

INFORMATION, AUTHORIZATION, & CONSENT TO TREATMENT

I am very pleased that you have selected me to be your psychotherapist, and I am sincerely looking forward to assisting you. This document is designed to inform you about what you can expect from me regarding confidentiality, emergencies, and several other details regarding your treatment. Although providing this document is part of an ethical obligation to my profession, more importantly, it is part of my commitment to you to keep you fully informed of every part of your therapeutic experience. Please know that your relationship with me is a collaborative one, and I welcome any questions, comments, or suggestions regarding your course of therapy at any time.

Background Information

The following information regarding my educational background and experience as a therapist is an ethical requirement of my profession. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

*Georgia State University * Atlanta, Georgia * May 2006 * Master of Science * Professional Counseling

*Mental Health Therapist * Cobb County School District * Marietta, Georgia * March 2010- June 2013

*Therapist/Forensic Interviewer * Georgia Center for Child Advocacy * Atlanta, Georgia * May 2006 – February 2010

* Intern Counselor * SafePath Children's Advocacy Center, Inc. * Marietta, Georgia * August 2005 – May 2006

Theoretical Views & Client Participation

It is my belief that as people become more aware and accepting of themselves, they are more capable of finding a sense of peace and contentment in their lives. However, self-awareness and self-acceptance are goals that may take a long time to achieve. Some clients need only a few sessions to achieve these goals, whereas others may require months. As a client, you are in complete control, and you may end your relationship with me at any point.

In order for therapy to be most successful, it is important for you to take an active role. This means working on the things you and I talk about both during and between sessions. This also means avoiding any mind-altering substances like alcohol or non-prescription drugs for at least eight hours prior to your therapy sessions. Generally, the more of yourself you are willing to invest, the greater the return.

It is my intention to empower you in your growth process to the degree that you are capable of facing life's challenges in the future without me. I also don't believe in creating dependency or prolonging therapy if the therapeutic intervention does not seem to be helping. If this is the case, I will direct you to other resources that will be of assistance to you. Your personal development is my number one priority. I encourage you to let me know if you feel that transferring to another therapist is necessary at any time. My goal is to facilitate healing and growth, and I am very committed to helping you in whatever way seems to produce maximum benefit.

Confidentiality & Records

Your communications with me will become part of a clinical record of treatment, and it is referred to as Protected Health Information (PHI). Your PHI will be kept in a file stored in a

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locked cabinet for 7 years and then it will be shredded. Additionally, I will always keep everything you say to me completely confidential, with the following exceptions: (1) you direct me to tell someone else and you sign a "Release of Information" form; (2) I determine that you are a danger to yourself or to others; (3) you report information about the abuse of a child, an elderly person, or a disabled individual who may require protection; or (4) I am ordered by a judge to disclose information. In the latter case, my license does provide me with the ability to uphold what is legally termed "privileged communication." Privileged communication is your right as a client to have a confidential relationship with a therapist. The state of Georgia has a very good track record in respecting this legal right. If for some unusual reason a judge were to order the disclosure of your private information, this order can be appealed. I cannot guarantee that the appeal will be sustained, but I will do everything in my power to keep what you say confidential.

Interaction with the Legal System

I understand that I will not involve or engage my therapist in any legal issues or litigation in which I am party to at any time either during my counseling or after counseling terminates. This would include any interaction with the court system, attorney, Guardian ad Litem, psychological evaluators, alcohol and drug evaluators, or any other contact with the legal system. In the event that I wish to have a copy of my file, and I execute a proper release, my therapist will provide me with a copy of clinical forms and a summary of my sessions. If I believe it necessary to subpoena my therapist, I would be responsible for her expert witness fees in the amount of \$1,000 for one-half (1/2) day to be paid five (5) days in advance of any court appearance or deposition. Any additional time I spend over one-half (1/2) day would be billed at the rate of \$375.00 per hour including travel time. I understand that if I subpoena my therapist she may elect not to speak with my attorney, and a subpoena may result in my therapist withdrawing as my therapist.

Technology

Secure and private communication cannot be fully assured utilizing cell/smart phone or regular email technologies. It is the client's right to determine whether communication using non-secure technologies may be permitted and under what circumstances. Use of any non-secure technologies to contact Sonya Coy, LPC, BC-TMH will be considered to imply consent to return messages to client via the same non-secure technology, pending further clarification from client. Please check below which modes of communication are permitted and which are not permitted. This consent may be altered at any time should circumstances or preference change. In the event that client chooses not to allow non-secure modes of communication, contact will only be made via mail.

