

INFORMATION, AUTHORIZATION, & CONSENT TO TREATMENT

I am very pleased that you have selected me to be your therapist, and I am sincerely looking forward to assisting you. This document is designed to inform you about what you can expect from me regarding confidentiality, emergencies, and several other details regarding your treatment. Although providing this document is part of an ethical obligation to my profession, more importantly, it is part of my commitment to you to keep you fully informed of every part of your therapeutic experience. Please know that your relationship with me is a collaborative one, and I welcome any questions, comments, or suggestions regarding your course of therapy at any time.

Background Information

The following information regarding my educational background and experience as a therapist is an ethical requirement of my profession. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. I'm a LMSW in the state of Georgia. I have over 9 years' experience working in therapeutic settings beginning as a volunteer with Ridgeview Institute in 2010 in the Young Adult Addiction Program. As a volunteer, I worked with the staff in group therapy and aftercare. Building upon addiction experience, I became a Resident Manager at Safety Net Recovery in 2010. In this role, I performed interventions, administered drug tests and actively participated in the treatment planning for young adult and professional residents. I completed my Bachelor's in History with a minor in Psychology from Georgia State in 2013. Immediately following my undergraduate, I enrolled in University of Georgia's Masters of Social Work program. Throughout my masters, I completed internships at Women's Resource Center, Anchor Hospital and the Grady ACT Team. I completed my master's degree in 2015 and began working as a full time case manager at Ridgeview Institute in the Young Adult Addiction Program. I was responsible for the full case management responsibilities of male and female patients including facilitating groups and providing family therapy and routinely gave lectures during family week educating families on anger management. After Ridgeview Institute, I worked for Alana Recovery as a Primary Therapist. In this role, I provided individual therapy, facilitated groups and was a member of the clinical team deciding on the best course of treatment for my clients. I have completed training at the Beck Institute and believe cognitive behavioral therapy techniques greatly benefit most clients seeking therapy. I have gained experience with a wide array of mental health issues including anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addiction.

Theoretical Views & Client Participation

It is my belief that as people become more aware and accepting of themselves, they are more capable of finding a sense of peace and contentment in their lives. However, self-awareness and self-acceptance are goals that may take a long time to achieve. Some clients need only a few sessions to achieve these goals, whereas others may require months or even years of therapy. As a client you may end your relationship with me at any point. In order for therapy to be most successful, it is important for you to take an active role. This means working on the things you and I talk about both during and between sessions. Generally, the more of yourself you are willing to invest, the greater the return.

Furthermore, it is my policy to only see clients who I believe have the capacity to resolve their own problems with my assistance. It is my intention to empower you in your growth process to the degree that you are capable of facing life's challenges in the future without me. I also don't believe in creating dependency or prolonging therapy if the therapeutic intervention does not seem to be helping. If this is the case, I will direct you to other resources that will be of assistance to you. Your personal development is my number one priority. I encourage you to let me know if you feel that terminating therapy or transferring to another therapist is necessary at any time. If at any point you are unable to keep your appointments or I don't hear from you for one month, I will need to close your chart. However, as long as I still have space in my schedule, reopening your chart and resuming treatment is always an option.

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Confidentiality & Records

Your communications with me will become part of a clinical record of treatment, and it is referred to as Protected Health Information (PHI). Your PHI will be kept in a file stored in a locked cabinet in my locked office, and or your PHI will be kept on my password-protected computer in an encrypted file format. Additionally, I will always keep everything you say to me completely confidential, with the following exceptions: (1) you direct me to tell someone else and you sign a "Release of Information" form; (2) I determine that you are a danger to yourself or to others; (3) you report information about the abuse of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled individual who may require protection; or (4) I am ordered by a judge to disclose information. In the latter case, my license does provide me with the ability to uphold what is legally termed "privileged communication." Privileged communication is your right as a client to have a confidential relationship with a therapist. The state of Georgia has a very good track record in respecting this legal right. If for some unusual reason a judge were to order the disclosure of your private information, this order can be appealed. I cannot guarantee that the appeal will be sustained, but I will do everything in my power to keep what you say confidential.

