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OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions that you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting. Once you sign this, it will constitute an agreement between us.

Psychological Services

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personality of both the therapist and the patient and the particular problems that the patient brings. There are a number of different approaches that can be utilized to address the problems you hope to raise. It is not like visiting a medical doctor, in that it requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable feelings of sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. Psychotherapy often requires recalling unpleasant aspects of your history. Psychotherapy has also been shown to have benefits for people who undertake it. It often leads to significant reduction of feelings of distress, improved relationships, and resolutions of specific problems. But there are no guarantees what will happen.

By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what our work will include and an initial treatment plan, if you decide to continue. You should evaluate this information along with your own assessment about whether you feel comfortable working with me. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, I will be happy to help you secure an appropriate consultation with another mental health professional.

Meetings

My normal practice is to conduct an evaluation, which will last from 2 to 3 sessions. During this time, we can both decide whether I am the best person to provide the services that you need in order to meet your treatment objectives. If psychotherapy is initiated, I will usually schedule one

fifty-minute session (one appointment hour of fifty minutes duration) per week at a mutually agreed time, although occasionally sessions may be longer or more frequent. Once this appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24-hour advance notice of cancellation [or unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances which were beyond your control]. If it is possible, I will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.

Professional Fees

My hourly fee is \$150. In addition to weekly appointments, it is my practice to charge this amount on a prorated basis for other professional services you may require such as report writing, telephone conversations which last longer than 15 minutes, or the time required to perform any other service which you may request of me.

Billing and Payments

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise or you have insurance coverage that requires another arrangement. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or installment payment plan

Insurance Reimbursement

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources are available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health benefits plan, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. I will provide you with whatever assistance I can in facilitating your receipt of the benefits to which you are entitled including filling out forms as appropriate. However, you, and not your insurance company, are responsible for full payment of the fee that we have agreed to. Therefore, it is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your health plan covers.

You should carefully read the section in your health coverage booklet that describes mental health services. If you have questions, you should call your plan and inquire. Of course, I will provide you with whatever information I can based on my experience and I will be happy to try to assist you in deciphering the information you receive from your carrier. If necessary to resolve confusion, I am willing to telephone the carrier on your behalf.

The escalation of the cost of health care has resulted in an increasing level of complexity about health benefits which sometimes makes it difficult to determine exactly how much mental health coverage is available. Managed health care plans, such as HMOs and PPOs, often require advance authorization before they will provide reimbursement for mental health services. These plans are often oriented towards a short-term treatment approach designed to resolve specific problems that are interfering with one's usual level of functioning. It may be necessary to seek additional approval after a certain number of sessions. In my experience, while quite a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, many clients feel that more services are necessary after benefits expire.

You should also be aware that most health plans require you to authorize me to provide a clinical diagnosis, and sometimes additional clinical information such as a treatment plan or summary. This information will become the property of your health plan. Law requires health plans to keep such information confidential, but once it is in their hands, I have no control over what they do with it. In some cases they may share the information with a national medical information bank.

Once we have all of the information about your health coverage, we will discuss what we can expect to accomplish with the benefits that are available and what will happen if the benefits run out before you feel ready to end our sessions. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself and avoid the complexities that are described above.

Contacting Me

I am often not immediately available by telephone. I usually will not answer the phone when I am with a client. When I am unavailable, my telephone is answered by an automated system that forwards your voicemail to my cell phone. I will make every effort to return your call (if you request) within an hour. Please follow the instructions given by the automated system. I am sometimes in transit, or otherwise away from my list of telephone numbers when I am contacted, so please leave a telephone number at which you can be reached when you call. My cell phone is always turned on, so please avoid calling late at night, or on weekends, with non-urgent messages. If you cannot reach me, and you feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, you should contact your family physician or the emergency room at the nearest hospital and ask for the mental health professional on call. If I am unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a trusted colleague whom you can contact if necessary.

Professional Records

Both law and the standards of my profession require that I maintain appropriate treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of the records, but if you wish, I can prepare an appropriate summary. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or can be upsetting. If you wish to see your records, I recommend that you review them in my presence so that we can discuss what they contain.

Minors

If you are under eighteen years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents with the right to examine your treatment records. It is my policy to request an agreement from parents that they consent to give up access to your records. If they agree, I will provide them only with general information on how your treatment is proceeding unless I feel that there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or another, in which case I will notify them of my concern. I will also provide them with a summary of your treatment when it is complete. Before giving them any information, I will discuss the matter with you and will do the best I can to resolve any objections you may have about what I am prepared to discuss.

Confidentiality

In general, law protects the confidentiality of all communications between a client and a psychologist, and I can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. However, there are a number of exceptions.

If I believe that a child or elderly person is being abused or neglected, I may be required to file a report with the appropriate state agency. If I believe that a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required to take appropriate actions, which may include notifying the potential victim, notifying the police, or seeking appropriate hospitalization. If a client threatens to harm him/herself, I may be required to seek hospitalization, or to contact family members or others who can provide protection. These situations have only rarely arisen in my practice. Should such a situation occur, I would make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

I may find it helpful to consult about a case with other professionals, such as a fellow licensed psychologist. In these consultations, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my client. The consultant is, of course, also legally bound to keep the information confidential. Unless you object, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I feel that it is important to our work together.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have at our next meeting.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship. You also acknowledge receipt of Dr. Schroeder’s Privacy Policy regarding your protected health information.

signature

date

(revised 6/2008)