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New Client Information and Treatment Agreement

Psychotherapy is a mutual effort between you and your therapist that seeks to work out the problem or issues you bring for treatment.

What you can expect from me:

- I will be present at our appointed time, barring emergencies.
- I will develop an assessment of the problem or issue that you bring for treatment. This assessment may include a mental health diagnosis.
- I will collaborate with you in developing a plan that addresses the problem in a way that works for you.
- I will be in contact with your primary care physician or other care providers at your request.

What I expect from you:

- I expect you to be present at the office at our appointed time.
- I expect you to give proper notice when canceling an appointment (see cancellation policy below).
- I expect you to attend your appointment free from any intoxicant.
- I expect you to commit to the work of solving your problem, both in the office and between sessions.
- I expect you to honor the financial agreement made at the start of treatment.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an essential part of a trusting, effective therapeutic relationship. Confidentiality means that I do not talk about any aspect of your treatment outside of this office. Your right to confidentiality in treatment is protected by professional standards, my license to practice, and the law. I will not release information about your treatment to anyone without your written or verbal consent.

This agreement does, however, have limitations. Under certain circumstances, psychotherapists are required by law to reveal information about your treatment without your consent. These include:

- If there is evidence of harm to a minor, an elder, or disabled person. If a child or elder is in serious danger, I am required by law to report the problem to authorities.
- If you are threatening serious harm to yourself or others. If the danger level warrants, I could seek hospitalization for a client's protection. If another party is threatened, that person, their family, or authorities could be alerted.
- If a court orders the release of your records. Although rare, this can happen in divorce proceedings, child custody, and criminal hearings.
- If you are a minor, general feedback on treatment is reported to parents or guardians.

Also, please be aware that the standards of the profession require that I keep written records of your treatment. If you are using insurance, your insurance company will require a diagnosis and type of treatment. Your insurance company may also seek to review your chart to ensure quality standards. In addition, there are times when it is clinically necessary and appropriate for me to seek consultation with another professional. Such consultations are with other professionals who are also bound by the confidentiality rules stated above.

Please let me know if you have any concerns regarding confidentiality.

Cancellation Policy

A scheduled appointment is an agreement I take very seriously, and that time is reserved just for you. If you need to cancel or postpone a scheduled session, I require 24 hours' notice. Otherwise, you will be charged \$70. for the time reserved. There are no exceptions to this policy. Once inside 24 hours, the fee applies and insurance does not cover it. If I need to postpone your session, I will give you as much notice as possible.

Please initial if you have read and understand the cancellation policy: _____

Payment Policy

Full payment (or co-payment) is expected at the start of each session. Please check with your insurer to see what your co-payment is. Filling out your check in advance will save valuable time in the office. If you are using insurance, I will do my best to work with your insurer to track eligibility and preauthorization. Please report any changes to your policy. If authorization is denied, you will be responsible for payment.

Fees are as follows:

- Initial Diagnostic Session: \$130.
- Individual or Family Session: \$110.
- Telephone Sessions/Consults: First 5 minutes: Free; After that, \$20. for each 10 minute interval (Including emergency calls). I do not normally do sessions over the phone, but make exceptions under certain circumstances. Note that most insurance does not pay for phone sessions.
- Court Involvement/Testimony: \$110. per hour.
This includes travel time. Payment is the responsibility of the client regardless of who initiates a subpoena.

Contacting Me

I keep the phone ringer off during session. Therefore, when you call, it is likely that you will get a message service. You can expect a return call in less than 24 hours and most often much sooner. It helps if you leave the best time to reach you. If you do not hear from me within 24 hours, it is likely that a message has been lost in the system or I was not able to reach you, so please call back. If your call is urgent or your symptoms seem unmanageable, please explain that in your message and I will try to contact you as soon as possible. **If you are in crisis and do not hear from me soon enough, you have several options: Call Merrimac Valley Crisis Services at 1-800-281-3223; call 911; or go to your local emergency room for help.**

Regarding phone calls: If your privacy needs are such that you do not wish me to leave a message at your home, let me know and we will make other arrangements. Otherwise, when I return your call, I will identify myself by name and leave a message relevant to your call with only the necessary detail.

The Basics of Therapy

The therapeutic "hour" for insurance requirements is 45 minutes. That's what they pay for. In most cases I will use 50-55 minutes. In order to make the most of our time together, I request that you arrive early enough so that you are ready to start at the appointment time.

Some issues just seem to need more time to work through and would benefit from a longer session. When the schedule allows and the issue warrants extra time, I am willing to offer double sessions. Because insurance will only pay for one session per day, that second hour is paid out of pocket. That means you would be billed the normal copay plus full fee (\$110) for the second hour.

Insurance Coverage and "Medical Necessity"

In order for treatment to be reimbursed by insurance it must be considered "medically necessary." This means that the client is exhibiting a certain level of distress or impairment in order to qualify for medically necessary care. This can cause confusion on the part of clients who are allowed a certain number of sessions under their plan. Many clients experience a reduction in symptoms and improvement in functioning before they consider that their therapy is completed. Insurance companies may stop coverage even though you wish to continue or have not exhausted all of the sessions that the policy allows. You have the right to appeal a provider's decision, and it is your option to contract for services privately beyond those limits.

I understand and agree to the terms above.

Client: _____ Date: ___/___/___ Therapist: _____ Date: ___/___/___