileged under state law, and I will not release the information without your written consent or a court order. However, the privilege does not apply when the evaluation is mandated by a third party or court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case. 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. Additionally, I may, in response to a warrant or subpoena, be required to disclose health information about you to a law enforcement official for certain law enforcement purposes.

HIPPA Privacy Practices

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) authorizes disclosure of your protected health information (PHI) for treatment, payment and practice operations purposes with your general consent. With regard to services provided by our office, HIPPA only comes into play if you are planning to use your insurance benefits for payment for treatment. If this is the case, you will be asked to sign a Release of Information to your insurance company. Doing so will authorize me to use and disclose your protected health information for the purposes of treatment, payment and practice operations such as billing, insurance mandated audits and care coordination. Please understand that while my office may submit claims to your insurance, you (and not your insurance company) are ultimately responsible for payment of services. Also, if you are planning to use your insurance benefits you will have to be assigned a psychiatric diagnosis in order for the insurance company to recognize the services provided as medically necessary.

With that in mind, there are certain advantages of self-pay. First, paying for psychotherapy out of pocket minimizes the exposure of your protected health information. If you are a self-pay client, your therapy remains completely private. No reports of your treatment are shared with your insurance and all records of therapy remain with the therapist only. Another advantage of self-pay includes the fact that no records of therapy exist in the Medical Information Bureau which could potentially limit your ability to get current or future life, health, disability, or long-term care insurance. Self-pay involves no psychiatric diagnosis code. A final advantage of self-pay is that I am able to offer psychotherapy services at a reduced fee as it involves less administrative time and expense for my practice.

What to Expect from Our Relationship

As a practical, interactive, solution-focused therapist, my approach is to provide support, guidance, consultation and feedback to facilitate change in order to help you resolve current problems. I offer an integrative treatment approach that is tailored to each patient's presenting problems. As a professional, I will use my best knowledge and skills to help you. This includes following the standards of the American Psychological Association (APA). In your best interests, the APA puts limits on the relationship between a therapist and a client, and I will abide by these. Let me explain these limits, so you will not think they are personal responses to you. First, I am licensed and trained to practice psychology – not law, medicine, finance, or any other profession. I am not able to give you

good advice from these other professional viewpoints. Second, state laws and the rules of the APA require me to keep what you tell me confidential. You can trust me not to tell anyone else what you tell me, except in certain limited situations as explained earlier under "Confidentiality." Even your identity as a patient or client of mine is confidential. With this in mind, please note that if we happen to meet in public, I may not acknowledge you or engage unless you choose to do so first. Also, I will likely remain quite reserved so as to protect your confidentiality. Third, in your best interest, and following the APA's standards, I can only be your therapist. I cannot have any other role in your life. I cannot, now or ever, be a close friend or socialize with any of my clients. Business or romantic relationships with clients are also strictly prohibited by the APA and for your protection.

Office Policies

We schedule appointments to begin on the hour or half-hour. Therapy appointments usually last 50-55 minutes, and we must end each session promptly. Unless other arrangements have been made, payment is due at the time of your appointment. If I am a provider for your insurance company, I will submit your insurance claim to your insurance company with the appropriate authorization. You are responsible for any copay or for the fee if your deductible has not been met. If you seek payment from an insurance company that I do not work with, you must obtain a claim form from your insurance company and complete the claim form. Ask me for a statement of services (an invoice) and then attach my invoice to the claim form and mail it to the insurance company. We accept cash, checks or credit cards for your payment.

Our first session is an evaluation or "getting to know you" session in which I will be asking you about your reasons for seeking therapy, your personal history, and goals that you have for our work together. This session, typically lasts a full 60 minutes or more. Subsequent sessions will be on a schedule mutually agreed upon, but typically one session per week. Our office must charge a full fee even if you are late, or you cannot make your appointment and do not cancel the appointment 24 hours in advance. Your insurance will not pay for missed sessions, you must pay for those yourself. Our office charges a \$30 fee for any check returned for any reason.

I am often not immediately available by telephone. My telephone (321-757-4058) is answered 24 hours a day by a confidential voice mail system that I monitor frequently. I will make every effort to return your call within 24 business hours, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If I have not returned your phone call within 24 hours, please try again as your message may have been lost. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary. Please do not email me personal information as email is not a secure method of transmission. I will only use email for scheduling purposes. Established patients are given my cell phone number to call in a clinical emergency. If you are experiencing a clinical emergency (for example, if you feel you are at risk for harming yourself or someone else), and you are unable to reach me, please call 911 or go to the Emergency Room at your nearest hospital. If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, consider calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK).

Client Signature

Date

Therapist Signature

Date