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General Information and Informed Consent for Psychotherapy

INTRODUCTION

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 you might have so that we can discuss them at our next meeting. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and client, and the particular problems you hope to address. There are many different methods I may use to deal with those problems. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Because therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. However, there are no guarantees as to what you will experience.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions about whether you feel comfortable working with me. At the end of the evaluation, I will notify you if I believe that I am not the right therapist for you and, if so, I will give you referrals to other practitioners whom I believe are better suited to help you.

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 set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

ABOUT YOUR PSYCHOLOGIST

I earned a Master's Degree and a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD) in Clinical Psychology from Fuller Graduate School of Psychology in Pasadena, CA (fully accredited by the American Psychological Association). I completed a Clinical Psychology Internship at the University of Washington School of Medicine under a Rehabilitation Medicine stipend. I then completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Clinical Neuropsychology at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine.

I hold a Washington state license to practice psychology (WA License #1866), which certifies that I have a doctoral degree from an accredited university and have passed a national written examination and an oral examination given by the Washington State Examining Board of Psychology.

In January 2021, I completed a 2-year Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Training Certification led by psychologists Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach. As a psychologist, I continue to learn new concepts, approaches and skills through continuing education.

THERAPEUTIC ORIENTATION

As a clinical psychologist, I provide supportive psychotherapy utilizing an integrative, holistic approach to treatment drawing upon a variety of evidence-based modalities. I work from a strength-based model of therapy and seek to help individuals identify and build on capacities they already have, and to set goals together that support healing and growth.

My goal is to help individuals cope with the stressors of life, to facilitate assisted self-discovery and to help clients build skills to reduce their suffering and engage more fully in life. My focus on a client's self-discovery is rooted in my belief that cultivating a sense of curiosity and compassion towards oneself is necessary to move toward healing and increased well-being. My therapy approach is best described as integrative, drawing largely from client-centered, existential, mindfulness and positive psychology modalities. This means that I use a range of techniques in therapy, applying those techniques that I believe are most suitable to your particular needs at a given time. I may make changes in your treatment over time and/or make referrals to other providers, and your input into these decisions is crucial for the success of our work.

MEETINGS

I normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 2 to 4 sessions. During this time, we can both decide if I am the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If we agree to begin psychotherapy, I will usually schedule one [53-minute] session (one appointment hour of 53 minutes duration) per week, at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be more or less frequent.

LOCATION AND PRACTICE DAYS

As of January 2021, my practice days are on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and I am conducting all therapy sessions via telehealth until further notice. Once it is deemed safe to meet in person, I may begin to offer in-person sessions on Friday. Please note that my decision related to providing

in-person services instead of telehealth will be made by factoring in possible risks for clients and clinician and will be made on a case-by-case basis.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 24-hours [1 day] advance notice of cancellation via phone message, text or email. This policy is not intended to be punitive. It is rare that appointment vacancies that open up with less than 24-hour notice can be filled by others. Therefore, requiring this cancellation policy is important to the viability of my small business.

If you provide less than 24-hour notice, or you do not show up for your appointment, regardless of the reason, you have the following two options: 1) Reschedule later in the day or within a few days of the cancelled appointment; this option is only available if there are openings in my schedule. 2) Pay out-of-pocket for the full price of the session. Client credit card information will be held securely on file and will be used to pay for sessions in which inadequate cancellation notice is provided.

Exceptions to this cancellation policy:

Payment for less than 24-hour notice is not required for the following: 1) up to one cancellation without rescheduling in a calendar year due to acute illness; 2) hazardous weather conditions making it unsafe for you to get to the office.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

My hourly fee is \$165. I offer a limited number of sliding scale appointments based on financial need; however, they are most often filled. If you have a financial hardship, you are welcome to inquire about availability of reduced fee spots.

In addition to weekly appointments, I charge the same hourly rate for other professional services you may need, though I will prorate the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other professional services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 5 minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other service you may request of me. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for any professional time I spend on your legal matter, including preparation and transportation costs, even if the request comes from another party. Because of the difficulty and disruption of legal involvement, I charge \$250 per hour for professional services I am asked or required to perform in relation to your legal matter. I also charge a copying fee of \$1 per page for records requests.

Please note, each year I typically review my rates and may adjust them upward to account for cost-of-living increases.

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when such services are

requested. In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, I may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan.

If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, I have the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. [If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim.] In most collection situations, the only information I would release regarding a client's treatment is their name, the dates, times, and nature of services provided, and the amount due.

INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. As I am an Out-Of-Network Provider, I can provide you with a Superbill at the end of each month so that you can submit it to your insurance provider for whatever possible reimbursement your insurance company might provide. Please remember that you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of my fees. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers. You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services. If you have questions about the coverage, call your plan administrator.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require that I provide them with your clinical diagnosis, along with dates of service, on your Superbill in order for them to reimburse you. This information will become part of the insurance company files. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, I have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. Also please note that I am a Non-Medicare Provider and do not accept payment for services with Medicare monies.

