



## OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT

This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

### **Psychological Services**

Psychotherapy has been shown to result in many benefits, including reduced feelings of distress, solutions to specific concerns, enhanced relationships, and increased well-being, resilience and fulfillment. Since treatment often involves discussing unpleasant, hurtful or painful aspects of one's life, feelings such as sadness, guilt, anger, frustration or helplessness will often appear in treatment. This is an important part of the work. The most important part of treatment is our commitment to provide you with the best care while supporting you and the goals of the treatment. The ongoing relationship with the therapist can assist you with any questions and concerns you have about your feelings and treatment.

When working with adults we first meet for the Evaluation phase. During the evaluation, the treatment provider gathers information about the client and family's history. At the end of the evaluation, the therapist will suggest the type of treatment that is best suited for your needs. With children and adolescents, the evaluation includes meetings with the parents and the children. The parent/guardian will collaborate with the therapist and decide if they both agree that there will be a good fit between client and therapist.

Following the evaluation, treatment sessions and/or parent guidance sessions will both be scheduled for 45-minute sessions. Out of respect to our clients, we make every effort to begin and end on time so that clients are not left wondering when the start and stop times are, and the following clients are not having to wait or lose any of their treatment time. There are, of course, exceptions, such as a serious crisis. If

your doubts persist, your therapist will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

## **Meetings**

Most people find that it is preferable for them to set up a time (or times) to meet that will be the same each week. Setting up a regular psychotherapy appointment time is particularly convenient when people have very busy schedules. You can be assured that your appointment will be at a time you prefer. Your regular appointment time will not be available for anyone else to schedule. In addition to convenience, most people like to know that there is a time that is for them that they can count on each week to obtain support and assistance. They can feel certain that their therapist will be available to them at this point every week, without having to wonder what the schedule will be like. Of course, you are under no obligation to continue this regular time, and can discontinue it at any point. You can also request that we change your regular time if your schedule changes and your regular time no longer works.

## **Rescheduling Appointments**

When you need to reschedule an appointment, if you call prior to the beginning of your appointment time you can arrange to set up another time during the same week (Monday through Friday) if there are available openings, and you will be charged only for the rescheduled time.

## **Canceling Appointments**

If you need to cancel a scheduled appointment, either a time scheduled on a regular basis or on a week to week basis, you will be responsible for the appointment fee unless you reschedule your appointment (as described earlier), have your session by phone, or provide at least 48 hours advance notice. You should be aware that most insurance plans will not reimburse patients for fees for cancelled appointments or phone sessions. By signing the Outpatient Services Contract you have agreed to any missed or late cancelled appointment fees.

## **Professional Fees**

Our fees at Inner Life Psychological Services range from \$150 to \$200. After discussion with your therapist, you will decide whether to pay at the start of each session or be billed monthly. Currently, we accept Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO plans. Please check with your insurance to make sure that we are in your specific

network. We are not in network with any HMOs.

For those of you with other insurance, we are happy to submit on your behalf. It is important to know what your out of network benefits are. Some policies are wonderful and others offer very little. If you have an unfriendly policy, we will work with you on reimbursement and payments. Keep in mind that you are responsible for the payments.

At this time, we accept cash, checks, Chase QuickPay, Visa and MasterCard for services. Please make all checks payable to: Inner Life Psychological Services. Payments are to be received by the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month. For every 30 days past due, a fee of \$50 will be added to your invoice. 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 to be released regarding a patient's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

### **Contacting Your Therapist Outside of Your Scheduled Visit**

Our team of therapists has a variety of office hours and availability. They are often not immediately available by telephone. Your therapist will make every effort to return your call within 24 hours from the time you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform your therapist of some times when you will be available. In emergencies, or if you are unable to reach your therapist and feel that you can't wait for them to return your call, contact your family physician or go to the nearest emergency room. Phone calls lasting more than 5 minutes may result in a fee like a scheduled session.

### **Professional Records**

The laws and standards of my profession require that clinical treatment records are kept. You are entitled to receive a copy of your records if you request it in writing, or your therapist can prepare a summary for you instead. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. If you wish to see your records, I recommend that you review them in the presence of your therapist so that you can discuss the contents. Patients will be charged an appropriate fee for any professional time spent in responding to information requests. You will be charged a statutory fee.

## **Minors**

Patients under 12 years of age and their parents should be aware that the law allows parents to examine their child's treatment records. When children between the ages of 12 and 18 are seen alone the content of these sessions is kept confidential, between therapist and child. Parents of children between 12 and 18 years of age cannot examine their child's records unless their child consents or unless I find there is no compelling reason for denying them access to those records. Parents of children between 12 and 18 years of age are entitled to information concerning their child's current physical and mental condition, diagnosis, treatment needs, services provided and services needed. If I believe that the child is at imminent risk of harming himself/herself or others. I will notify the parents of my concern. Before giving parents any information, I will discuss the matter with the child, if possible, and do my best to handle any objections the child may have with what I am prepared to discuss with the parents. My policy is that both parents be notified that their child is in therapy and both parents consent to therapy for the child.

We take the confidentiality of a child's record very seriously. Without confidentiality, children have a difficult time trusting which can interfere with the building of the therapeutic relationship and the child's treatment. This protects the client-therapist relationship and allows for the child to feel that the therapy is a safe place.

## **Confidentiality**

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist or social worker is protected by law, and we 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 your therapist from providing any information about your treatment. In some proceedings involving child custody and those in which your mental health condition is an issue, a judge may order your therapist's testimony and/or disclosure of your clinical treatment records if he/she determines that the issues demand it.

There are some situations in which your therapist is legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if they have to reveal some information about a patient's treatment. For example, if one believes that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused by someone in a caretaking role, the therapist must file a report with the appropriate state agency.

If your therapist believes that a patient is threatening imminent serious bodily harm to another, they are 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 imminently harm himself/herself, the therapist may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

These situations rarely occur. If a similar situation occurs, your therapist will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have at our next meeting. I will be happy to discuss these issues with you if you need specific advice, but formal legal advice may be needed because the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex, and I am not an attorney.

## **Questions**

If during the course of your therapy, you have any questions about the nature of your therapy or about your billing statement, please ask.

Please ask before signing below if you have any questions about psychotherapy or our office policies. Your signature indicates that you have read the Outpatient Services Contract and agree to enter therapy under these conditions. Your signature below indicates that you are making an informed choice to consent to therapy and understand and accept the terms of this agreement.