



Informed Consent Form 2017-18

Welcome to Willow. This document contains important information about our professional services and policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so we might discuss them. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Nature of Psychological Services: Psychotherapy is not easily described, as its character depends on the personalities of both the psychotherapist and client(s), and the particular problems you bring in. As a group of clinicians, we may use many different methods of practice, most of which call for a very active effort on your part—both in our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since 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 been shown to improve the lives of many people who engage in it—leading to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. Each person's experience is unique, and as such, there can be no guarantees of what you yourself will experience.

Our first few (1-3) sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of this evaluation, we will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work together will entail, and we can both decide whether or not your particular therapist is the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If not, you may request or we may offer you referrals for other professional clinicians within or beyond our practice.

When you choose to use insurance, we are required to select a diagnosis for you from the DSM-V system; you are encouraged to discuss this with your therapist. We believe that a diagnosis does not define people or their worth. It is a particular kind of singular, overly simplified description, created at a specific moment in time, to name behaviors and effects without really explaining how these came to be. Diagnosis is a shorthand method of communication among clinicians and insurers, and as such may be useful for certain limited purposes. In our work here, we strive to situate diagnoses in context by considering complex descriptions of the person or relationship; this consideration surely includes your own way of understanding the problem or problems that bring you in to see us now.

Once psychotherapy has begun, we will usually schedule regular sessions together. Typically, therapy sessions are scheduled once a week for 45-60 minutes, but some situations may require more (or less) frequent or longer sessions. Determining when to end therapy generally is a mutual decision, but is likely to be considered when therapy goals have been met, when a therapist or client feels psychotherapy does not appear to be helping the client, when a client's financial status or insurance changes (or if payment ceases), or when clients repeatedly miss appointments.

Confidentiality: The privacy and security of your Protected Health Information (PHI) is protected by federal HIPAA and Illinois mental health laws—and we at the Willow Wellness Center take every reasonable precaution to ensure the confidentiality of your care records. PHI is defined as *information that relates to the past, present or future physical or mental health condition of a client; providing health care to a patient; or the past, present or future payment for the client's health care; that identifies the client or could reasonably be used to identify the client; and that is transmitted or maintained in any form or medium.* You have certain rights concerning PHI that we are required to share with you, and we have prepared a Privacy Notice for this purpose. If sharing clinical information with a physician, family member, or other party is necessary, or requested by

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you, we will ask you to sign an authorization to do so. Medicare encourages us to collaborate with your primary care physician, so it is likely that you will be given the opportunity to discuss and/or limit the type and content of information to be shared in your particular situation.

Professional Records: The laws and standards of our profession require that we keep treatment records in a manner consistent with HIPAA standards. To do this, we use Empathic Clinical Suites, a secure (encrypted) form of electronic health records that includes clinical notes, insurance billing, and financial statements.

Insurance Considerations: Please consider very carefully whether or not to use health insurance benefits to pay for psychological services. While we strongly support the full and equal inclusion of mental health services in healthcare coverage, we are sadly aware of rare instances in which psychiatric diagnosis and treatment have been used to deny or limit the availability of life or disability insurance; in such cases, we have been known to write letters on clients' behalf.

For couples therapy specifically, insurance companies (if they cover the service at all) require that one of the partners be identified as the "patient" and given a diagnosis that passes their criteria for "medical necessity" of care—minimally, an adjustment disorder. Given even the remote possibility of future legal involvement (divorce or child custody), in which diagnosis or treatment might be used against the identified "patient," we tend to encourage couples to forego using insurance if possible.

That said, you should investigate how your insurance policy handles mental health services. Some insurance policies make use of managed care companies for mental health, some of which restrict treatment and require significant clinical information to determine what they will and will not cover. We will help you receive benefits to which you are entitled; however, you (*not* your insurance company) are responsible for all fees.

Professional Fees: Our fees reflect our specialized training and experience. Unless arranged in advance or dictated by insurance agreements, our fees for typical sessions are as follows: Initial Evaluation/Session (\$200); Individual Psychotherapy (\$150 or \$180, per length); Couples/Family Therapy (\$180). Payment is due at the time of service; we will make every effort to help you figure out insurance deductibles, copays, and/or coinsurance. For scheduled therapy sessions, *you will be expected to provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation or be personally responsible for a \$100 fee* (unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control). We accept payment in cash, checks, and credit or HSA/FSA cards (visa, mastercard, discover, amex).

Contact with Therapists: Given our clinical schedules, we are often not immediately available by phone. Our voicemail system handles calls 24 hours a day, but we are only notified of messages during weekday business hours from 8:00 to 5:00. Check with your therapist directly, as each of us has different policies concerning weekend or evening messages, but we try to return calls within a reasonable amount of time. If you are unable to reach your therapist in an emergency, and feel that you can't wait for a return call, please call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.

We do maintain email addresses for all our therapists; however, we discourage the use of email for anything other than scheduling arrangements due to the uncertainty of ensuring the security of email communications and contact information. For similar reasons, our therapists do not respond to invitations from clients to connect via social networking sites such as Facebook or LinkedIn.

Signature: Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship; it also indicates that you have been given or offered information about how we protect your PHI (privacy). For questions, contact Dr. Lisa Campbell at (847) 318-8200 or 1400 Renaissance Drive, Suite 401, Park Ridge, IL 60068.

Client name (print please)

Client signature

Date