CONTACTING ME

When you call my office phone (206-579-3143), you can leave messages in my confidential voice mailbox. Please keep in mind that I am only in my office on a part-time basis (generally Tues/Th/Fri) and am often not immediately available by telephone. While I am usually in my office between 10 AM and 5 PM, I probably will not answer the phone when I am with a client. When I am unavailable, my telephone receives voice mail that I monitor frequently. I will make every effort to return your call as soon as possible, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform me of some times when you will be available. You may use email (karen@agingwithcreativity.com) for quick administrative issues such as scheduling, but my email is not used to discuss any clinical issues or to provide therapy.

In emergencies, you can try to reach me by phone. However, if you are unable to reach me and feel that you cannot wait for me to return your call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist or psychiatrist on call. **Should you need immediate assistance for your own or someone else's safety, do not delay while waiting for a return call**

from me. Phone the King County Crisis line at 206-461-3222 or (866) 4CRISIS, call 911 or report to the nearest hospital emergency room.

Please note, I periodically take vacation time throughout the year. If I plan on being out of the office, I will give you plenty of advanced notice. If I am scheduled to be out of town, I will arrange for another behavioral health professional to be available for emergencies, and I will provide you with the name /number of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

I am required to keep Protected Health Information about you in your Clinical Record, which I maintain for 8 years and then may destroy. Your records are confidentially maintained and are securely stored upon termination of service. Except in some unusual circumstances, you may review or receive a copy of your Clinical Record if you request it in writing and pay a \$20 clerical fee. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, I suggest that you initially review them in my presence or have them forwarded to another mental health professional so you can discuss the contents.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY

In order to maintain clarity regarding our use of electronic modes of communication during your treatment, I have prepared the following policy. This is because the use of various types of electronic communications is common in our society, and many individuals believe this is the preferred method of communication with others, whether their relationships are social or professional. Many of these common modes of communication; however, put your privacy at risk and can be inconsistent with the law and with the standards of my profession. Consequently, this policy has been prepared to assure the security and confidentiality of your treatment and to assure that it is consistent with ethics and the law. If you have any questions about this policy, please feel free to discuss this with me.

Email Communications

I use email communication and text messaging only with your permission and only for administrative purposes unless we have made another agreement. That means that email exchanges and text messages with my office should be limited to things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters and other related issues. Please do not email me about clinical matters because email is not a secure way to contact me. If you need to discuss a clinical matter with me, please feel free to call me so we can discuss it on the phone or wait so we can discuss it during your therapy session. The telephone or face-to-face context simply is much more secure as a mode of communication.

Text Messaging

Because text messaging is a very insecure and impersonal mode of communication, I do not text message nor do I respond to text messages from anyone in treatment with me. So, please do not text message me unless we have made other arrangements.

Social Media

I do not communicate with, or contact, any of my clients through social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. In addition, if I discover that I have accidentally established an online relationship

with you, I will cancel that relationship. This is because these types of casual social contacts can create significant security risks for you.

I may participate on various social networks, but not in my professional capacity. If you have an online presence, there is a possibility that you may encounter me by accident. If that occurs, please discuss it with me during our time together. I believe that any communications with clients online have a high potential to compromise the professional relationship. In addition, please do not try to contact me in this way. I will not respond and will terminate any online contact no matter how accidental.

Websites

I have a website that you are free to access. I use it for professional reasons to provide information to others about me and my practice. You are welcome to access and review the information that I have on my website and, if you have questions about it, we should discuss this during your therapy sessions.

Web Searches

I will not use web searches to gather information about you without your permission. I believe that this violates your privacy rights; however, I understand that you might choose to gather information about me in this way. In this day and age, there is an incredible amount of information available about individuals on the internet, much of which may actually be known to that person and some of which may be inaccurate or unknown. If you encounter any information about me through web searches, or in any other fashion for that matter, please discuss this with me during our time together so that we can deal with it and its potential impact on your treatment.

Recently it has become fashionable for clients to review their health care provider on various websites. Unfortunately, mental health professionals cannot respond to such comments and related errors because of confidentiality restrictions. If you encounter such reviews of me or any professional with whom you are working, please share it with me so we can discuss it and its potential impact on your therapy. Please do not rate my work with you while we are in treatment together on any of these websites. This is because it has a significant potential to damage our ability to work together.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, the privacy of all communications between a client and a psychologist is protected by law, and I can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. But there are a few exceptions.

In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent me from providing any information about your treatment. In some legal proceedings, a judge may order my testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it, and I must comply with that court order.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if I have to reveal some information about a client's treatment. For example, if I believe that a child, elderly person or disabled person is being abused or has been abused, I must make a report to the appropriate state agency.

