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INFORMED CONSENT REGARDING OUT-PATIENT INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

Alaska law requires that psychotherapy clients be provided with information to allow them to make informed decisions regarding participation in psychotherapy, including an understanding of the issues related to risks and benefits of psychotherapy, medical concerns, confidentiality, and length of psychotherapy, fee for psychotherapy, emergencies, and obligations of adult psychotherapy clients. Ask your therapist any questions that you may have. As these issues are understood, please initial in the places provided.

Risks and Benefits of Psychotherapy

Most people considering psychotherapy are experiencing psychological problems that cause internal distress and or/problems in relationships. The goal of psychotherapy is reduction of such problems. However, some individuals experience an exacerbation of problems of different problems in the course of psychotherapy.

These problems can include flooding of emotions, intrusive thoughts, anxiety, flashbacks, nightmares, panic attacks, self-destructive or angry impulses, depression, suicidality, numbing dissociations, and feelings of disorganization. In some cases, people have difficulty maintaining employment or academic studies, problems in social and family relationships, or require hospital care.

Psychotherapy clients benefit from having a strong support system, including family, friends, 12-step, self-help, and support groups, religious affiliations, group therapy, medication, and enjoyable, enriching, and expressive activities, such as art, writing, music, exercise, etc. A stable support system is particularly helpful when dealing with difficult material and feelings. Your therapist will provide referrals to help develop a support system at your request.

In most cases, therapy eventually improves a client's sense of well-being and one's relationships. In some cases, people obtain little or no benefit from therapy, or become worse. It is not always possible to predict the outcome for an individual. Given this knowledge, the decisions to participate in therapy and to terminate therapy are personal ones. These decisions may be evaluated with one's therapist. Clients may also obtain independent consultation for a second opinion at any time.

Initial here if this section has been read and understood. _____

Medical Concerns

Your therapist is not a medical doctor and can therefore not recognize or diagnose medical conditions. It is essential that you obtain a medical examination to determine any medical origin of your psychological problems, e.g., neurological, genetic, glucose, and insulin imbalances, effects of toxins, infectious disease, gastrointestinal disorders, medication side effects, etc.

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Confidentiality: Psychotherapy is confidential, with important exceptions:

1. Information may be released to designated parties by written authorization of clients or legal guardians.
2. Therapists are required to report suspected past or present abuse or neglect of children, adults, and elders, to the authorities, including Child protection and law enforcement, based on information provided by the client or collateral sources.
3. If clients participate in psychotherapy in compliance with a court order, therapists are required to release information to the relevant court, social service, or probation departments.
4. Therapists are required to release information obtained from clients or from collateral sources (other individuals involved in a client's psychotherapy, such as parents, guardians, spouses) to appropriate authorities to the extent to which such disclosure may help to avert danger to a psychotherapy client or to others, e.g.; imminent risk of suicide, homicide, or destruction of property that could endanger others.
5. When clients seek reimbursement for psychotherapy from insurance companies or other third parties, information, including psychological diagnoses, and in many cases, explanations of symptoms and treatment plans, and in rare cases, entire client records, must be provided to the third party. If health coverage is provided by an employer, the employer may have access to such information. Insurance companies usually claim to keep psychological diagnoses confidential, but may enter this information into national medical information databanks, where it may be accessed by employers, insurance companies, etc., and may limit future access to disability insurance, life insurance, jobs, etc. Your therapist will provide you with copies of reports submitted to insurance companies at your request.
6. Others involved in a client's therapy are not therapy clients and have no therapist-client confidentiality.
7. Therapists are required to provide information in response to court orders and, in some cases, to subpoenas. In some kind of proceedings, courts order the entire psychotherapy record to be provided.
8. Therapists often consult with other professionals on cases, and teach or write about the psychotherapy process, but disguise identifying information when doing so. Please indicate to your therapist if you wish to place restrictions on consultation, teaching, or writing related to your case.
9. Psychotherapists reserve the right to release financial information to a collections agency, attorney, or small claims court, if you are delinquent on paying your bill.

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Professional Records

Psychotherapy laws and ethics require that Alaska licensed therapists keep treatment records. Professional records can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. You are entitled to receive a copy of these records unless your therapist believes that seeing them would be emotionally damaging, in which case your therapist will review them together with you or will send them to a mental health professional of your choice to allow you to discuss the contents. Clients will be charged copying costs plus \$2.00 a minute for professional time spent responding to information requests.

