[Informed Consent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Informed_consent)

Client-Counselor Service Agreement

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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_Insurance_Portability_and_Accountability_Act) (HIPAA), a federal law that provides privacy protections and [patient rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._patients%27_bill_of_rights) about the use and disclosure of your [Protected Health Information](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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.

Counseling is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in counseling, 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 counselor, have corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

 Goals of Counseling

There can be many goals for the counseling relationship. Some of these will be long term goals such as improving the quality of your life, learning to live with mindfulness, and self-actualization. Others may be more immediate goals such as decreasing anxiety and depression symptoms, developing healthy relationships, changing behavior or decreasing/ending drug use. Whatever the goals for counseling, they will be set by you, the client, according to what you want to work on in counseling. The counselor may make suggestions on how to reach that goal but you decide where you want to go.

Risks/Benefits of Counseling

Counseling is an intensely personal process which can bring unpleasant memories or emotions to the surface. There are no guarantees that counseling will work for you. Clients can sometimes make improvements only to go backwards after a time. Progress may happen slowly. Counseling 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.

However, there are many benefits to counseling. Counseling can help you develop coping skills, make behavioral changes, reduce symptoms of mental health disorders, improve the quality of your life, learn to manage anger, learn to live in the present and many other advantages.

 Appointments

Appointments will ordinarily be 60 minutes in duration, once per week at a time mutually agreed upon, 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 hours’ notice. If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel with less than 24 hour notice, you will be required to pay the full session fee [unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control]. Initial here\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to note that you understand this policy and agree. You are responsible for coming to your session on time; if you are late, your appointment will still need to end on time.

 Confidentiality

Your counselor will make every effort to keep your personal information private. If you wish to have information released, you will be required to sign a consent form before such information will be released. There are some limitations to [confidentiality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confidentiality) to which you need to be aware. Your counselor may consult with a supervisor or other professional counselor in order to give you the best service. In the event that your counselor consults with another counselor, no identifying information such as your name would be released. Counselors are required by law to release information when the client poses a risk to themselves or others and in the following cases:

Child Abuse**:** If we know, or have reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the law requires that we report such knowledge or suspicion to the Florida Department of Child and Family Services.

Adult and Domestic Abuse: If we know, or have reasonable cause to suspect, that a vulnerable adult (disabled or elderly) has been or is being abused, neglected, or exploited, we are required by law to immediately report such knowledge or suspicion to the Central Abuse Hotline**.**

Serious Threat to Health or Safety**:** When you present a clear and immediate probability of physical harm to yourself, to other individuals, or to society, we may communicate relevant information concerning this to the potential victim, appropriate family member, or law enforcement or other appropriate authorities.

Health Oversight: If a complaint is filed against your mental health practitioner with the Florida Department of Health on behalf of the Board of Psychology, the Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy & Mental Health Counseling, or Florida Board of Medicine and Nursing, the Department has the authority to subpoena confidential mental health information from the practitioner relevant to that complaint.

Judicial or Administrative Proceedings**:** If you are involved in a court proceeding and a request is made for information about your diagnosis or treatment and the records thereof, such information is privileged under state law, and we will not release information without the written authorization of you or your legal representative, or a subpoena of which you have been properly notified and you have failed to inform us that you are opposing the subpoena or a court order. The privilege does not apply when you are being evaluated for a third party or where the evaluation is court ordered. You will be informed in advance if this is the case.

Worker’s Compensation: If you file a worker's compensation claim, we must, upon request of your employer, the insurance carrier, an authorized qualified rehabilitation provider, or the attorney for the employer or insurance carrier, furnish your relevant records to those persons.

To Family Members, Friends and Others: If you are in an emergency situation involving you or another person (e.g. your minor child) and you cannot consent to your care because you are incapable of doing so or you cannot consent to the other person’s care because, after a reasonable attempt, we have been unable to locate you, we may, based on professional judgment and the surrounding circumstances, determine that disclose is in the best interests of you or the other person. In these emergency situations, your PHI will be disclosed, but only as it pertains to the care being provided and you will be notified of the specific disclosures as soon as possible after the care is completed.

Confidentiality and [Group Therapy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_psychotherapy)

The nature of group counseling makes it difficult to maintain confidentiality. If you choose to participate in group therapy, be aware that your counselor cannot guarantee that other group members will maintain your confidentiality. However, your counselor will make ever effort to maintain your confidentiality by reminding group members frequently of the importance of keeping what is said in group confidential. Your counselor also has the right to remove any group member from the group should she discover that a group member has violated the confidentiality rule.

