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Psychologist ~ Client Agreement for Psychological Services

Welcome to my practice, and I look forward to our work together. You may have many questions as you begin this important work with a psychologist who is new to you. In an effort to answer some of those questions, please take the time to read this document prior to our initial session. If you have any questions or need additional clarification, please feel free to discuss that with me when we meet. Once you are comfortable with the information presented here, please sign the Acknowledgment Form indicating you have reviewed this document and that you are aware of the agreement that will exist between us once we begin working together.

Psychological Services

The psychotherapy process is difficult to describe fully because it will vary depending on our personalities and the on the issues that you would like to work on in therapy. My therapeutic style is individualized based on the needs of my clients and the unique relationship between us. Generally speaking, I have a humanistic approach to working with clients, and I tend to view the issues people face in a non-judgemental and non-pathologizing manner. This means I am less interested in diagnosing what is “wrong” with you and more interested in helping you find ways you can build on your strengths and apply them to a wider variety of life circumstances. I practice from an integrative perspective, meaning that I use approaches and techniques that are likely to be helpful for your specific needs. Some of these approaches include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and systems approaches.

Your participation in psychotherapy can result in many benefits to you including improved interpersonal relationships, reduction of distressing feelings, improved coping skills, and resolution of the specific issues that led you to seek therapy. In order for therapy to be most effective, you will need to put forth active effort both during sessions and in-between them as well.

Attempting to resolve the issues that brought you into therapy may result in unexpected changes for you. Since psychotherapy can involve discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings such as sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, or helplessness. You may also find yourself making changes in your life that you had not originally intended. Utilizing therapy to improve your life can sometimes be quick and easy, but more often will be hard-fought and gradual. There are no guarantees that psychotherapy will yield positive or intended results.

Throughout our work together I will continue to elicit your views and feedback about your treatment and your progress. If you ever have questions about any aspect of your treatment, I encourage you to bring them to me. The more involved, honest, and open you are throughout the therapy process, the more effective it will be for you.

Beginning Therapy

During our first few sessions you can expect that we will be discussing what is bringing you to therapy at this time, what you hope to gain from your time in therapy, and how you feel about the therapeutic relationship that is developing between us. If I believe that I am not an appropriate treatment provider for your specific situation, or if you feel that there is not a “good fit” between us, then I will provide you with referrals for other clinicians who may better suit your needs. After this initial evaluation time, I will be able to offer you some first impressions about what our work would include and what a potential treatment plan would look like if we continued working together. You should consider this information carefully, as therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy; therefore it is essential that you feel comfortable with the therapist you select.

Meetings

I will usually schedule one 50-minute individual session or one 75-minute couples or family session per week at a mutually agreed-upon time, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent. If you are late to an appointment, we will end on time so as not to run over into someone else’s appointment time. Once an appointment time is scheduled, that time is reserved specifically for you. If you need to reschedule or cancel an appointment, I require a minimum of 24 hours notice. Your full fee will be charged for sessions missed without sufficient notice. If your sessions are covered by insurance, please be advised that most insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions.

Payments

You will be expected to pay for each session at or before your scheduled appointment time, as I do not allow clients to run a bill with me. I ask that you let me know if you have difficulty maintaining this financial obligation so that we can work out other payment arrangements. Should a check be returned due to insufficient funds, you will be responsible for all associated costs and fees.

For other professional services you may need outside of our scheduled sessions I will bill you on a prorated basis. These services may include telephone conversations lasting longer than fifteen minutes, extensive coordination of care, consulting with other professionals with your permission, report writing, preparation of records or treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other service you may request of me. In the unusual circumstance that you are involved in a legal proceeding that requires my participation, I may charge a higher fee for my professional time due to the complexity and difficulty of legal involvement. In the event there is an outstanding balance on your account for more than 90 days, I reserve the right to utilize a collection agency to facilitate financial reimbursement for services rendered. Please note that relevant client information will be provided to the collection agency as necessary for the purpose of obtaining reimbursement.

Insurance

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health insurance policy with outpatient mental health benefits, it will likely provide some coverage for our work together, although it may place limits on your number of sessions or require continued approval of services. It is your responsibility to verify the specifics of your insurance coverage, and I will assist you in any way I can to help you receive the benefits to which you are entitled. Please note, though, that you are responsible for direct payment of my services even if you are getting reimbursed by an insurance company. This way it is clear that I work for you, not for the insurance company.

In order to process your insurance claims, I may be required to disclose confidential information about your treatment such as a diagnosis, the date and length of our appointments, your treatment plan, treatment summaries, and your progress toward treatment goals. I will make every effort to release only the minimum information necessary for the requested purpose. While insurance companies claim to keep this information confidential, I cannot guarantee that to be the case once the information is released to them and it becomes part of your insurance record.

When we have all the information about the insurance benefits available to you, we will discuss what we can expect to accomplish within those parameters and what will happen if your benefits run out before you feel ready to end your sessions. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services “out of pocket” (without insurance reimbursement) to avoid the problems described above.

