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Office Policies and Informed Consent for Treatment 2023

The therapeutic relationship is unique in that it is a highly personal and at the same time, a contractual agreement. Given this, it is important for us to reach a clear understanding about how our relationship will work, and what each of us can expect. This consent will provide a clear framework for our work together. Feel free to discuss any of this with me. Please read and indicate that you have reviewed this information and agree to it by filling in the checkbox at the end of this document.

The Therapeutic Process

You have taken a very positive step by deciding to seek therapy. The outcome of your treatment depends largely on your willingness to engage in this process, which may, at times, result in considerable discomfort. Remembering unpleasant events and becoming aware of feelings attached to those events can bring on strong feelings of anger, depression, anxiety, etc. There are no miracle cures. I cannot promise that your behavior or circumstance will change. I can promise to support you and do my very best to understand you and repeating patterns, as well as to help you clarify what it is that you want for yourself.

Session Length, Fees, & Method of Payment

I have two options for length of sessions, and other arrangements may be made as needed. For couples, a 50-minute session is \$200 and an 80-minute session is \$280. Payment is due at the time of service. I accept cash, checks, and credit cards.

If your finances are interfering with your access to therapy, I encourage you to talk to me to discuss options. If my sliding-scale spots are currently full, I can put you on a waitlist for future fee reductions.

Cancellations

Since the scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, a minimum of 24 hours notice is required for re-scheduling or canceling an appointment. Unless we reach a different agreement, you will be charged 50% of your regular fee for sessions missed without such notification.

Use of Diagnosis & Insurance

I am not currently accepting insurance as payment. Please inquire directly with your insurance company or flexible-spending plan to see if you can be reimbursed for sessions with a receipt.

If your health insurance does reimburse you, most will require a diagnosis of a mental-health condition. Some conditions for which people seek counseling do not qualify for reimbursement. If a qualifying diagnosis is appropriate in your case, I will inform you of the diagnosis and discuss it with you before I issue a receipt for you to give to the health insurance company. Any diagnosis made will become part of your permanent insurance records.

Confidentiality & Mandated Reporting

Information shared in a counseling session is kept strictly confidential. By law, confidentiality is not protected in circumstances which are life-threatening to you or another person or when vulnerable persons, such as children or elderly adults, are at risk.

Specifically, disclosure is required by law under the following circumstances:

- There is reasonable suspicion of child, elder (65 and older) or dependent adult abuse or neglect.
- The client presents a serious danger to self, to others, to property, or is gravely disabled, or when client's family members communicate to me that the client presents a danger to others.
- There is a court order legally requiring information obtained in the course of therapy to be revealed
- An authorized federal official is conducting a national security investigation or providing protective services to the president or other important official. By law I may not reveal when I have disclosed such information to the government.

If you have any concerns about what is safe to talk about within counseling, please let me know. I make every effort to ensure that clients that are recovering from abuse cycles have a safe place to seek help.

Confidentiality & Consultation

In my efforts to provide you the best possible counseling experience, I engage in monthly consultation with professional colleagues and may occasionally seek the advice of other mental health professionals. If I seek consultation for matters involving our work together, all information will be presented in a manner which protects your identity.

Communication in Therapy

If at any time during counseling you have questions about the effectiveness of the process, feelings about something I have said or suggested, or need clarification of our goals, please do not hesitate to bring this up in session. Sometimes these discussions are powerful turning points within therapy.

At any time you may initiate a discussion of positive or negative effects of entering, not entering, continuing or discontinuing therapy, or decreasing or increasing the frequency of visits.

I generally defer to your wisdom for when you feel complete with the therapy process and/or when you feel a break is needed. If you decide you would like to end therapy, please discuss this with me in

person. When possible, I suggest allowing additional sessions between when you let me know you will be ending and your final session. This allows time for the organic process of closure.

My Education, Credentials, and Background

- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, North Carolina, #1647
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, California, #47600
- MA, Counseling Psychology, from John F. Kennedy University in California, received in 2004.

I have been working directly with adult individuals, couples and groups as a therapist since 2002. I have received specialized training in trauma work, somatic psychotherapy, and mindfulness-based therapy. I am passionate about the work I do and strive to continually grow as a therapist and a person.

I invite you to view my counseling experience in more detail on LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/in/sheffaariensmft/