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TREATMENT AGREEMENTS

Each person is unique. This makes it difficult to predict the length or course psychotherapy may take. You may enter therapy with one concern and later find other topics arise or your concerns may change. Significant changes usually do not take place on a straight path. During treatment, you may experience unwanted feelings such as unhappiness, anger, guilt or frustration. Such feelings are a natural part of the psychotherapy process and often provide the basis for change. Psychotherapy requires an active effort on your part that may include self-exploration, gaining understanding, finding ways of dealing with problems, and learning new skills.

You may chose to make important personal decisions as a result of psychotherapy including changing behavior, substance use patterns, relationships, education or exploring employment options. Such decisions may produce new opportunities and new challenges. Members of your family, your employer, a co-worker or someone with whom you have a personal relationship may view quite negatively a decision that is quite positive for you. There are no guarantees. Your commitment to the process of psychotherapy generally assists in achieving a helpful outcome.

My commitment is to offer you my best efforts to assist you in meeting your goals. Occasionally this may involve referring you to others if you could benefit from methods or services I do not offer. I participate regularly in continuing education and consultation with other professionals. During these discussions, I maintain your confidentiality (as described below) unless I have your express, written permission to disclose.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of communications between the patient and psychologist is important and is legally protected by state law. Normally, before any information can be released, you must complete a written release. (If you are a minor, your legal guardian may control the privilege). In general, a signed release is required before I may discuss anything about you (including the fact you are seeing me) or release any written or verbal information to anyone (including spouse, parent, employer, insurance company). A signed release specifies who may receive information and how long it remains in effect.

There are limited exceptions. Verbal and written reports may be required by state law in suspected cases of abuse of a child, elderly or disabled person. I may be required to disclose information in cases where a person may be a danger to themselves or to another person. In most legal proceedings in local and state courts, the psychotherapist-patient privilege protects information about your treatment. However, I can be required to release information when you or your attorney have raised a legal issue about your psychological, emotional or mental condition, and in some other court actions, and in actions before the Board of Psychology (that licenses psychologists in California).

If you ask me to prepare insurance claims, my office manager will review the diagnosis, procedure codes, dates of service, fees, and other confidential information in your file to verify insurance benefits and prepare claims for submission. If you pay by credit card, my office manager will post the credit card charges to your chart. My office manager is also required to protect your confidentiality.

Hours and Availability

I am generally available and schedule in-office services Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 10:00 am – 5:00 pm. Usually therapy is scheduled as one 50 minute session per week or as your treatment needs dictate and as we agree. In the event of an urgent need after hours, you may call my cell phone (707) 696-2412.

My answering machine is always on at (707) 579-9457. Should my phone be answered by anyone other than me, you may ask to be transferred to my voice mail. In a crisis situation, you may contact your primary care physician, the local emergency room, or Sonoma County Mental Health Emergency Services at (707) 576-8181.

Fee Information and Financial Agreements

Fee: My standard fee is \$195 for the initial visit and then \$170 for 50-minute psychotherapy sessions (effective 09/01/19). Fee adjustments may be available for patients in on-going therapy when there is financial difficulty in paying the standard fee. Longer and shorter sessions are prorated from your normally charged fee. **Payment of your individual fee is due and collected before your session** unless another arrangement has been made **before** the session. Payments may be made by checks, cash or credit cards.

Financial Responsibility: I accept “assignment of benefits” for payment directly from Medicare and Victim of Crime program after I have verified coverage. Verification of benefits does not guarantee insurance will pay for any or all of the services I provide to you. Should the third party not pay in a reasonable period of time (30 to 60 days from date of submitting a claim) or refuse to pay for certain services, you remain financially responsible for the fees for the services I provide to you.

Missed and Canceled Appointments: A minimum notice of 2 full business days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal legal holidays) is required for appointment changes and cancellations. Unless I am able to fill your scheduled appointment, **your full session fee will be charged if you cancel your appointment with less than 2 full business days notice.** Insurance will not pay for missed or late canceled appointments.

Late Arrival: If you will be more than 15 minutes late for your appointment, I ask that you call to let me know you are on your way. If you arrive late, your session will end at the scheduled time to respect the needs of those with following appointments. Note that sessions shortened due to late arrival have often turned out to be some of the most valuable.

Returned check fee: There is a \$15 charge on all returned checks.

Telephone calls and other services: For brief phone calls of less than ten minutes to reschedule your appointment or to discuss other issues, there is no charge. For phone calls longer than 10 minutes to discuss issues related to your on-going therapy, a prorated charge will be made based on approximately one fiftieth (1/50th) of your usual individual fee per minute of telephone time.

Other services, such as report writing, authorized consultation with other treating professionals, preparation of records, or treatment summaries, will also be charged on a prorated basis. Psychological testing is charged at a flat fee per test. Please ask about charges for any tests that you are asked to take.