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## INFORMED CONSENT FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY

Welcome to the office of George Livengood, M.S, LMFT, Marriage and Family Therapist. It is my intention to do everything within my professional capacity to be helpful to you. It is my hope that your personal investment in therapy will be a beneficial experience. Please read the following information thoroughly and completely before signing this page. My professional responsibility is to inform you about the limitations and possible risks of entering into psychotherapy.

**HEALTH INSURANCE & CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS:** Disclosure of confidential information may be required by your health insurance carrier or HMO/PPO/MCO/EAP in order to process the claims. If you so instruct me, only the minimum necessary information will be communicated to the carrier. Unless authorized by you explicitly the Psychotherapy Notes will not be disclosed to your insurance carrier. I have no control or knowledge over what insurance companies do with the information I submit or who has access to this information. You must be aware that submitting a mental health invoice for reimbursement carries a certain amount of risk to confidentiality, privacy, or to future eligibility to obtain health or life insurance. The risk stems from the fact that mental health information is entered into insurance companies' computers and soon will also be reported to the, congress-approved, National Medical Data Bank. Accessibility to companies' computers or to the National Medical Data Bank database is always in question, as computers are inherently vulnerable to break-ins and unauthorized access. Medical data has been reported to have been sold, stolen, or accessed by enforcement agencies; therefore, you are in a vulnerable position.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All information disclosed within sessions and the written records pertaining to those sessions are confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your (client's) written permission, except where disclosure is required by law.  
**When Disclosure Is Required By Law:** Some of the circumstances where disclosure is required by the law are: where there is a reasonable suspicion of child, dependent or elder, abuse or neglect; and where a client presents a danger to self, to others, to property, or is gravely ill.

**EMERGENCIES:** If there is an emergency during our work together where I become concerned about your personal safety, the possibility of you injuring someone else, or about you receiving proper psychiatric care, I will do whatever I can within the limits of

the law, to prevent you from injuring yourself or others and to ensure that you receive the proper medical care. For this purpose, I may also contact the police, hospital or the person whose name you have provided on the biographical sheet.

**CONFIDENTIALITY OF E-MAIL, CELL PHONE AND FAXES COMMUNICATION:** It is very important to be aware that e-mail and cell phone communication can be relatively easily accessed by unauthorized people and hence, the privacy and confidentiality of such communication can be easily compromised. E-mails, in particular, are vulnerable to such unauthorized access due to the fact that servers have unlimited and direct access to all e-mails that go through them. Faxes can be sent erroneously to the wrong address. Please notify me at the beginning of treatment if you decide to avoid or limit in any way the use of any or all of the above-mentioned communication devices. Please do not use email or faxes in emergency situations.

**TELEPHONE & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:** If you need to contact me between sessions, please leave a message on my voicemail at (917) 674-3459 and your call will be returned as soon as possible. I check my messages daily (but never during the night time), unless I am out of town. I check the messages less frequently on weekends and holidays. Please do not use text messaging, I do not respond to them. If an emergency situation arises, please indicate it clearly in your message. If you need to talk to someone right away, you can call the suicide hotline or psychiatric emergency team of Los Angeles County at (800) 854-7771 or the Police (911).

**PAYMENTS & INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT:** Clients are expected to pay the standard fee of \$100 per 50 minute session at the beginning of each session unless other arrangements have been made. Please notify me if any problem arises during the course of therapy regarding your ability to make timely payments. Clients who carry insurance should remember that professional services are rendered and charged to the clients and not to the insurance companies. Unless agreed upon differently, I will provide you with a copy of your receipt on a monthly basis, which you can then submit to your insurance company for reimbursement if you so choose. As was indicated in the section, Health Insurance & Confidentiality of Records, you must be aware that submitting a mental health invoice for reimbursement carries a certain amount of risk. Not all issues/conditions/problems, which are the focus of psychotherapy, are reimbursed by insurance companies. It is your responsibility to verify the specifics of your coverage.

**THE PROCESS OF THERAPY/EVALUATION:** Participation in therapy can result in a number of benefits to you, including improving interpersonal relationships and resolution of the specific concerns that led you to seek therapy. Working toward these benefits, however, requires effort on your part. Psychotherapy requires your very active involvement, honesty, and openness in order to change your thoughts, feelings and/or behavior. I will ask for your feedback and views on your therapy, its progress, and other aspects of the therapy and will expect you to respond openly and honestly.

Sometimes more than one approach can be helpful in dealing with a certain situation. During evaluation of therapy, remembering or talking about unpleasant events, feelings, or thoughts can result in your experiencing considerable discomfort or strong feelings of anger, sadness, worry, fear, etc. or experiencing anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc. I may challenge some of your assumptions or perceptions or propose different ways of looking at, thinking about, or handling situations that can cause you to feel very upset, angry, depressed, challenged, or disappointed. Attempting to resolve issues that brought you to therapy in the first place, such as personal or interpersonal relationships, may result in changes that were not originally intended. Psychotherapy may result in decisions about changing behaviors, employment, substance use, schooling, housing, or relationships. Sometimes a decision that is positive for one family member is viewed quite negatively by another family member. Change will sometimes be easy and swift, but more often it will be slow and even frustrating. There is no guarantee that psychotherapy will yield positive or intended results. During the course of therapy, I am likely to draw on various psychological approaches according, in part, to the problem that is being treated and my assessment of what will best benefit you. These approaches include cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic, experiential, existential, system/family, developmental (adult, child, family), or psycho-educational.

**DISCUSSION OF TREATMENT PLAN:** Within a reasonable period of time after the initiation of treatment, I will discuss with you (client) my working understanding of the problem, treatment plan, therapeutic objectives, and my view of the possible outcomes of treatment. If you have any unanswered questions about any of the procedures used in the course of your therapy, their possible risks, my expertise in employing them, or about the treatment plan, please ask and you will be answered fully. You also have the right to ask about other treatments for your condition and their risks and benefits. If you could benefit from any treatment that I do not provide, I have an ethical obligation to assist you in obtaining those treatments.

**TERMINATION:** As set forth above, after the first couple of meetings, I will assess if I can be of benefit to you. I do not accept clients who, in my opinion, I cannot help. In such a case, I will give you a number of referrals that you can contact. If at any point during psychotherapy, I assess that I am not effective in helping you reach the therapeutic goals, I am obliged to discuss it with you and, if appropriate, to terminate treatment. In such a case, I would give you a number of referrals that may be of help to you. If you request it and authorize it in writing, I will talk to the psychotherapist of your choice in order to help with the transition. If at any time you want another professional's opinion or wish to consult with another therapist, I will assist you in finding someone qualified, and, if I have your written consent, I will provide you with the essential information needed. You have the right to terminate therapy at any time. If you choose to do so, I will offer to provide you with names of other qualified professionals whose services you might prefer.

DUAL RELATIONSHIPS: Not all dual relationships are unethical or avoidable. Therapy never involves sex or any other dual relationship that impairs a therapist's objectivity, clinical judgment, or therapeutic effectiveness or can be exploitative in nature. I will assess carefully before entering into nonsexual and non-exploitative dual relationships with clients. Even though Los Angeles is a large city, many clients know each other and myself from the community or community groups. Consequently you may bump into someone you know in the waiting room or into me out in the community. I will never acknowledge working therapeutically with anyone without their written permission any time.

CANCELLATION: Since scheduling of an appointment involves the reservation of time specifically for you, a minimum of 24 hours notice is required for rescheduling or canceling an appointment. I do not respond to text messages and text messages are not considered a valid cancellation. Unless we reach a different agreement, the full fee will be charged for sessions missed without such notification. Most insurance companies do not reimburse for missed sessions.

I have read the above Agreement and Office Policies and General Information carefully; I understand them and agree to comply with them:

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Client name (Print) Date

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Client Signature Date

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Therapist Signature Date