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Policy Statement for In-Person Psychotherapy and Telepsychology

Welcome to my psychotherapy practice. This document contains information about my services and policies. Please read it carefully and write down any questions you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting. Your signature on the Client Registration Form represents an agreement between us.

Psychological Services

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the psychologist and patient, and the particular problems you hope to address. There are different methods I may use to understand your concerns. Psychotherapy is not like a visit to a medical doctor. Instead, I work with you during weekly sessions over an extended period of time.

Psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often involves discussing painful aspects of your life. You may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. During therapy, patients often find clarity, better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress.

Our first session involves an evaluation of your needs. Occasionally, I will extend the evaluation to two or three sessions. By the end of the evaluation, you will get a feel for my therapeutic style. Together we will decide if we could work well together. If I think that someone else would meet your needs better, I will let you know.

Appointments

If we agree to begin psychotherapy, I will typically schedule one to three sessions per week, at a time we agree on. Ideally, we have set times during the week, such as Mondays at 9:30. Regular weekly sessions are an important part of therapy and eventually become part of your weekly routine.

Once an appointment is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide two business days (48 hours) advance notice of cancellation. Often, I am able to reschedule an appointment for another time during that week. Insurance does not pay for canceled appointments, so that you are responsible for covering a missed session.

Fees, Payments and Insurance

The fee for an initial assessment appointment is \$225. The fee for a therapy appointment, usually after the first appointment, is \$195. Phone consultations (longer than fifteen minutes) and report writing will be prorated at the hourly rate. I am currently out of network for all insurance companies. I can bill Premera and First Choice. Those insurance companies will pay a portion of your bill and you are responsible for the rest. So that you are informed, I recommend calling your insurance company and asking about coverage, deductible, copayment or session limit. I can also give you documentation of bills and payments if you need that.

I will ask you for your credit card information at the end of the first session and store it in a secure location. During the first month of our work together, I will charge your card weekly.

After that, I will send you your balance at the beginning of the month and ask you to pay electronically. If you prefer to pay by credit card, I will add a \$5 credit card fee and charge your credit card. Your signature to this policy indicates authorization to charge your credit card for your balance, missed appointments and late cancellations.

Insurance companies require that I provide dates of service, types of service and a diagnosis. You are welcome to pay out of pocket if you do not want to use your insurance.

Confidentiality

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist is protected by law. I can only release information about our work to others with your written permission.

There are a few exceptions:

In some legal proceedings, a judge may order my testimony if they determine the issues demand it.

If I believe that a child, or elderly person is being abused or has been abused, I may be required to make a report to the appropriate state agency.

If I believe that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I may be required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient. If the patient threatens to harm themselves, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for them or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection. If a similar situation occurs in the course of our work together, I will attempt to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

Electronic Communications and Communication between sessions

I only use email and text messaging with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. This means that email exchanges and text messages with me should be limited to administrative matters. This includes things like setting and changing appointments and billing matters. You should be aware that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email or text because I do not have an encrypted system. Therefore, I will not discuss any clinical information by email or text and prefer that you do not either.

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at your regularly scheduled sessions. But if an urgent issue arises, you should feel free to attempt to reach me by phone. I will try to return your call within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, contact the Crisis Line at (206) 461- 3222, The National Mental Health Crisis Line at 988, or go to the nearest emergency room. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact in my absence if necessary.

Telepsychology

Telepsychology refers to providing psychotherapy services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone. One of the benefits of telepsychology is that you and I can engage in services without being in the same physical location. There are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and telepsychology, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because telepsychology sessions take place outside of the therapist's private office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. On my end I will take reasonable steps

to ensure your privacy. It is also important for you to make sure you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted.

- Issues related to technology. If a session becomes disabled, please log back into Doxy. Doxy is the HIPAA compliant site I use for sessions. If that doesn't work, please call or text me at 206-525-9665 so that we can figure out how to continue the session.
- Crisis management and intervention. Usually, I will not engage in telepsychology with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that telepsychology is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, some therapists believe that something is lost by not being in the same room. For example, there is debate about a therapist's ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely.