



BRIDGES COUNSELING CENTER FOR CHILD & FAMILY WELLNESS

Informed Consent / Client Agreement

To be completed by the client, parent, or guardian and signed by the health care provider

Read each item below and sign if you understand and agree to follow your provider's instructions. A parent or guardian of a client under age 18 must also read and understand each item before signing the agreement.

Do not sign this agreement if there is anything that you do not understand about the information received.

I _____ (Client) understand and agree to the following:

Background of Clinician

The therapists at Bridges Counseling are fully licensed in the state of NJ as Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) and Professional Counselors (LPC). We are specially trained in marriage and family therapy and in combination have several years of experience delivering therapeutic services to individuals, couples, and families in several settings including community-based agencies, hospitals, and private outpatient psychotherapy practices. Furthermore, Heather DiDomenico, Director of Bridges Counseling, is in the process of becoming dually licensed as a Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT). She is clinically trained in Marriage & Family Therapy from Seton Hall University and is board certified in professional counseling (BCPC).

Risks and Benefits of Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is the process where difficulties in one's life are assessed, prevented, evaluated, and treated in regard to arising and/or pre-existing psychological disorders. Although these disorders may be present, Bridges Counseling does not make it a practice to label clients, but instead we educate clients on symptomology and how to address the possible symptoms which may be impacting one's level of functioning. There are a variety of techniques that can be utilized to deal with the problem(s) that brought you to therapy. These services are generally unlike any services you may receive from a physician in that they require your active participation and cooperation.

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Possible risks include the experience of uncomfortable feelings (such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, frustration, loneliness, or helplessness) or the recall of unpleasant events in your life. Potential benefits include significant reduction in feelings of distress, better relationships, better problem-solving and coping skills, and resolutions of specific problems. Given the nature of psychotherapy, it is difficult to predict what exactly will happen, but we will do our best to make sure you will be able to handle the risks and experience as many benefits as are made possible through treatment.

Psychotherapy clients benefit from having a support system, including family, friends, 12-step, self-help, and support groups, religious affiliations, group therapy, medication, and enjoyable, enriching, and expressive activities, such as art, writing, music, exercise, etc. A stable support system is particularly helpful when dealing with difficult material and feelings. Your therapist will provide referrals to help develop a support system at your request.

In most cases, therapy eventually improves one's sense of well-being and one's relationships. In very few cases, people obtain little or no benefit from therapy or become worse. It is not always possible to predict the outcome for an individual. Given this knowledge, the decisions to participate in therapy and to terminate therapy are personal ones. These decisions may be evaluated with one's therapist. Clients may also obtain independent consultation for a second opinion at any time.

Initial here if this section has been read and understood _____

Medical Concerns

Your psychotherapist is not a medical doctor and can therefore not recognize or diagnose medical conditions. If there are significant medical conditions that may be impacting your mental health, your psychotherapist will make the appropriate referral for you to see a medical doctor specializing in the assessment and/or treatment of these conditions. Not being a medical doctor, your psychotherapist cannot prescribe psychiatric medication, but will refer you for psychiatric consultation if this presents itself.

Initial here if this section has been read and understood _____

Confidentiality

In general, the law protects the confidentiality of all communications between a client and a therapist, and we can release information to others about your therapy only with your written permission (in the form of a Release of Information).

However, there are several exceptions:

- client is a danger to self / others,
- client requests release of information,
- court orders a release of information,
- counselor is engaged in a systematic supervision process
- legal and clinical consultation situations
- client initiates a malpractice lawsuit
- client is below 18 years of age, parents have rights to therapeutic information
- a child is abused or neglected
- an elderly person is abused or neglected
- an insurance company or managed care company requests a diagnosis and/ or relevant clinical information.