Confidentiality and Technology

Some clients may choose to use technology in their counseling sessions. This includes but is not limited to online counseling via Skype, telephone, email, text or chat. Due to the nature of online counseling, there is always the possibility that unauthorized persons may attempt to discover your personal information. Your counselor will take every precaution to safeguard your information but cannot guarantee that unauthorized access to electronic communications could not occur. Please be advised to take precautions with regard to authorized and unauthorized access to any technology used in counseling sessions. Be aware of any friends, family members, significant others or co-workers who may have access to your computer, phone or other technology used in your counseling sessions. Should a client have concerns about the safety of their email, your counselor can arrange to encrypt email communication with you.

Record Keeping

Your counselor may keep records of your counseling sessions and a treatment plan which includes goals for your counseling. These records are kept to ensure a direction to your sessions and continuity in service. They will not be shared except with respect to the limits to confidentiality discussed in the Confidentiality section. Should the client wish to have their records released, they are required to sign a release of information which specifies what information is to be released and to whom. Records will be kept for at least 7 years but may be kept for longer. Records will be kept either electronically on a USB flash drive or in a paper file and stored in a locked cabinet in the counselor’s office.

Professional Fees

You are responsible for paying at the time of your session unless prior arrangements have been made. Payment must be made by check, cash, credit card or PayPal. If you cannot make an appointment due to financial hardship please inform me to see if a payment plan would be helpful to you on a temporary basis. If you refuse to pay your debt, I reserve the right to use an attorney or collection agency to secure payment.

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.

Fees are non-negotiable. To receive sliding scale fees, you must present proof of income through recent pay stubs or tax forms. Fees are subject to change at counselor’s discretion.

Fee Schedule

First Session: Intake – $120

Therapy 60 minutes – $85

Therapy 90 minutes – $125

Group Therapy 60-90 minutes –  $45

Sliding Scale

60 minute individual session

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| $30,000 (Yearly) and below |     $65 |
| $30,001 (Yearly) to $50,000 |     $75 |
| $50,001 (Yearly) to $70,000 |     $80 |
| $70,001 (Yearly) to $90,000 |     $85 |
| $90,001 and above |    $85 |

1.5 hour individual session

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| $30,000 (Yearly) and below |     $100 |
| $30,001 (Yearly) to $50,000 |     $110 |
| $50,001 (Yearly) to $70,000 |     $120 |
| $70,001 (Yearly) to $90,000 |     $125 |
| $90,001 (Yearly) and above |     $125 |

1 to 1.5 hour group session

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| $30,000 (Yearly) and below |     $30 |
| $30,001 (Yearly) to $50,000 |     $35 |
| $50,001 (Yearly) to $70,000 |     $40 |
| $70,001 (Yearly) to $90,000 |     $45 |
| $90,001 (Yearly) and above |     $45 |

Insurance

If you have a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. With your permission, I will assist you to the extent possible in filing claims and ascertaining information about your coverage, but you are responsible for knowing your coverage and for letting me know if/when your coverage changes.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize me to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes I have to provide additional clinical information which will become part of the insurance company files. By signing this Agreement, you agree that I can provide requested information to your carrier if you plan to pay with insurance.

In addition, if you plan to use your insurance, authorization from the insurance company may be required before they will cover counseling fees. If you did not obtain authorization and it is required, you may be responsible for full payment of the fee. Many policies leave a percentage of the fee to be covered by the patient. Either amount is to be paid at the time of the visit by check or cash. In addition, some insurance companies also have a deductible, which is an out-of-pocket amount that must be paid by the patient before the insurance companies are willing to begin paying any amount for services.

If I am not a participating provider for your insurance plan, I will supply you with a receipt of payment for services, which you can submit to your insurance company for reimbursement. Please note that not all insurance companies reimburse for out-of-network providers.  If you prefer to use a participating provider, I will refer you to a colleague.

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 you feel you cannot wait for a return call or it is an emergency situation, go to your local hospital or call 911.**

Email

Counselor may request client’s email address. Client has the right to refuse to divulge email address. Counselor may use email addresses to periodically check in with clients who have ended therapy suddenly. Counselor may also use email addresses to send newsletters with valuable therapeutic information such as tips for depression or relaxation techniques. Counselor also has a blog and if this is appropriate for the client, counselor may send information through email about subscribing to the blog or information related to mental health and wellness. If you would like to receive any correspondence through email, please write your email address here  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

If you would like to opt out of email correspondence, please check here \_\_\_\_\_\_ .

Consent to Counseling

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

Client Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_        Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This document goes into effect 02/21/2016

Updated 04/24/2016