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CONFIDENTIALITY

Privacy of Information Shared in Psychotherapy

What to Expect with Confidentiality:

The purpose of meeting with a therapist is to get help with problems in your life that are bothering you or that are keeping you from being successful in important areas of your life. You may be here because you wanted to talk to a therapist about these problems. Or, you may be here because your family member, partner, doctor, or employer has concerns about you. When you meet with me as your therapist, you will discuss these problems. I will ask questions, listen to you and suggest a plan for improving these problems. It is important that you feel comfortable talking to me about the issues that are bothering you. Sometimes these issues will include things you don't want your loved ones, guardian, or partner to know about. For most people, knowing that what they say will be kept private helps them feel more comfortable and have more trust in their therapist. As a general rule, I will keep the information you share in sessions confidential, unless I have your written or verbal consent to disclose certain information, or the issues are serious enough that clinical judgment requires notification to emergency services or guardian in order to ensure safety and wellbeing. In addition, there are legal exceptions to this rule that are important for you to understand before you share personal information in a therapy session. In some situations, I am required by law or by the guidelines of my profession to disclose information whether or not I have your permission. Listed below are some of these situations.

Confidentiality Cannot Be Maintained When:

- You tell me you plan to cause serious harm or death to yourself, and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. I must take steps to inform a legal authority and/or guardian of what you have told me and how serious I believe this threat to be. I must make sure that you are protected from harming yourself.
- You tell me you plan to cause serious harm or death to someone else who can be identified, and I believe you have the intent and ability to carry out this threat in the very near future. In this situation, I must inform a legal authority and/or guardian, and I must inform the person who you intend to harm.
- You are doing things that could cause serious harm to you or someone else, even if you do not *intend* to harm yourself or another person. In these situations, I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether a legal authority should be informed.
- You tell me you are being abused-physically, sexually or emotionally, or that you have been abused in the past. In this situation, I am required by law to report the abuse to the local authorities (there may be some exceptions if it has already been reported by another mandated reporter).
- You are involved in a court case and a request is made for information about your counseling or therapy. If this happens, I will not disclose information without your written agreement *unless* the court requires me to do so. I will do all I can within the law to protect your confidentiality, and if I am required to disclose information to the court, I will inform you that this is happening.
- Your services are being paid by a third party, such as your health insurance plan. I will be required to provide the third party with dates of service and billing amount in order to process payment. For health insurance plans, it is also required that I provide a diagnosis. Your insurance plan may also request your medical records to verify justification of services.

For Minors or Conserved Adults: Communicating with your guardian(s):

Except for situations such as those mentioned above, I will not tell your guardian specific things you share in private therapy sessions. This includes activities and behavior that your guardian would not approve of, or would be upset by, but that do not put you at risk of serious and immediate harm. However, if your risk-taking behavior becomes more serious, then I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether you are in serious and immediate danger of being harmed. If I feel that you are in such danger, I will communicate this information to your guardian. You should also know that, by law in California, your guardian has the right to see any written records I keep about our sessions.

Communicating with Other Services:

Sometimes another of your health care providers and I may need to work together; for example, if you need to take medication in addition to seeing a therapist. I will get your written permission (and permission from guardian, if needed) in advance to share information with your health care provider. I may need to communicate and share information with your health care provider, even if he/she does not have your written authorization, in cases where there is serious threat of self-harm.

Signing below indicates that you have reviewed the policies described above and understand the limits to confidentiality. If you have any questions, you can ask me at any time.

Client Name: _____

Client Signature: _____

Date: _____

Legal Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____