Please note that in couple's counseling, I do not agree to keep secrets. Information revealed in any context may be discussed with either partner.

Structure and Cost of Sessions

I agree to provide psychotherapy for the fee of \$100 per 50-minute session. Doing psychotherapy by telephone is not ideal, and needing to talk to me between sessions may indicate that you need extra support. If this is the case, you and I will need to explore adding sessions or developing other resources you have available to help you. Cash, personal checks, Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express are acceptable for payment, and I will provide you with a receipt of payment. The receipt of payment may also be used as a statement for insurance if applicable to you.

Insurance companies have many rules and requirements specific to certain plans. Unless otherwise negotiated, it is your responsibility to find out your insurance company's policies and to file for insurance reimbursement. I will be glad to provide you with a statement for your insurance company and to assist you with any questions you may have in this area.

Cancellation Policy

In the event that you are unable to keep an appointment, you must notify me at least 24 hours in advance. If such advance notice is not received, you will be financially responsible for the session you missed. Please note that insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions.

In Case of an Emergency

My practice is considered to be an outpatient facility, and I am set up to accommodate individuals who are reasonably safe and resourceful. I do not carry a beeper nor am I available at all times. If at any time this does not feel like sufficient support, please inform me, and we can discuss additional resources or transfer your case to a therapist or clinic with 24-hour availability. Generally, I will return phone calls within 24-48 hours. If you have a mental health emergency, I encourage you not to wait for a call back, but to do one or more of the following:

- ! Call Behavioral Health Link/GCAL: 800-715-4225 or other crisis hotline
- ! Call Ridgeview Institute at 770.434.4567 or local hospital
- ! Call Peachford Hospital at 770.454.5589 or local hospital
- ! Call Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 (National Crisis Line)
- ! Call 911.
- ! Go to the emergency room of your choice.

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Professional Relationship

Psychotherapy is a professional service I will provide to you. Because of the nature of therapy, our relationship has to be different from most relationships. It may differ in how long it lasts, the objectives, or the topics discussed. It must also be limited to only the relationship of therapist and client. If you and I were to interact in any other way, we would then have a "dual relationship," which could prove to be harmful to you in the long run and is, therefore, unethical in the mental health profession. Dual relationships can set up conflicts between the therapist's interests and the client's interests, and then the client's (your) interests might not be put first. In order to offer all of my clients the best care, my judgment needs to be unselfish and purely focused on your needs. This is why your relationship with me must remain professional in nature.

Additionally, there are important differences between therapy and friendship. Friends may see your position only from their personal viewpoints and experiences. Friends may want to find quick and easy solutions to your problems so that they can feel helpful. These short-term solutions may not be in your long-term best interest. Friends do not usually follow up on their advice to see whether it was useful. They may *need* to have you do what they advise. A therapist offers you choices and helps you choose what is best for you. A therapist helps you learn how to solve problems better and make better decisions. A therapist's responses to your situation are based on tested theories and methods of change.

You should also know that therapists are required to keep the identity of their clients confidential. For your confidentiality, I will not address you in public unless you speak to me first. I must also decline any invitation to attend gatherings with your family or friends. Lastly, when your therapy is completed, I will not be able to be a friend to you like your other friends. In sum, it is my ethical duty as a therapist to always maintain a professional role. Please note that these guidelines are not meant to be discourteous in any way, they are strictly for your long-term protection.

Statement Regarding Ethics, Client Welfare & Safety

I assure you that my services will be rendered in a professional manner consistent with the ethical standards of the The National Association of Social Workers. If at any time you feel that I am not performing in an ethical or professional manner, I ask that you please let me know immediately. If we are unable to resolve your concern, I will provide you with information to contact the professional licensing board that governs my profession.

Due to the very nature of psychotherapy, as much as I would like to guarantee specific results regarding your therapeutic goals, I am unable to do so. However, with your participation, we will work to achieve the best possible results for you. Please also be aware that changes made in therapy may affect other people in your life. For example, others may not always welcome an increase in your assertiveness. It is my intention to help you manage changes in your interpersonal relationships as they arise, but it is important for you to be aware of this possibility nonetheless.