Initial here if this section has been read and understood _____

Professional Records

Both law and the standards of the counseling profession require that we keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of these records unless your therapist believes that seeing them would be emotionally damaging to you. If this is the case, we will be happy to provide your records to an appropriate mental health professional of your choice. Although you are entitled to receive a copy of your records if you wish to see them, your therapist may prefer to prepare an appropriate summary instead. Clients will be charged an appropriate fee for any preparation time that is required to comply with an informal request for record review. If you are under 18 years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents with the right to examine your treatment records. It is policy to request an agreement from parents that they consent to give up access to your records. If they agree, we will provide your parents only general information on how your treatment is proceeding unless there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or another person. In such instances, we may be required by law to notify your parents of my concern. Parents of minors also can request to be provided with a summary of their child's treatment when it is complete. Before giving your parents any information, your therapist will discuss this matter with you and will do the best we can to resolve any objections you may have about what will be discussed. It is required that we keep your records for 7 (seven) years after termination of counseling services and for minors, 7 (seven) years after the minor turns 18 (eighteen). Please note that we do not provide treatment of minors without their parents' consent.

Initial here if this section has been read and understood _____

Fees for Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy sessions are billed at \$250. per 60-minute intake session, \$200. per 45-minute family session and \$160. per 45-minute individual session. Extended sessions are \$225. Bio-Psycho-Social Evaluations are \$350. Any copay, coinsurance and/or deductible payments will be determined by your individual insurance company plan benefits. Any fees not covered by insurance are the member's responsibility.

IMPORTANT

- **Understand that payment is due at the end of each session.**
- **Understand that if payment is not received within 2 weeks of service, future sessions cannot be scheduled until balance is paid in full.**
- **Understand that I am responsible for fees not covered by my insurance company.**
- **Understand that if I do not make responsible payment on my account that it may be placed in collections.**
- **Understand that if I fail to give 24hrs advanced notice of a cancellation, or miss a scheduled session, I will be charged a \$100. Fee.**
- **Understand that we reserve the right to increase our rates each year as necessary.**

Initial here if this section has been read and understood _____

Emergencies

You may telephone your therapist in an emergency, but he/she may not always immediately be available by phone and may not be available in the late evening. If unavailable, your therapist will return your call as soon as possible, but you can call 911 or proceed to the nearest emergency room if you feel that you might harm yourself or someone else.

Initial here if this section has been read and understood _____

Obligations of Adult Psychotherapy Clients

I understand that I must be open and honest with my therapist, although in doing so it may be painful and possibly embarrassing. Therapists can only help clients to the extent that the client allows. The desire to get well and function well can only come from the client. Therapists can help clients slowly overcome feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, but progress is more affected by client motivation than any other factor. I understand that doing therapy homework can often facilitate recovery and that participating in this process is crucial.

Painful emotions and memories of painful experiences press for expression. Avoidance of these issues cannot make them go away. Therapists' cannot magically erase the anxiety and pain related to such issues but can provide tools that may help reduce the intensity of the work. If I sense that I am resisting dealing with particular issues, I should discuss my resistance with my therapist to try to overcome it.

I agree to inform my therapist of any plans of self-harm, suicide, homicide, or destruction of property that could endanger others and I agree to honor contracts with my therapist in these matters.

I understand that misunderstandings can occur between myself and my therapist. I also understand that I may develop troublesome feelings toward my therapist, such as fear or anger. Any of these problems can interfere with treatment. Therefore, if these problems occur, I agree to discuss them openly with my therapist to attempt to resolve any problems or to plan to terminate therapy.

Initial here if this section has been read and understood _____

Length of Psychotherapy

Some psychological problems can be alleviated in a few sessions. Other problems require years of treatment. It is often difficult to predict the length of therapy needed. Some disorders cannot be properly treated within the limitations of some health insurance policies. The decision to terminate therapy belongs to the client, although one may evaluate this with one's therapist. It is critical that you have a final psychotherapy session or two before terminating therapy. If your therapist believes you need further therapy, he or she will provide referrals to other therapists, or you may choose to continue therapy with your current therapist.

Initial here if this section has been read and understood _____

Psychotherapy Contract for Adult Clients and Guardians of Children and Adolescents

I have read the above information, have asked questions as needed, and understand the issues related to risks and benefits of psychotherapy, medical concerns, confidentiality, professional records, fees for psychotherapy, emergencies, length of psychotherapy, and the obligations of psychotherapy clients.

Initial here if this section has been read and understood _____

Based on my understanding of these issues, I agree to proceed with treatment.

Name

Date