

INFORMED CONSENT FOR SERVICES

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It is very important for you to be fully and honestly informed about the nature of your problems and the kind of assistance that I can offer. This form provides that information so that you can freely and knowingly choose to work with me. Please take the time to read all of it. IT IS IMPORTANT.

The Nature of Your Problems

You are asking for help in dealing with something distressing in your life. Let me assure you that the distress is not a sign of illness or any other type of defect in your brain or mind, despite what the orthodox mental health system claims. There is no scientific evidence that these distressing problems are caused by chemical imbalances in the brain, genetic anomalies, or any other commonly understood disease processes. The terms “mental illness” and “mental health” are figurative and not literal language. This is similar to how “spring fever” is figurative and while it describes a real problem, it isn’t a literal fever.

About Me

I was trained in clinical psychology and awarded a Ph.D. from the Florida State University in 1995 after having completed the doctoral course work, dissertation requirements, and a follow-on residency program at Malcolm Grow Medical Center at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. This program is fully accredited by the American Psychological Association. I have been licensed to practice psychology in Maryland since 1997. My license number is MD3372. I am also a 20-year veteran of the U.S. military.

Early in my training and education I became disillusioned with the “medical model” of the orthodox mental health system. In applying critical thinking and the scientific method to this system, I discovered no evidence supporting the notion that the distressing experiences we face in life have anything to do with true disease or illness, as commonly defined. Of course, things like chronic worry and impulsive behaviors can lead to illnesses and bodily damage, such as ulcers and accidental injuries. However, the chronic worry and the impulsive behaviors themselves are not illnesses, any more than are other human actions that can result in bodily harm, such as playing football or choosing to eat unhealthy foods. Therefore, it is unwarranted to use a medical approach when attempting to help you with these distressing problems and life choices.

How I Can Help

I offer assistance to you in addressing the problems you identify. The process is one where we have an extended series of conversations about what is distressing in your life and how your thoughts, actions, and language contribute to the distress. We will also identify areas where you might be willing to make difficult changes in order to reduce the distress in the long term. Keep in mind that working with me to address your problems can be emotionally painful at times, even if the end goal is to enhance your contentment in life. While I might “push” you into emotionally charged topics, you always retain control of the process and can slow down or stop whenever you choose.

I will not participate in any type of coerced work. In other words, if you are ordered by a court, required by an employer, demanded by a spouse, or compelled by any other person to seek out my services, I must ensure that you are freely choosing to do so for your own reasons, not theirs. This means you must have a genuine, ongoing, and keen interest in exploring your experience of and responses to life in order to make difficult changes in a way you deem valuable, not what they deem valuable.

I recommend you see your medical doctor for a complete physical in order to make sure there are no true bodily malfunctions, such as hypothyroidism, vitamin deficiencies, and Lyme's disease, that you might experience as emotional distress. I also recommend you get plenty of sleep, eat well, and exercise. Problems in these three areas can also negatively affect your sense of wellbeing.

Confidentiality

I use a secure and encrypted virtual system for our work together. All information about you will be appropriately safeguarded and not released to anyone without your written permission. There are exceptions to this: 1) If I have reason to believe a child or vulnerable adult has been, is being, or is about to be abused or neglected, I must report it to the appropriate authorities; 2) If I have reason to believe you are at imminent risk of suicide or violence toward other people, I am permitted to disclose your information to people who can help in preventing that harm; 3) If I receive a court order to release your information, I must comply (I will refuse to release information in response to a subpoena only). Just the limited information that is necessary for each specific purpose above will be released.

Insurance Coverage

If you choose to use your health insurance benefits to pay for my services, they require me to diagnose you with a "mental disorder" contained in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* (5th Edition). Alarmingly, senior authorities in the field admit the *DSM* is scientifically invalid and unreliable, yet they refuse to provide ethical guidance about an alternative way to classify human distress for the purpose of filing insurance claims. So, the *DSM* continues to be the only method of providing that required diagnosis to your insurance company.

Be aware that a *DSM* diagnosis documented in your records can harm you. It can potentially jeopardize your eligibility for certain kinds of employment, security clearances, military service, health/life insurance coverage, probation and parole actions, and adoption/parenting rights. It can also negatively affect your self-esteem, as it is commonly, but erroneously, thought to reflect something inherently wrong with you. Further, the lack of scientific foundation for the *DSM* makes the difference between specific diagnoses, for instance, between "adjustment disorder with anxiety" and "post-traumatic stress disorder," scientifically meaningless. Some diagnoses can be more harmful to you than others because they falsely imply more serious and entrenched disease processes.

Cost to You

My fee is \$150 an hour. I do not bill for my services.

Please pay at the time the services are rendered. If you use your insurance, the cost to you will depend on the specifics of your plan regarding copays, coinsurance, and deductibles. I will maintain your credit card on file to process your portion of the payment each time we meet. I use a system that complies with federal laws protecting the information. I will submit a claim to your insurance company for the

remainder of my fee. If you have an insurance plan other than BCBS/CareFirst that provides “out of network” benefits, you will pay my fee up front, and I will provide you with the documents needed for you to file with your insurance company in order to be reimbursed.

If you fail to show for an appointment or fail to give me at least 24 hours’ notice of a cancellation, you will be assessed a \$100 fee (insurance will not pay this). Obviously, I will not assess this missed appointment/late cancellation fee if you have an emergency.

Mental Disability/Insanity

I do not provide opinions about mental disability or insanity, including formal assessments for social, financial, legal, or academic purposes. There are three reasons for this. First, decades of research have failed to provide evidence that mental disorders are literally disabling or otherwise take away your ability to choose certain actions. Second, in order to provide such an opinion, I would be required to diagnose you with a mental disorder, and that diagnosis in your records can potentially harm you as explained above. Third, in order to make such a disability determination, I would have to be comprehensive and objective, and be willing to rule for *or against* you, which I can’t ethically do as your psychotherapist, as it could damage our therapeutic relationship.

Contacting Me

You are welcome to contact me via my website, email, text, or phone call. However, be aware that I might not be able to reply quickly. I will try to return all contacts within one business day. If you have a life-threatening emergency, do not contact me first. Instead, contact your nearest emergency room or call 911. If you do, please let me know after you’ve contacted emergency services.

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Name – by entering your name, you are acknowledging that you have read this form, understand its contents, and fully consent to working with me.

Date