

Advanced Health Care

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Informed Consent for Psychological Services

Welcome to our practice and we appreciate the opportunity to be of help to you! This document provides information for new clients that allow you to make an informed decision before proceeding. We welcome any questions you may have and look forward to discussing them with you during our session.

Process of Psychotherapy

The purpose of our work together is to help you live a healthier, happier and more meaningful life. We encourage you to be a proactive part of your treatment. This is achieved through the process of being open and honest about your thoughts, feelings and life experiences; even though at times this may be difficult. Most individuals who engage in psychotherapy benefit from the experience. Therapy can lead to a decrease in distress and negative feelings, an enhanced sense of self, healthier relationships, more positive emotions, resolution of a specific problem, and an overall increase in well-being. It is important to acknowledge that psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Processing your feelings, recalling life experiences, and learning about yourself can be challenging. For some people, this may bring up uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness, anxiety, fear, or anger. These feelings are a normal response to the therapy process and are typically temporary. We will make every effort to identify and discuss each of these situations as they occur and you are encouraged to ask any questions or make suggestions regarding your therapy as we go along.

We will work together to foster self-understanding and growth, to get through difficult times and to help you meet your personal goals. To be successful in therapy requires commitment, motivation, effort, and a desire to change. The work needed in order to see these changes will occur during our sessions, but also in your life between our sessions. Our first few therapy sessions will be used to obtain detailed information, to assess and to make initial impressions as to what our work together might entail. It is important that you evaluate if we are a good match for you as your therapist. It should be someone who you feel connected to and safe with. If you feel that we are not the best match to be working together, we will try and help you find another therapist who may be better able to meet your needs. We take clients that we think we can help and we enter the therapy relationship with optimism about working together. If you have concerns about your progress or the course of therapy, please do not hesitate to discuss this. You may end therapy at any time; however, it is highly recommended that we discuss termination together before therapy ends.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the therapist's obligation to make certain that what is discussed in therapy remains between the therapist and client, except where directed by state or federal law. This means that what you do or say while in therapy, or even the mere fact that you

are in therapy, will not be shared with anyone else without your consent. The purpose of confidentiality is to help you feel safe in discussing any information. The exceptions to confidentiality will be reviewed below and need to be fully understood.

Exceptions to Confidentiality

In accordance with the law, there are some situations in which it is legally necessary to break confidentiality and report information that is obtained through our work together. These include:

- 1) Any serious threat of harm against yourself, in which there is reason to believe that you have the intention, plan, and ability to do so.
- 2) Any serious threat of harm against another person, in which there is reason to believe that you have the intention, plan, and ability to do so.
- 3) Any instances of child, elder, or dependent adult abuse.
- 4) Other circumstances, such as: grave disability, disclosure to insurance companies, worker's compensation claims, managed care and collection agencies, and your involvement in certain litigation processes in which records may be requested by the court. If records are requested, you will be notified, privilege will be claimed on your behalf and only mandated information will be disclosed.

This information must be reported and does not require your permission. We are not required by law to inform you should reporting be necessary, however, our preference during these circumstances is to include you if possible. If we have to report any of the above situations we will support you through these difficult times.

Confidentiality with Children and Adolescents

When working with children or adolescents under the age of eighteen, the law may provide the parents with the right to examine their child's treatment record. However, it is our policy to request an agreement from the parents to give up access to this record, in order to allow for the best possible treatment for their child. We will provide the parents with only general information about our work with their child, unless we feel there is a risk that the child is in danger of hurting themselves or someone else, in which case we will notify the parents of our concern. In most cases, before discussing any information with the parents, we will share with the child what we intend to share with their parents, or involve the child in the process of sharing important information.

Confidentiality in Couples/Marital/Family Treatment

In couples and family treatment, you should be aware that information shared during sessions may be disclosed to the members of the couple/family who are also participating in treatment. A disclosure of this nature may occur when the information is relevant to the treatment in which both parties are participating, and every effort to advise you of the necessity to disclose this information will be made.

In case of Emergency

If there is a serious emergency, or you are feeling unsafe, it is important that you get the immediate help you need by going to a local emergency room, calling 911, or calling the San Diego Crisis Line at 1-800-479-3339. If you are in distress, you may call us. We will

attempt to return your call as soon as possible, although we may not be able to get to your message immediately. In addition, there may be times during our work together in which we become concerned with your personal safety. We may need to contact someone close to you, such as a parent, family member, spouse, or close friend. We will ask you to sign a release of information for an emergency contact to allow us to make this contact if necessary.

Consultation

Based on what we learn about you and your difficulties, we may recommend services such as a medical exam, psychological testing, use of medications, or other treatments. If a recommendation is made, we will discuss the reasons and you may choose what is best for you. If you are receiving services from another professional, we will do our best to coordinate our services with theirs. As caring, trusted and ethical therapists, we cannot treat you if our treatment is not helping you. At that point, we will recommend another professional for you to see. At any time, if you would like to seek the opinion of another therapist or professional, or wish for a different therapist, we will help you find a qualified person.

Dr. Sarah Ray engages in ongoing consultation with Dr. Steven Hirsch, the licensed psychologist under which she works. Dr. Hirsch and Dr. Ray meet in person each week to discuss patients and treatment decisions. He has full access to her client's treatment records, and can review all notes and treatment plans to assist in any changes that might improve the quality of the treatment. In addition, there are also times when we may consult with colleagues in order to better plan your treatment. In these cases, your identity will remain private and the consultant is legally bound to keep the information confidential.

Contact

You may reach us by phone or leave a voicemail at 619-281-6414. If you leave a message, we will return your phone call as soon as possible. We check messages and return phone calls during weekdays. If you call in the evening or on the weekends, every attempt will be made to return your call the following weekday. Occasionally we may be unable to return your call right away, but we will make every effort to call you as soon as possible. It is important that you leave your phone number when you call and that it is a discreet number to protect your confidentiality.

Payment Information

Payment arrangements will be mutually determined at the beginning of therapy. Our standard fee is \$200 for the initial diagnostic interview and \$150 for each session thereafter. If you plan to use your health insurance to help pay for your therapy, please be aware that many companies require information about you. This may include, but is not limited to: diagnosis, symptoms, treatment plan, therapeutic interventions, and response to treatment. Though all insurance companies claim to keep this information confidential, we have no control over what they do with the information once it is in their hands. Please consider this when choosing whether or not to use your insurance. You always have the right to pay for your services directly. In addition, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of fees. It is important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers. Payment (co-payment or private pay) is requested at the time services are provided. In the event that your check is returned