Additionally, at times people find that they feel somewhat worse when they first start therapy before they begin to feel better. This may occur as you begin discussing certain sensitive areas of your life. However, a topic usually isn't sensitive unless it needs attention. Therefore, discovering the discomfort is actually a success. Once you and I are able to target your specific treatment needs and the particular modalities that work the best for you, help is generally on the way.

Technology Statement

In our ever-changing technological society, there are several ways we could potentially communicate and/or follow each other electronically. It is of utmost importance to me that I maintain your confidentiality, respect your boundaries, and ascertain that your relationship with me remains therapeutic and professional. Therefore, I've developed the following policies:

Cell phones: It is important for you to know that cell phones may not be completely secure or confidential. However, I realize that most people have and utilize a cell phone. I may also use a cell phone to contact you. If this is a problem, please feel free to discuss this with me.

Text Messaging and Email: Both text messaging and emailing are not secure means of communication and may compromise your confidentiality. I realize that many people prefer to text and/or email because it is a quick way to convey information. **However, please know that it is my policy to utilize these means of communication strictly for**

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appointment confirmations (nothing that could be inferred as therapy). Therefore, please do not bring up any therapeutic content via text or email to prevent compromising your confidentiality. If you do, please know that I will not respond. **You also need to know that I am required to keep a summary or copy of all emails and texts as part of your clinical record that address anything related to therapy.**

Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Etc. It is my policy not to accept requests from any current or former clients on social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. because it may compromise your confidentiality.

Google, Bing, etc.: It is my policy not to search for my clients on Google or any other search engine. I respect your privacy and make it a policy to allow you to share information about yourself with me as you feel appropriate. If there is content on the Internet that you would like to share with me for therapeutic reasons, please print this material and bring it to your session.

Faxing Medical Records:

If you authorize me (in writing) via a "Release of Information" form to send your medical records or any form of protected health information to another entity for any reason, I may need to fax that information to the authorized entity. It is my responsibility to let you know that fax machines may not be a secure form of transmitting information. Additionally, information that has been faxed may also remain in the hard drive of my fax machine. However, my fax machine is kept behind two locks in my office. And, when my fax machine needs to be replaced, I will destroy the hard drive in a manner that makes future access to information on that device inaccessible.

Recommendations to Websites or Applications (Apps):

During the course of our treatment, I may recommend that you visit certain websites for pertinent information or self-help. I may also recommend certain apps that could be of assistance to you and enhance your treatment. Please be aware that websites and apps may have tracking devices that allow automated software or other entities to know that you've visited these sites or applications. They may even utilize your information to attempt to sell you other products. Additionally, anyone who has access to the device you used to visit these sites/apps, may be able to see that you have been to these sites by viewing the history on your device. Therefore, it is your responsibility to decide and communicate to me if you would like this information as adjunct to your treatment or if you prefer that I do not make these recommendations.

In summary, technology is constantly changing, and there are implications to all of the above that we may not realize at this time. Please feel free to ask questions, and know that I am open to any feelings or thoughts you have about these and other modalities of communication.

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Our Agreement to Enter into a Therapeutic Relationship

I am sincerely looking forward to facilitating you on your journey toward healing and growth. If you have any questions about any part of this document, please ask.

Please print, date, and sign your name below indicating that you have read and understand the contents of this “Information, Authorization and Consent to Treatment” form **as well as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Notice of Privacy Practices**” provided to you separately. Your signature also indicates that you agree to the policies of your relationship with me, and you are authorizing me to begin treatment with you.

Client Name (Please Print)

Date

Client Signature

If Applicable:

Parent’s or Legal Guardian’s Name (Please Print)

Date

Parent’s or Legal Guardian’s Signature

My signature below indicates that I have discussed this form with you and have answered any questions you have regarding this information.

Therapist’s Signature

Date

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