Text communication to client's cell phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Permitted	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Permitted
Voice communication to client's cell phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Permitted	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Permitted
Email communication to client	<input type="checkbox"/> Permitted	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Permitted

Clients can feel free to text if they are going to be late. If an appointment needs to be canceled therapist prefers that you call and reschedule the appointment. Clients are asked to not text or email personal and private information. The cell carrier or email provider cannot ensure confidentiality. If personal information is texted or email, therapist will not respond to attempt to keep client's information confidential. **Therapist only responds to text messages, calls, and email during office hours of 9:00am- 6:00pm Monday – Thursday unless on vacation and will respond upon her return back to the office.**

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Telemental Health (Distance Counseling)

Telemental Health is the use of technology in any way via phone, texting, chat, email, or video. There are multiple names for Telemental Health such as: On-line Counseling, Distance Counseling, Telehealth, Virtual Counseling, Web-based Counseling, and many more.

There are benefits and drawbacks for counseling being conducted via Distance Counseling that are listed below.

Benefits:

- Choice in location
- Does not have to travel
- Has greater sense of control
- Client becomes more interactive
- Verbal communication may be easier
- Client can control when session ends
- Client feels more comfortable revealing traumatic events

Drawbacks:

- Technology challenges
- Not recommended for clients with suicidal ideation, homicidal ideation, psychosis (delusions about technology)
- Cultural concerns about online interactions
- No therapeutic environment
- Client may struggle with building rapport with therapist
- Lack of online experience
- Lack nonverbal communication

If a client wants to use their insurance for Distance Counseling the client needs to first call their insurance and verify that they have Distance Counseling benefits. Dove Counseling only provides video conferencing to clients using their insurance. **Insurances will not pay for therapy provided over the phone.** For Employee Assistance Program (EAP) clients may have counseling via video or telephone depending on the stipulations set by the EAP. For Distance Counseling to be provided the client will need the following:

- A laptop or desktop with audio and video
- Internet connection
- A confidential location for therapy to take place

Phone

For EAP clients desiring counseling via the phone, it is helpful to have an alternate phone such as a landline in case the cell phone is no longer able to be used. Clients are asked to refrain from using the speaker phone but can use a headset. **Therapy cannot be conducted while client is driving.**

Client must be located in a place that is confidential.

Emergency Management Plan

Client **must** provide a support person along with the support person's phone number that is available **every time** during the session in case of an emergency. If client presents suicidal, homicidal, or psychotic and client agrees to go to the hospital the following steps will be made.

1. Again, if client agrees to go to the hospital the support person will drive to client's home and take them as therapist stays on the phone with the client.

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Note: If client has a gun or is violent the support person will not be called.

2. Support person will call therapist after arriving at the hospital.
3. Therapist will call the hospital and give them clinical information.

If client refuses to go to the hospital:

1. The support person will be called to go to client's home and call 911 so ambulance can transport client.
2. If client does not want to be transported via ambulance, Therapist will call the Georgia Crisis Access Line (GCAL) (1-800-715-4225) mobile unit and they will go to client's home to assess client. A clinician with GCAL will make a recommendation on next steps with client i.e. hospital, therapy in-person, follow-up, etc.

Confidentiality

Therapist will not record any of the therapy sessions to ensure client's confidentiality. Other stipulations to confidentiality as stated on page 2 still apply to clients who have Distance Counseling.

Technology Breakdown

If there is an interruption with the video, clients can check to see if they have lost internet connection, restart their computer, or run a test with Vsee (software used for distance counseling). If these strategies do not work client will need to call therapist and reschedule appointment. If therapist is not able to conduct the session do to technology issues she will call client to reschedule appointment. If after a 30-minute session and the technology failed, therapist is allowed to bill for that session but not for less than 30 minutes.

Structure and Cost of Sessions

For clients who do not have insurance, I agree to provide therapy for the fee of \$125 per 60 minute session, \$185 per 90 minutes, \$250 per 120 minute session, unless otherwise negotiated by you or your insurance carrier. Providing therapy by telephone is not ideal, and needing to talk to me between sessions may indicate that you need extra support. If this is the case, you and I will need to explore adding sessions or developing other resources you have available to help you. Telephone calls that exceed 10 minutes in duration will be billed at \$.50 per minute. The fee for each session will be due at the conclusion of the session. Cash, Visa, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express are acceptable for payment, and I will provide you with a receipt of payment. The receipt of payment may also be used as a statement for insurance if applicable to you. Therapist will charge \$1.50 /page (in state) to fax paperwork, \$2/page (out of state) and \$2/page to make copies.

Copy of Records

If requested, per current state statues for Georgia, an administrative search and retrieval fee of \$25.88 is charged; and for up to 20 pages \$0.97 per page; 21-100 pages \$0.83 up to 21-100 pages is charged. Fees are collected prior to release of medical records. The actual cost of postage incurred in mailing the requested records is also charged.

