

## ***Informed Consent for Psychological Services***

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

### **Nature of Psychological Services**

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and 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 of your experiences. Within this general approach, I may emphasize the use of certain techniques such as cognitive (i.e., focusing on the way you think about things and how this might affect your feelings and your impressions of other people), interpersonal (i.e., focusing on your relationships with others), or specific problem-solving (i.e., generating alternatives for action on a specific issue). 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.

For children aged 3-11, psychotherapy typically takes the form of play therapy, which is a treatment that utilizes play as the medium of expression and communication between the child and doctor / therapist, and for many children, it is the therapeutic process itself. Play is a natural medium in which children can explore and work through their experiences and master psychological tasks. Depending on the child’s needs, play can be non-directive, psycho-educational, cognitive-behavioral or psychodynamic. Art, therapeutic games, puppets, various building materials, characters, and playsets are typical therapeutic tools. For older children, therapy is typically more verbal in nature but simple games may be utilized to provide comfort and decrease the pressure for eye contact while discussing difficult topics. Many times, the treatment will include parental guidance and training to address a child’s behavioral issues. Family therapy may be recommended when it is necessary to address difficulties that emerge as a result of family dynamics, its relationships, its structure, and its roles. Often, family therapy is provided by a different doctor / therapist to maintain appropriate boundaries and preserve the therapeutic relationship that exists within a child’s individual therapy.

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 you life more adaptively, provide you with a greater sense of security, and assist in your emotional and interpersonal growth. You are responsible for following treatment recommendations, completing therapeutic assignments if applicable, and communicating about your treatment progress. If you have 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 (or you and your partner/family member) 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 our 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 preferences 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 for change. Important personal decisions are often a result of therapy. These decisions, including changing behavior, exploring employment options, substance use patterns, schooling, or relationships, are likely to produce new opportunities as well as unique challenges. Sometimes a decision that is positive for one family member will be 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 toward 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 any 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 it is your responsibility to have these treated by your physician. If at any point during 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 (or you and your partner/family member). 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 a particular psychologist or therapist is an important part of the process. Feel free to discuss these issues with me at any time. If you have questions about the services being provided at any time, you may ask me 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 reviewed all of the information in this document, you have had ample opportunity to discuss it with me, and you have had your 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 (or that you consent to your child's participation) in the evaluation and/or psychotherapy. Your signature(s) does not mean that you have waived any rights.

I have received the following documents:

- Notice of Privacy Practices
- Policy and Procedures for Psychological Services
- Confidentiality Policy for Psychological Services

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Print Name of Patient

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Signature of Patient

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Parent/Guardian, if participant is minor

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Signature of Parent/Guardian, if participant is minor