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INFORMED CONSENT

Welcome to Choosing You. I, Lacey Morris, MA, look forward to working with you. 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 therapist and patient, 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. But, 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.

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 [50-minute] session (one appointment hour of 50 minutes duration) per week, at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent. Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for it unless you provide 48 hours advance notice of cancellation (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control). If it is possible, I will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.

If we decide to meet on a regular basis, I would ask that we make an agreement to have at least one session to have final closure and discuss the end of work. Therapy is an experience laden with meaning; it is important to me that we practice appropriate endings and saying goodbye. To stop talking or working together in between meetings without a discussion would be a disservice to you.

Along those lines, I welcome your thoughts and ideas about how our work together is progressing – both the positive aspects and especially any ways that our time could be more helpful to you. It is important that therapy allow for discussions of all aspects of our communication.

PROFESSIONAL FEES

My hourly fee is \$150, but currently am offering teletherapy rates at \$75 an hour. If we meet more than the usual time, I will charge accordingly. In addition to weekly appointments, I charge this 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 ten 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.

BILLING AND PAYMENTS

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage that requires another arrangement. As of now Venmo or Paypal is an option to pay for telehealth services. 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 will release regarding a patient's treatment is his/her name, the dates, times, and nature of services provided, and the amount due.

however, 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 understand the mental health coverage of your insurance plan before beginning treatment. If you have questions about the coverage, call your plan administrator. Of course, I will provide you with whatever information I can based on my experience and will be happy to help you in understanding the information you receive from your insurance company.

CONTACTING ME

I am often not immediately available by telephone. My telephone is answered by voice mail that I monitor frequently. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform me of some times when you will be available. 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. If I will be unavailable for an extended time, I will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

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. Sensitive, clinical information is generally to be discussed over the phone or in-person and not over electronic communication. I will do my best to respond to your e-mail or text communication within 24 hours.

Potential risks of using electronic communication may include, but are not limited to; inadvertent sending of an e-mail or text containing confidential information to the wrong recipient, theft or loss of the computer, laptop or mobile device storing confidential information, and interception by an unauthorized third party through an unsecured network. E-mail messages may contain viruses or other defects and it is your responsibility to ensure that it is virus-free. In addition, e-mail or text communication may become part of the clinical record. You may be charged for time I spend reading and responding e-mail or text messages if the process takes more than ten minutes.

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 and much more accurate to communicate important information.

Text Messaging

Text messaging is a very unsecure and impersonal mode of communication, and yet a very convenient way to quickly exchange information. I will reply to brief text messages (which like emails focus on scheduling appointments more than anything else) as I am able. Do know that this is a very insecure mode of communication that may result in your identity being displayed on the front of my cell phone and that it may result in a loss of your privacy.

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 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.

Web Searches

I will generally 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.

CONFIDENTIALITY FOR ADULTS

In general, law protects the privacy of all communications between a patient and a therapist, 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 patient'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.

If I believe that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient. If the patient threatens to harm himself/herself, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection. If a similar situation occurs in the course of our work together, I will attempt to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

If you are asking me to assist you with couples counseling or other sessions with someone else in the room in addition to yourself, there are complications around confidentiality. I will not disclose confidential information about your treatment unless all person(s) who participated in the treatment with you provide their written authorization to release such information. Additionally, I utilize a "No Secrets Policy" which means that in couples or family therapy, I am permitted to use information obtained in an individual session with the couple. Thus, if one person reveals a secret to me in an individual session, I retain the right to share that information with the other partner if I deem that appropriate for our work together. This is not a decision I take lightly, but it is an important part of sharing honestly and working towards mutual growth.

I may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my patient. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. Ordinarily, I will not tell you about these consultations unless I believe that it is important to our work together.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.

PATIENT SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

PATIENT SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____