

## CONSENT TO PSYCHOTHERAPY AGREEMENT

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Psychotherapy is not a guarantee or a cure. Its effectiveness depends on the relationship between the patient and therapist. The client/counselor relationship is unique, intimate, highly personal, and at the same time, a contract. As such, it is important that both parties have a clear understanding and agreement about the responsibilities and obligations involved. This written agreement is an effort to make such considerations clear.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Your presence and all that is discussed in session or during the course of phone conversations is held in strict confidence. No information will be given out without prior expressed written consent from the client. The therapist is required by law to disclose otherwise confidential information to the appropriate authorities when; 1) the therapist hears of or suspects child abuse, elder abuse, or dependent adult abuse, 2) the client is thought to be in danger of harming him/her self, 3) when the client threatens serious harm to someone else or 4) when required by Court Order. Parents are encouraged to inquire about their child's progress in therapy. In such cases, and with the involvement of the minor who holds the privilege of confidentiality, general trends, observations, concerns and verification of attendance will be discussed as well as recommendations for further treatment.

When working in couples' therapy confidentiality becomes both more important and more confusing. As part of our work it may be decided that individual sessions could be of benefit. If you and/or your partner decide to have some individual sessions please be aware that what you say in those individual sessions will be considered to be a part of the couples' therapy. While individual discussions do not necessarily NEED to be discussed in the couples sessions, I cannot promise things will NOT come up. Do not tell me anything you wish kept secret from your partner. I will remind you of this policy before beginning such individual sessions. As a general rule, if I have information that affects the couples work, I need to be able to use that information.

Family sessions are different. Where work is primarily individual, but occasionally family members are asked to join in, the individual client CAN expect privacy and confidentiality will be maintained and that only what has been previously planned to be discussed, will be disclosed in family sessions.

### SESSIONS

Counseling sessions are 50 minutes long. Please respect this time limit. If you are late, your session will still end at the normal time. My policy requires a 24-hour cancellation notice. **UNLESS 24 HOURS NOTICE IS GIVEN YOU WILL BE CHARGED YOUR REGULAR SESSION FEE.** Please note that insurance companies do not pay for missed appointments. Please refrain from drinking alcohol or using drugs that would cause you to be intoxicated at the time of your session. This includes medicinal or recreational marijuana. The emotional processing necessary for psychotherapeutic work to be beneficial is not possible while one is influenced by substances. If the therapist suspects the client is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the session will be terminated immediately and billed as a missed appointment. The duration of therapy is different for each person and for each issue. It is impossible to determine, in advance, how long a client will need to be in therapy.

### COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SESSIONS

If you need to contact me between sessions, please call or text (925) 567-6301 with your name and contact need. I am NOT available 24 hours for emergencies. However, I will do my best to get back to you with at least a time that we will be able to speak. In general, I do not charge for brief phone calls (5 min or less). If a call needs to be longer, or if calls become frequent, I charge by the half-session. Your regular fee will be charged in 25 minute intervals. **In case of emergency**, dial 9-1-1 or call the appropriate crisis line for your county. Alameda: (800) 309-2131, Contra Costa: Crisis and Suicide (800) 833-2900, Grief (800) 837-1818, Homeless (800) 808-6444, Child Abuse (877) 881-1116, Elder Abuse (877) 839-4347 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800) 273-8255. Sometimes texting is an easier way to ask for help. Text "HOPE" to 20121 to text with a crisis support person.

If you elect to communicate with me via email at any point in our work together, please be aware that email is not completely confidential. All emails are retained in the logs of internet service provider(s). In addition, wireless networks cannot be guaranteed secure. While I do have reasonable securities in place, privacy via email is not guaranteed. Emails received from you, and my responses to them, where they contain significant content relevant to your work and treatment in therapy, are printed and kept as part of your permanent record.

Texting is available to current clients as a way of communicating appointment schedule changes and billing information only. I DO NOT use texting as a way to communicate about personal and emotional content. If you feel you are in crisis and need to speak with me, text a request for phone contact and I will respond as quickly as possible.

#### FEES AND PAYMENT

Credit card information is required to schedule an initial appointment. Payment can be made by cash, check or credit card. Required credit card will only be charged in the event of a missed or late cancelled (<24 hrs.) appointment. All professional services are charged directly to you and are due at the time of each session unless previous arrangements have been made. Standard fees are \$160 per session for individuals, \$185 per session for couples. This fee will be reevaluated and subject to change annually. I am not contracted with any insurance companies. It is the clients' responsibility to determine their specific insurance coverage. If requested, a statement of services will be provided to you monthly. A Credit Card Authorization form is available to clients who wish to be charged automatically on the day of their appointment. These forms are kept as a part of the client record and are securely stored. Once a client terminates therapy, credit card information is removed from the file and shredded. Clients may also pay by credit card by using the Pay Pal link on my website, [www.kristinaschasker.com](http://www.kristinaschasker.com).

#### TERMINATION

In most cases, therapy is most productive when attended weekly. Progress is monitored closely with the goal being clients developing new healthy habits, coping skills and stronger, healthier relationships as soon as possible. Once the therapist and client(s) together decide they are ready, sessions can be dropped to every other week, monthly, or stopped completely depending on the need for ongoing support. The counseling relationship may also be terminated by the therapist at any time if the relationship is no longer productive. This includes, but is not limited to situations such as; client fee is not paid, two or more consecutive sessions are missed or cancelled, client's attendance becomes inconsistent or if the client is not progressing in therapy. In cases where the therapist has terminated treatment, an explanation as well as referrals will be provided. The counseling relationship may also be terminated by the client at any time.

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Client Signature

Date

Client Signature

Date

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