THERAPY WITH DR.G.

OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have; so that I can discuss them at my next meeting. When you sign this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

Counseling and Psychotherapy Services

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychotherapist and client; and the particular problems you bring forward. Theoretically, I am a Rogerian based, client-centered therapist. I believe that you have the power within you to conquer all your problems – you just need a little guidance. Typically, I am an experiential psychotherapist – dealing with "naming the elephant in the room". However, my approaches differ with each client. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for a very active effort and commitment on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things I talk about both during my 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 also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, better coping strategies, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. There are no guarantees, however, on what you will experience.

My first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions of what my work will include and a treatment plan to follow; if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with one of us. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy; so, you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have any questions about my procedures, I should discuss them whenever they arise.

Meetings

Therapy sessions are scheduled, as much as possible, for your convenience. Therefore, cancellations should be made at least 24 hours in advance, or you will be billed the full [private pay] rate for the session.

Therapy sessions will be 45 minutes in length unless otherwise agreed upon by you and your therapist.

Professional Fees

The hourly fee for professional services is $100. Beyond my weekly appointments, I charge this amount for other professional services you may need; though, I will break down the hourly cost if I work for periods of less than one hour. Other services include, but are not limited to, report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, text messages that require more than 2 exchanges, email exchanges discussing therapeutic content, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, attending school meetings, and the time spent performing any other service you may request outside of your regularly scheduled appointment.

If you become involved in legal proceedings that require my participation, you will be expected to pay for my professional time even if I am called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, I charge $125 per hour – **with a minimum of four hours charged** - for preparation and attendance (whether in person or via telephonic/video testimony) at any legal proceedings. If I must attend court outside of Cobb County, you will also be responsible for travel expenses to include: mileage and per diem at the current annual rate published by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), for business travelers, for each day of the required trip; gasoline; and airline tickets.

Billing and Payments

Payment, for services, is due at the time they are rendered unless prior arrangements are agreed upon with your therapist. If you have insurance coverage that will apply to the cost of your therapy, my biller, Amanda, will cooperate in providing any appropriate information and signatures required.

If your account has not been paid for more than 45 days, and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, I have the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If such legal action is necessary, its costs will be included in the claim.

Insurance Reimbursement

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 any health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. My biller will fill out forms and provide you with whatever assistance she can in order to help you receive the benefits to which you are entitled. However, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of my fees. It is very important that **you** find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers.

You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes mental health services. If you have questions about the coverage, call your plan administrator. Of course, my biller will provide you with whatever information she can, based on her experience; and will be happy to help you in understanding the information you receive from your insurance company. If it is necessary to clear confusion, Amanda will be willing to call the company on your behalf after you have made the initial call.

Due to the rising costs of healthcare, insurance benefits have increasingly become more complex. It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how much mental health coverage is available. "Managed healthcare" plans, such as HMOs and PPOs, sometimes require authorization before they provide reimbursement for mental health services.

Some plans may be limited to short-term treatment approaches designed to work out specific problems that interfere with a person's usual level of functioning. It may be necessary to seek approval for more therapy after a certain number of sessions. While a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, some patients feel that they need more services after insurance benefits end. After your benefits end, it will be up to you as to whether or not we continue our sessions; because at that point, you will be responsible for paying for the entire session.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize us to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes, I have to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of the entire record (in rare cases). This information will become part of the insurance company files and will probably be stored in a computer. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, I have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. In some cases, they may share the information with a national medical information databank. I will provide you with a copy of any report I submit; if you request it. It is important to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself to avoid the problems described above (unless prohibited by contract).

Hypnotherapy, equine therapy, and psychological testing (e.g., MMPI, MCMI, WAIS, BHI-2, TAT, etc.) are sometimes not covered by most insurance companies. Therefore, you are responsible for paying the session fees. You may, however, file for reimbursement from your insurance company if you think they may cover the service.

Contacting Me

I am often not immediately available by telephone. I will not answer the phone when I am in session with a client. When I am unavailable, the telephone is answered by voice mail. I will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exception of weekends and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform me, in your voice message, of which times you will be available. If you are unable to reach me and feel that you can't wait for me to return your call, 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, one of my trusted colleagues will be on call. I will provide you with that contact information, if necessary.

Dual Relationships and Social Media Networking

Not all dual relationships are unethical or avoidable. However, romantic or sexual involvement between therapist and client is never a part of the therapy process, nor are any other actions or dual relationship situations that might impair my objectivity, clinical judgment, or therapeutic effectiveness or that could be exploitative in nature. In addition, I will never acknowledge working therapeutically with anyone without their written permission. In some instances, even with your permission, I will choose to preserve the integrity and privacy of our working relationship. For this reason, I will not accept any invitations via social or professional networking sites from clients, nor will I respond to blogs written by clients or accept online comments from clients [except for on my blog].

Professional Records

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep treatment records. You are not entitled to receive a copy of your [mental health] records; I will be happy to send them to a mental health professional of your choice. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. I

recommend that you review them in my presence so that I can discuss the contents. Patients will be charged an appropriate fee for any time spent in preparing information requests.

Minors

If you are under 18 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'll 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 will do my best to handle any objections you may have with what I am prepared to discuss.

Interns

With your consent, counseling services may be provided by an intern under my supervision. My interns are all Master's or Doctoral-level counseling students enrolled in an accredited university. Their treatment plans and progress notes are reviewed by me. In addition, they attend weekly supervision during which time their cases are reviewed to ensure effective and ethical treatment. Crises and emergent treatment will always be handled with supervision of the licensed clinician training the involved intern. At times, I may request an audio or videotaping of my interns' sessions; certain universities require this as well. If an intern's university requires them to voice record or videotape their sessions, you will be advised of this prior to the beginning of your session and will be asked to sign a release allowing me, as the counseling supervisor, to review the tape with the intern. Tapes are destroyed at the end of the intern's semester. If, at any time, you prefer to see me, you have the right to do so by simply giving the intern verbal notification and then contacting me. I would ask that you [privately] provide us with the reason for your decision so that I can help my interns improve on their service delivery. I would also appreciate any positive feedback that you may have concerning your experience with my interns, as that helps them grow too.

Licensed Associate Professional Counselors (LAPCs) and Licensed Master Social Workers (LMSWs)

LAPCs and LMSWs conduct therapy independently but are required to have scheduled supervision with a fully licensed Professional Counselor or Social Worker as they accumulate the required number of client & supervision to receive their full licensure. All payments to them must, ultimately, be made out to, charged by, or received by their supervising clinician per Georgia Board rules.

Confidentiality

In general, the privacy of all communications between a client and a psychotherapist are protected by law; and I can only release information about my work to others with your written permission. There are a few exceptions, however.

In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent me from providing any information about your treatment. In some proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may order my testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it.

There are some situations in which I am legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm; even if I have to reveal some information about a client's treatment. For example, if I believe that a child, elderly person, or disabled person is being abused, I must file a report with the appropriate state agency.

If I believe that a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another, I am required to take protective actions. These actions may include, but are not limited to, notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the client. If the client threatens to harm himself/herself, I may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection.

These situations have rarely occurred in my practice. If a similar situation occurs, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

Confidentiality and Technology

Some clients may choose to use technology in their counseling sessions. This includes, but is not limited to, online counseling via videoconference, telephone, email, text or chat. Due to the nature of online counseling, there is always the possibility that unauthorized persons may attempt to discover your personal information. I will take every precaution to safeguard your information but cannot guarantee that unauthorized access to electronic communications could not occur. Please be advised to take precautions with regard to authorized and unauthorized access to any technology used in counseling sessions. Be aware of any friends, family members, significant others or co-workers who may have access to your computer, phone or other technology used in your counseling sessions. Should a client have concerns about the safety of their email, your counselor can arrange to encrypt email communication with you.

Confidentiality and Professional Consultation

I may occasionally find it helpful to consult with each other or other professionals about a case. During a consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of my clients. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, I will not tell you about the consultations unless I feel that it is important to my work together.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that I discuss any questions or concerns you may have at my next meeting. I will be happy to discuss these issues with you if you need specific advice. However, formal legal advice may be needed because the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex; and I am not an attorney.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship. Due to the new HIPPA laws and regulations, it is now necessary to have an expiration date on this contract. This contract will expire two years from the date it is signed which is indicated below.

_____ _____

Client Therapist

_____

Date