Contacting Me

Due to the nature of my work, I am often not immediately available by telephone. Should you need to contact me between sessions please leave me a message at 209.286.6442. I frequently check my voicemail and I will generally return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. You may use my email address (dr.dulceywang@gmail.com) only for administrative purposes such as scheduling, rescheduling, or canceling appointments. Email is NOT an appropriate forum for discussing clinical issues that are better raised during our sessions. In an emergency situation, please contact me only via telephone. If I am going to be away from my practice and/or unavailable to respond to messages during an absence, I will let you know in advance and will provide you with the name of a colleague who will be covering for me. If an emergency situation arises and you are unable to reach me or you need to talk to someone right away, dial 911 or go to your nearest Emergency Room (Lodi Memorial Hospital, 209.339.7575, 800 South Lower Sacramento Road, Lodi, CA).

Confidentiality of Email, Voicemail, and Fax Communications

These forms of communication can easily be accessed by unauthorized individuals, compromising your privacy and confidentiality. Please notify me at any time during your treatment if you would like to avoid or limit the use of any or all of these methods of communication.

Ending Therapy

Concluding our work together will ideally be a mutual process comprised of us working together to decide when it will be best for you to end, whether follow-up options will be beneficial to you, and how you would know when it may be appropriate to return to treatment. If engaging in this process is not possible for you, I suggest you allow for at least two termination sessions so that we can wrap up your treatment in a way that is both healthy as well as respectful of the time and energy you have devoted to the therapy process. That said, it is your right to terminate treatment at any time, and I can provide you with referrals to other clinicians if needed.

I reserve the right to terminate treatment unilaterally and immediately if you verbally threaten or harass, physically threaten or harass, or commit violence towards me, my office, or my family. I may also choose to terminate services if you fail or refuse to pay for services after a reasonable amount of time.

Confidentiality

During your therapy process, my ability to help you will largely depend on how open and honest you can be about yourself. In order for you to feel free to talk openly with me, and so that your right to privacy is protected, the law makes it my duty to keep client information confidential. This means that, in most situations, I cannot release information about you, the content of our sessions, or your written records to anyone else without your permission. If you ever want me to share information about your treatment with someone else (for example, your physician), I will ask you to sign a *Consent to Release Information* form, which allows me to exchange information with that person.

Exceptions to Confidentiality

There are some situations where I am permitted or required to disclose information without your consent, and it is important for you to be aware of these situations prior to engaging in psychological services. If such a situation arises, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action and I will limit my disclosure to what is necessary. These situations are briefly noted here, but you will read about them in more detail in the *HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices* document.

- If I believe that you are unable to keep yourself safe, either because you are threatening serious harm to yourself or because you are unable to engage in basic activities of daily life, I am permitted to reveal information about you to others in order to ensure your safety. In urgent situations, I may also contact the person you designated as your emergency contact on your *Confidential Client Questionnaire*.
- If you threaten to harm another person, I am required by law to take steps to inform the intended victim and appropriate law enforcement agencies.
- If I reasonably suspect that any child, elderly person, or dependent adult is being abused or neglected, the law requires that I report this to the appropriate county agency.

- If a court of law orders me to release information, I am required to provide that specific information to the court.
- If you have been referred to me by a court of law for therapy or testing, the result of the treatment or tests ordered may have to be revealed to the court.
- If you are involved in, or become involved in, any kind of lawsuit or administrative procedure (such as worker's compensation), where the issue of your mental health is involved, you may not be able to keep your treatment information private.
- In couple or relationship therapy, or when different family members are seen individually, confidentiality and privilege do not apply between the couple or among family members. I will use my clinical judgment when revealing such information.
- If a client files a complaint or lawsuit against me, I may disclose relevant information regarding that client in order to defend myself.
- In order to provide you the best treatment I can, there will be times when I may seek consultation from another licensed mental health professional. In these consultations, I make every effort to avoid revealing your identity. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential, although the exceptions to confidentiality apply to them as well. Similarly, when I am away or unavailable, my practice is covered by a licensed therapist. I may inform the on-call therapist about your situation to facilitate your getting appropriate support should you need it in my absence.

Questions

I encourage you to ask any questions you have about your treatment at any time, including questions about my professional background, techniques I use, suggestions I make, what you can expect to happen in your session, and what you have read in any document associated with my psychotherapy practice. If you have concerns or questions about your treatment, I hope you will talk with me about it. I will take your criticism seriously, and I will respond with care and respect. If you think that I've been unwilling to listen and respond, or that I have behaved unethically, you have the right to discuss your complaints about me with anyone you wish, and you do not have any responsibility to maintain confidentiality about our work together since you are the person who has the right to decide what information you want kept confidential. You can also contact the California Board of Psychology, which receives questions and complaints regarding the practice of psychology in this state.

California Board of Psychology
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