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Guidelines for Clients and Consent to Treatment

Welcome to my practice. I appreciate your giving me the opportunity to be of help to you.

Clients often ask about the practice of therapy. Please read these guidelines about my professional services and business policies so that you know how we will work together. I believe our work will be most helpful to you when you have a clear idea of what we are trying to do. Please let me know if you have any questions at our next meeting. When you have read and fully understood these guidelines, please sign it and it will represent an agreement between us.

About Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient, and the particular problems you bring forward. I strongly believe you should feel comfortable with the therapist you choose, and hopeful about the therapy. When you feel this way, therapy is more likely to be very helpful to you.

People often initiate treatment at a time when they are having difficulty navigating life's challenges. This usually indicates that coping strategies which may have been effective in the past are no longer adequate. At these times people often feel distressed and "stuck" in a given situation. People enter therapy to seek relief from their distress and to learn new ways of coping, or getting "unstuck". Optimally, patients learn to apply the insight, principles and techniques learned in treatment in their personal and professional lives outside of the therapy office so that they may confront the challenges of daily living on their own.

I view psychotherapy as a process of exploration, understanding and learning how to genuinely relate to oneself, others and the world in general. I practice Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy, which focuses on helping clients understand and fully experience emotions that have been denied or avoided because they felt overwhelming. By developing the ability to feel and fully experience previously warded-off emotions, clients expand their emotional range, which helps them cope better and in a greater range of circumstances. I also use concepts and strategies from other orientations, particularly psychodynamic psychotherapy. This way I can flexibly adapt the therapy to the unique needs of my patients and further their progress.

In order to learn about you and what is challenging you, during the course of treatment I will examine your interpersonal interactions, beliefs, thoughts, emotions, behaviors and coping mechanisms. I will seek to identify patterns from among the different experiences that are reported and place them in a developmental and historical context. In so doing, I can examine various aspects of your personality and ability to function and then utilize concepts that permit the best understanding of the issues and facilitate the application of appropriate modalities and techniques.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation, after which I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan to follow. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. 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. I do not take on clients I do not think I can help. Therefore, I will enter our relationship with optimism about our progress.

An important part of your therapy will be to apply what you learn in treatment outside of our sessions. You will probably have to work on modifying patterns of relating to yourself and others and develop new coping strategies in order to get the best results. These are important parts of personal change. Change will sometimes be easy and quick, but more often it will be slow and frustrating, and you will need to keep trying. There are no instant, painless cures and no “magic pills.” However, you *can* learn new ways of looking at your problems that will be very helpful for changing your feelings and reactions.

Most of my clients see me once a week and sometimes more often if circumstances permit. The length of treatment varies depending on your problems and the progress we make. Often treatment lasts for several months but may last for a year or longer. Near the end of treatment we may meet less often in anticipation of therapy coming to an end. The process of ending therapy, called “termination,” can be a very valuable part of our work. Stopping therapy should not be done casually, although either of us may decide to end it if we believe it is in your best interest. If you wish to stop therapy at any time, I will ask you to meet for at least one session to review our work together. We will review our goals, the work we have done, any future work that needs to be done, and our choices. If you would like to take a “time out” from therapy to try it on your own, we should discuss this. We can often make such a “time out” be more helpful.

The Benefits and Risks of Therapy

As with any powerful treatment, there are some risks as well as many benefits with therapy. You should think about both the benefits and risks when making any treatment decisions. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. Sometimes, a client’s problems may temporarily worsen after the beginning of treatment, which may bother a client at work, school or home and possibly affect one’s relationships. Most of these risks are to be expected when people are making important changes in their lives.

