



PSYCHOLOGIST-CLIENT SERVICE AGREEMENT

Welcome to my practice, MindMe. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. As an acknowledgement that you accept my policies, I require a signature from each client to indicate that you have been provided with this information. Although this document is long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you read it carefully. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. We can discuss any questions you have during your session or at any time in the future. You may revoke this agreement in writing at any time.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychotherapy and psychological services are not easily described in general statements. There are many different methods which can be used to assist with the problems you hope to address. Here at MindMe, I endeavour to utilise evidence-based treatments with a collaborative approach to goal setting and in-session work. Psychotherapy is not like a visit to a medical doctor, instead it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Risks may include experiencing uncomfortable feelings, such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness and helplessness, because the process of psychotherapy often requires discussing the unpleasant aspects of your life. However, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for individuals who undertake it. Therapy often leads to a significant reduction in feelings of distress, increased satisfaction in interpersonal relationships, greater personal awareness and insight, increased skills for managing stress and resolutions to specific problems. While my aim is to help you make life improvements, there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Therapy is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in psychotherapy, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. There are also legal limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. I, as your therapist, have corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

The first few sessions will involve gathering information and a comprehensive evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some initial impressions of what our work might include. At that point, we will discuss your treatment goals and create an initial treatment plan. You should evaluate this information and make your own assessment about whether you feel comfortable working with me. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If I am unable to assist you then I will help you identify someone who can.

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APPOINTMENTS

Attending sessions regularly is important to the success of psychological treatment. Normally an initial evaluation will last from 2 to 4 sessions. Appointments will ordinarily be 50-60 minutes in duration, once per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be more or less frequent as needed. **The time scheduled for your appointment is assigned to you and therefore not available for another client, therefore, if you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I ask that you provide me with 24 hours notice.** There is no charge if you cancel an appointment at least 24 hours before the appointment; however, a 50% fee may apply if the session is cancelled with less than 24 hours notice, and the full fee may apply for failure to attend a booked session. If it is possible, I will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment. In addition, you are responsible for coming to your session on time; if you are late, your appointment will still need to end on time.

PROFESSIONAL FEES/PAYMENTS

The standard fee per hour is \$126.09 plus GST (\$145 total). Fees for psychometric tests and other services are determined on a case by case basis and can be obtained on request. You are responsible for paying at the time of your session unless prior arrangements have been made. Payment must be made by cash or fastpay at your session; Fastpay allows eftpos transactions; please note credit cards attract a 3% surcharge. If you refuse to pay your debt, I reserve the right to use a collection agency to secure payment. Some of my clients are referred under special contracts, for example ACC or other agencies. In these cases a fee may not be collected as costs are covered by the referring organisation.

PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

To remain in compliance with New Zealand Health and Disability Sector Standards and the Ethical Code for Psychologists, I am required to keep appropriate records of the psychological services that I provide. Your records are maintained in a secure location in the office. I keep brief records noting that you were here, your reasons for seeking therapy, the goals and progress we set for treatment, your diagnosis, topics we discussed, your medical, social, and treatment history, records I receive from other providers, copies of records I send to others, and your billing records. You may examine and/or receive a copy or summary of your clinical record if you request it in writing. Because these are professional records, they may be misinterpreted and / or upsetting to untrained readers. For this reason, I recommend that you initially review them with me, or have them forwarded to another mental health professional to discuss the contents. The only time that a release of records might be limited is if it is determined that access to the record is likely to cause substantial harm to yourself or others. You also have the right to request that a copy of your file be made available to any other health care provider at your written request.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND LIMITS

The law protects the privacy of communications between a client and a psychologist. In most situations, information about your treatment will only be released to others if you sign a

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written authorisation form requesting such a release. However, there are some situations in which I may be ethically obligated to take actions in order to protect yourself or others. This could occur if there is a high probability of physical harm to yourself, other individuals or society. This may require that some information about your treatment be revealed, but only to persons who require it to ensure the safety, wellbeing and coordination of care of those potentially affected. If such a situation arises, every effort will be made to fully discuss this matter before taking any action, and disclosure will be limited to what is necessary.

As I attend regular supervision to reflect on my practice, your therapy may be discussed in supervision meetings. Identifiable information is removed as much as possible and my supervisor is bound by the same ethical requirements for confidentiality.

From time to time I may request audio or video recording of our sessions together. The sole purpose of these recordings is to reflect on my practice, or gain additional input from my supervisor. I will not share this recording with anyone else (other than my supervisor) and this will be erased as soon as it has been reviewed.

On occasion, I work as part of multidisciplinary teams for coordination of care between several of your health providers. Every effort will be made to inform you of such occurrences. To the greatest extent possible I will work to protect your privacy and dignity, but elements of your case relevant to your other health providers could be discussed. These other professionals are obligated to adhere to the rules of confidentiality as mandated by the Health and Disability Commissioner Act (1994) and their professional ethical requirements.

When a referral is received from an external agency, I am generally obligated by professional courtesy to continue to liaise with the referring agency regarding on-going assessment and intervention. This is particularly the case when a third party is paying for the service and has requests that a particular assessment/intervention is provided. Please note that third parties generally expect update reports at regular intervals.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential limits to confidentiality, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have now or in the future. The laws and ethics governing confidentiality can be quite complex and every effort will be made to assist you in resolving your questions on this topic.

PARENTS & MINORS

While privacy in therapy is crucial to successful progress, parental involvement can also be essential. Clients under 18 years of age who are not living independently should be aware that the law may allow parents to examine their child's treatment records. Children between 13 and 17 may independently consent to (and control access to the records of) assessment and treatment. It is usually my policy to request an agreement with both the child and a parent about access to information. This agreement provides that during treatment, parents will be provided with only general information about the progress of treatment, and the client's attendance at scheduled sessions. Parents can also be provided with a summary of their

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child's treatment when it is complete. Any other communication will require the child's authorisation, unless it is determined that the child is in danger or is a danger to someone else, in which case, parents will be notified of the concern. Before giving parents any information, the matter will be discussed with the child, if possible, any objections he/she may have will be addressed during this discussion.

CONTACTING ME

I am often not immediately available by telephone. I do not answer my phone when I am with clients or otherwise unavailable. At these times, you may leave a message on my confidential voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible, but it may take a day or two for non-urgent matters. I will make every attempt to inform you in advance of planned absences.

Because I do not operate a crisis service, emergency and after-hours emergency calls cannot be addressed by me. In cases of emergency please call 111 or the after-hours mental health line on 0800 22 33 71.

CLIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Your rights are protected under the Code of Consumer's Rights established by the Health & Disability Commissioner. The Commissioner has a team of Consumer Advocates located around the country who are available to assist and support you if you have questions about your rights, or if you believe that your rights have been breached. Note: a full copy of the Code of Rights is available from www.hdc.org.nz

If you are unhappy with what is happening in therapy, I hope you will talk with me so that I can respond to your concerns. Such comments will be taken seriously and handled with care and respect. You may also request that I refer you to another therapist and are free to end therapy at any time. You have the right to fair, considerate, safe and respectful care, without discrimination as to race, ethnicity, colour, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, or source of payment. You have the right to ask questions about any aspects of therapy and about my specific training and experience.

SUMMARY

Thank you for taking the time to review this information. Hopefully this will be part of developing a clear and effective treatment relationship. My goal is to provide you with the highest quality psychological care and to work in cooperation with you to achieve your treatment goals. Please retain your copy of this information for future reference, and feel free to discuss any questions during your appointments.