Insurance companies have many rules and requirements specific to certain plans. Unless otherwise negotiated, it is your responsibility to find out your insurance company's policies and to file for insurance reimbursement. I will be glad to provide you with a statement for your insurance company and to assist you with any questions you may have in this area.

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Paperwork

Therapist does not provide letters, fill out ANY paperwork i.e. FMLA, short-term, long-term disability, etc. or talk to anyone regarding these matters. If asked, she will provide an excuse for work or school.

Cancellation/No Show Policy

In the event that you are unable to keep an appointment, you must **notify me at least 24 business hours (Monday – Thursday, 9am-6pm) in advance**. If your appointment is on a Monday and you want to cancel, you must notify me on the previous Thursday, otherwise you will be responsible for the full payment. **If such advance notice is not received, you will be financially responsible for the full payment** of the session you missed. Please note that insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions. **Please do not text or email therapist that you will cancel your appointment but please contact therapist by phone.**

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

If an EAP client misses two appointments without giving 24 hour notice, therapist will refer client back to their EAP to select another therapist. Therapist does not fill out ANY paperwork i.e. FMLA, short-term, long-term disability, etc. If asked, she will provide an excuse for work.

In Case of an Emergency

My practice is considered to be an outpatient facility, and I am set up to accommodate individuals who are reasonably safe and resourceful. I am I available at all times. If at any time this does not feel like sufficient support, please inform me, and we can discuss additional resources or transfer your case to a therapist or clinic with 24-hour availability. Generally, I will return phone calls within 24-48 hours. If you have a mental health emergency, I encourage you not to wait for a call back, but to do one or more of the following:

- Call Ridgeview Institute at 770.434.4567 or Peachford Hospital at 770.454.5589.
- Call 911.
- Go to your nearest emergency room.

Professional Relationship

Therapy is a professional service I will provide to you. Because of the nature of therapy, your relationship with me has to be different from most relationships. It may differ in how long it lasts, the objectives, or the topics discussed. It must also be limited to only the relationship of therapist and client. If you and I were to interact in any other ways, you would then have a "dual relationship," which could prove to be harmful to you in the long run and is, therefore, unethical in the mental health profession. Dual relationships can set up conflicts between the therapist's interests and the client's interests, and then the client's (your) interests might not be put first. In order to offer all of my clients the best care, my judgment needs to be unselfish and purely focused on your needs. This is why your relationship with me must remain professional in nature.

Additionally, there are important differences between therapy and friendship. Friends may see your position only from their personal viewpoints and experiences. Friends may want to find quick and easy solutions to your problems so that they can feel helpful. These short-term solutions may not be in your long-term best interest. Friends do not usually follow up on their advice to see whether it was useful. They may *need* to have you do what they advise. A therapist offers you choices and helps you choose what is best for you. A therapist helps you learn how to solve problems better and make better decisions. A therapist's responses to your situation are based on tested theories and methods of change.

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You should also know that therapists are required to keep the identity of their client's secret. As much as I would like to, for your confidentiality I will not address you in public unless you speak to me first. I also must decline any invitation to attend gatherings with your family or friends. Lastly, when your therapy is completed, I will not be able to be a friend to you like your other friends. In sum, it is my duty to always maintain a professional role. Please note that these guidelines are not meant to be discourteous in any way, they are strictly for your long-term protection.

Statement Regarding Ethics, Client Welfare & Safety

I assure you that my services will be rendered in a professional manner consistent with the ethical standards of the American Counseling Association. If at any time you feel that I am not performing in an ethical or professional manner, I ask that you please let me know immediately. If we are unable to resolve your concern, I will provide you with information to contact the Georgia professional licensing board that governs my profession.

Due to the very nature of therapy, as much as I would like to guarantee specific results regarding your therapeutic goals, I am unable to do so. However, with your participation, we will work to achieve the best possible results for you. Please also be aware that changes made in therapy may affect other people in your life. For example, an increase in your assertiveness may not always be welcomed by others. It is my intention to help you manage changes in your interpersonal relationships as they arise, but it is important for you to be aware of this possibility nonetheless.

Additionally, at times people find that they feel somewhat worse when they first start therapy before they begin to feel better. This may occur as you begin discussing certain sensitive areas of your life. However, a topic usually isn't sensitive unless it needs attention. Therefore, discovering the discomfort is actually a success. Once you and I are able to target your specific treatment needs and the particular modalities that work the best for you, help is generally on the way. I am sincerely looking forward to facilitating you on your journey toward healing and growth. If you have any questions about any part of this document, please ask.

Please print, date, and sign your name below indicating that you have read and understand the contents of this form, you agree to the policies of your relationship with me as your therapist, and you are authorizing me to begin treatment with you.

Client Name (Please Print)

Date

Client Signature

My signature below indicates that I have discussed this form with you and have answered any questions you have regarding this information.

Therapist's Signature

Date