While you consider these risks, you should know also that the benefits of therapy have been shown by scientists in hundreds of well-designed research studies. People who are depressed may find their mood lifting. Others may no longer feel afraid, angry, or anxious. In therapy, people have a chance to talk things out fully until their feelings are relieved or the problems are solved. Clients’ relationships and coping skills may improve greatly. They may get more satisfaction out of social and family relationships. Their personal goals and values may become clearer. They may grow in many directions—as persons, in their close relationships, in their work or schooling, and in the ability to enjoy their lives. But there are no guarantees about the results of treatment, the effectiveness of the procedures used in treatment, or the number of sessions necessary for therapy to be effective.

If you could benefit from a treatment I cannot provide, I will help you to get it. You have a right to ask me about such other treatments, their risks, and their benefits. If for some reason treatment is not going well, I might suggest you see another therapist or another professional in addition to me. As a responsible person and ethical therapist, I cannot continue to treat you if my treatment is not working for you. If you wish for another professional’s opinion at any time, or wish to talk with another therapist, I will help you find a qualified person and will provide him or her with the information needed.

About Confidentiality

In general, I will tell no one what you tell me and treat with great care all the information you share with me. In all but a few rare situations, your confidentiality (that is, your privacy) is protected by state law and by the rules of my profession. Here are the most common cases in which confidentiality is *not* protected:

1. If you were sent to me by a court or an employer for evaluation or treatment, the court or employer expects a report from me. If this is your situation, please talk with me before you tell me anything you do not want the court or your employer to know. You have a right to tell me only what you are comfortable with telling.

2. If you make a serious threat to harm yourself or another person, the law requires me to try to protect you or that other person. This usually means telling others about the threat. I cannot promise never to tell others about threats you make.

3. If I believe a child or an elderly person has been or will be abused or neglected, I am legally required to report this to the authorities.

Also, I may talk about your case with other therapists. It is common for therapists to present and discuss their cases to each other and receive feedback from their peers. This helps me in giving high-quality treatment. These persons are also required to keep your information private. Your name will never be given to them, and they will be told only as much as they need to know to understand your situation.

If your records need to be seen by another professional, or anyone else, I will discuss it with you. If you agree to share these records, you will need to sign a release form. This form states exactly what information is to be shared, with whom, and why, and it also sets time limits. You may read this form at any time. If you have questions, please ask me.

Professional Records

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep treatment records of the professional services I provide. Because these records contain information that can be misunderstood by someone who is not a mental health professional, it is my general policy that patients may not review them; however, I will provide at your request a treatment summary unless I believe that to do so would be emotionally damaging. If that is the case, I will be happy to send the summary to another mental health professional who is working with you. You should be aware that this will be treated in the same manner as any other professional service I provide and you will be billed accordingly.

As part of cost control efforts, an insurance company will sometimes ask for more information on symptoms, diagnoses, and my treatment methods. It will become part of your permanent medical record. I will let you know if this should occur and what the company has asked for. Please understand that I have no control over how these records are handled at the insurance company. My policy is to provide only as much information as the insurance company will need to pay your benefits.

Minors

If you are under eighteen years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents the right to examine your treatment records. It is my policy to request an agreement from parents that they agree to give up access to your records. If they agree, I will provide them only with general information about our work together, unless I feel there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or someone else. In this case, I will notify them of my concern. I will also provide them with a summary of your treatment when it is complete. Before giving them any information, I will discuss the matter with you, if possible, and do my best to handle any objections you may have with what I am prepared to discuss

My Background

I entered the field of psychology in 2001 when I began my graduate coursework at Fairleigh Dickinson University. I am trained and experienced in doing one-on-one, couple and group therapy. In my career, I have worked in clinic and hospital settings. I hold these qualifications:

- I have a doctoral degree in clinical psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson University, whose program is approved by the American Psychological Association (APA).
- I completed an internship in clinical psychology.
- I completed a program in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy at Manhattan Institute for Psychoanalysis
- I am continuing my training in Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy with the AEDP Institute.
- I am licensed as a psychologist in New York.

- I am a member of the New York State Psychological Association.