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Alternative Treatments

Other treatment approaches are available as an alternative, or as an adjunct, to individual psychotherapy. These include group therapy, support, self-help, and 12-step groups, medication, expressive therapies (e.g., art, writing, psychodrama), cognitive therapy, behavior modification, and guided imagery.

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Length of Psychotherapy

Some psychological problems can be alleviated in a few sessions. Other problems require years of treatment. It is often difficult to predict the length of therapy needed. Some disorders can not be properly treated within the limitations of some health insurance policies. Generally, hospitalization should be as brief as possible to limit disruptions to one’s life.

The decision to terminate therapy belongs to the client, although one may evaluate this with one’s therapist. It is critical that you have a final psychotherapy session before terminating therapy. If your therapist believes you need further therapy, your therapist will provide referrals to other therapists or you may choose to continue therapy with your current therapist.

Some managed health care plans provide benefits for only a time-limited course of psychotherapy. Some companies have contracts with therapists that prohibit clients to remain in therapy with a therapist beyond the designated time-frame. If your therapist believes you need further psychotherapy after this period, your therapist will provide referrals to another therapist with who you can continue treatment.

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Therapy Fees

Psychotherapy sessions: \$230.00 for Initial Assessment, \$140.00 per Individual 50 minute session, including any time missed by being late. \$115.00 per 30 minute session. \$210.00 for 75 minute session. \$165.00 for 50 minute Family Therapy session. \$50.00 for Group and Multi-Group Therapy session. Phone calls exceeding 5 minutes once a week: \$2.00 per minutes. Letters and reports: \$150.00 per hour. Testimony, court appearance, and preparation of written documents, meetings, phone consultations, in legal proceedings initiated by you or others relating to your case: \$150.00 per hour. I understand that payment is due at the end of each session. I agree to cooperate with procedures required to collect third-party payments. If I receive a third-party payment, I agree to turn it over to my therapist as soon as possible.

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Emergencies

I may telephone my therapist in an emergency. My therapist is not always immediately available by phone and may not be available in the late evening. If unavailable, my therapist will return my call as soon as possible. If I cannot reach my therapist, I can call the 24-hour Crisis Team at 907-563-3200. When my therapist is out of town, and if I am not seeing another mental health professional, such as a psychiatrist, my therapist will provide me with phone numbers of alternate sources of help.

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Cancellations

Missed appointments (cancellations with less than 24 hours notice, unless there is a medical emergency) will be charged a no-show fee of \$140.00. If I miss more than two scheduled appointments without 24 hour notice I will have voluntarily terminated this contract and understand no further appointments will be scheduled.

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Obligations of Adult Psychotherapy Clients

I understand that I must be open and honest with my therapist, even if doing so is painful or embarrassing. Lack of complete openness strips therapy of its meaning and exacerbates psychological problems, such as dissociations and denial. Therapists usually cannot tell when clients deliberately conceal things. Therapists can only help clients to the extent that they are provided with the whole truth. The desire to get well and function well can only come from the client. Therapists can help clients slowly overcome feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, but progress is more affected by client motivation than any other factor. I understand that doing therapy homework can often facilitate recovery. Painful emotions and memories of painful experiences press for expression. Avoidance of these issues cannot make them go away. Therapists cannot magically erase the anxiety and pain related to such issues, but can provide tools that may help reduce the intensity of the work. If I sense that I am resisting to dealing with particular issues, I should discuss my resistance with my therapist and try to overcome it.

I agree to inform my therapist of any plans of self-harm, suicide, homicide, or destruction of property that could endanger others and I agree to honor contracts with my therapist in these matters.

I understand that misunderstandings can occur between me and my therapist. I also understand that I may develop troublesome feelings toward my therapist, such as fear or anger. Any of these problems can interfere with treatment. Therefore, if these problems occur, I agree to discuss them openly with my therapist in order to attempt to resolve any problems or plan to terminate therapy.

I agree to respect my therapist's private and professional life and not make excessive demands on my therapist or his or her time. A therapist is a guide, not a friend. I must maintain my own support network.

I understand that misrepresenting my therapist's statements or actions to other people is potentially harmful to both my own well-being and to my therapist's professional reputation and agree not to engage in any such misrepresentation.

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Psychotherapy Contract for Adult Clients

I have read the above information, have asked questions as needed, and understand the issues related to the risks and benefits of psychotherapy, medical concerns, confidentiality, professional records, length of psychotherapy, fee for psychotherapy, emergencies, and the obligations of psychotherapy clients.

Based on my understanding of these issues, I agree to proceed with treatment.

Initial here if this section has been read and understood_____

Print Name

Signature

Date

Therapist signature and credentials
New Directions Counseling Corp.

Date