



Susan Houck Strom, MA, LMFT
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CONSENT FOR SERVICES

WELCOME TO MY PRACTICE. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. It also contains summary information about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), a federal law that provides privacy protections and patient rights about the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) for the purposes of treatment, payment, and health care operations. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you understand them. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. We can discuss any questions you have when you sign them or at any time in the future.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Therapy is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in psychotherapy, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. There are also legal limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. I, as your therapist, have corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness, because the process of psychotherapy often requires discussing the unpleasant aspects of your life. However, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for individuals who undertake it. Therapy often leads to a significant reduction in feelings of distress, increased satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, greater personal awareness and insight, increased skills for managing stress and resolutions to specific problems. But, there are no guarantees about what will happen. Psychotherapy requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work on things we discuss outside of sessions.

The first 1-3 sessions will involve a comprehensive evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what our work might include. At that point, we will discuss your treatment goals and create an initial treatment plan. You should evaluate this information and make your own assessment about whether you feel comfortable working with me. 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 set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

APPOINTMENTS

Appointments will ordinarily be 50-55 minutes in duration, once per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be more or less frequent as needed. The time scheduled for your appointment is assigned to you and you alone. If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I ask that you provide me with 24 hour notice. If it is possible, I will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

The standard fee for the initial intake is \$160.00 and each subsequent session is \$140.00. You are responsible for paying at the time of your session unless prior arrangements have been made. If you are not able to afford this fee, I will work with you to come up with an amount you can afford. \$_____ Payment can be made by check, cash or credit card.



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If you anticipate becoming involved in a court case, I recommend that we discuss this fully before you waive your right to confidentiality. If your case requires my participation, you will be expected to pay for the professional time required even if another party compels me to testify.

I am not a participating provider for any insurance plan but can provide you with a receipt of payment for services (**superbill**), which you can submit to your insurance company for reimbursement. Please note that not all insurance companies reimburse for out-of-network providers.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

I am required to keep appropriate records of the psychological services that I provide. Your records are maintained in a secure location in the office. Except in unusual circumstances that involve danger to yourself, you have the right to a copy of your file. Because these are professional records, they may be misinterpreted and / or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, I recommend that you initially review them with me, or request to have them forwarded to another mental health professional to discuss the contents. If I refuse your request for access to your records, you have a right to have my decision reviewed by another mental health professional, which I will discuss with you upon your request.

CONFIDENTIALITY

My policies about confidentiality, as well as other information about your privacy rights, are fully described in a separate document entitled **Notice of Privacy Practices**. I will provide you with a copy of that document upon your request.

PARENTS & MINORS

While privacy in therapy is crucial to successful progress, parental involvement can also be essential. It is my policy not to provide treatment to a child under age 13 unless s/he agrees that I can share whatever information I consider necessary with a parent. Children 14 and older may consent for their own therapy and will receive all rights of confidentiality afforded to them by law.

I request an agreement between the client and the parents allowing me to share general information about treatment progress and attendance, as well as a treatment summary upon completion of therapy. All other communication will require the child's agreement, unless I feel there is a safety concern (see also above section on Confidentiality for exceptions), in which case I will make every effort to notify the child of my intention to disclose information ahead of time and make every effort to handle any objections that are raised.

CONTACTING ME

I am often not immediately available by telephone. I do not answer my phone when I am with clients or otherwise unavailable. At these times, you may leave a message on my confidential voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible, but it may take a day or two for non-urgent matters. If, for any number of unseen reasons, you do not hear from me or I am unable to reach you, and you feel you cannot wait for a return call or if you feel unable to keep yourself safe:

- 1) Call 211 and ask to speak to a Mental Health professional
- 2) Go to your Local Hospital Emergency Room,
- 3) Call 911



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I will make every attempt to inform you in advance of planned absences and provide you with the name and phone number of the mental health professional covering my practice.

OTHER RIGHTS

If you are unhappy with what is happening in therapy, I hope you will talk with me so that I can respond to your concerns. Such comments will be taken seriously and handled with care and respect. You may also request that I refer you to another therapist and are free to end therapy at any time. You have the right to considerate, safe and respectful care, without discrimination as to race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, or source of payment. You have the right to ask questions about any aspects of therapy and about my specific training and experience. You have the right to expect that I will not have social relationships with clients or with former clients.

CONSENT TO PSYCHOTHERAPY

Your signature below indicates that you have read this Agreement and agree to these terms.

Signature of Client or Personal Representative

Printed Name

Date: _____

Description of Personal Representative's Authority: _____