About Our Appointments

We will usually meet for a 50-minute session once or twice a week, then less often. We can schedule meetings for both your convenience and mine. I will give you advance notice of my vacations or any other times we cannot meet. Please ask about my schedule in making your own plans.

An appointment is a commitment to our work. We agree to meet here and to be on time. If I am ever unable to start on time, I ask your understanding. I also assure you that you will receive the full time agreed to. If you are late, we will probably be unable to meet for the full time, because it is likely that I will have another appointment after yours.

I will reserve a regular appointment time for you into the foreseeable future. I also do this for my other patients. Please try not to miss sessions if you can possibly help it. When you must cancel, please give me at least 24 hour's notice. A cancelled appointment delays our work. I will consider our meetings very important and ask you to do the same. I am rarely able to fill a cancelled session unless I know well in advance. Therefore, you will be charged the full fee for sessions cancelled with less than 24 hour's notice or missed for reasons other than unpredictable emergencies. For instance, you will be charged if you frequently forget your appointments, would rather go shopping, prefer to socialize with friends, or don't "feel like" coming to your session. Examples of unpredictable emergencies would include having to take care of a sick child, mandatory overtime at work, or severe weather that halts public transportation. Your insurance will not cover this kind of charge.

Fees, Payments, and Billing

My current regular fees are based on a rate of \$200 per hour. You will be given advance notice if my fees should change.

Regular therapy services: For a session of 50 minutes, the fee is \$150 payable at the beginning of each session. I have found that this arrangement helps us stay focused on our goals, and so it works best.

Telephone consultations: I do not typically conduct telephone consultations but if they are needed I will charge you our regular fee, prorated over the time needed. If I need to have long telephone conferences with other professionals as part of your treatment, you will be billed for these at the same rate as for regular therapy services. There is no charge for calls about appointments or similar business.

Extended sessions: Occasionally it may be better to go on with a session, rather than stop or postpone work on a particular issue. When this extension is more than 5 minutes, I will tell you, because sessions that are extended beyond 5 minutes will be charged on a prorated basis from the beginning of the extended time period.

Psychological testing services: \$200 per hour. Psychological testing fees include the time spent with you, the time needed for scoring and studying the test results, and the time needed to write a report on the findings. The amount of time involved depends on the tests used and the questions the testing is intended to answer.

Other services: Charges for other services, such as hospital visits, consultations with other therapists, home visits, or any court-related services (such as consultations with lawyers, depositions, or attendance at courtroom proceedings) will be based on the time involved in providing the service at my regular fee schedule. Some services may require payment in advance.

If there is any problem with my charges or any other money-related point, please bring it to my attention so that they can be worked out openly and quickly.

Health Insurance Coverage

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. You (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of the fees that we have agreed to. Therefore, it is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers by carefully reading the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services or calling your plan administrator. Remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself to avoid the complexities described above.

If You Need to Contact Me

I am often not immediately available by telephone. When I am unavailable, you may leave me a voice mail, text me or send me an email. I will make every effort to respond to you the same day, 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 the matter is urgent, 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.

If I Need to Contact Someone about You

If there is an emergency during our work together, or I become concerned about your personal safety, I am required by law and by the rules of my profession to contact the person you identified in the Client Information Form. I am also required to contact this person, or the authorities, if I become concerned about your harming someone else.

Agreement to Consent to Treatment

I, the client (or his or her parent or guardian), consent to enter into therapy with Dr. David Gerard according to the terms detailed above in this Guidelines for Clients and Consent to Treatment. I understand that no promises have been made to me as to the results of treatment, any procedures provided by this therapist, or the number of sessions necessary for therapy to be effective.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent to therapy at any time, for any reason. I also understand that withdrawing from treatment will not absolve me from the responsibility for paying for the services I have already received

Signature of client (or person acting for client)

Date

Printed name

Relationship to client:

- Self Parent Legal guardian
 Other person authorized to act on behalf of the client