

# **CHANGE HAPPENS, INC**

*The Slower You Go, The Faster You Get There.*

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## **OUTPATIENT SERVICES CONTRACT**

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

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the therapist and patient, and the particular problems you bring forward. There are many different methods we may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. 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 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, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. But there are no guarantees of what you will experience. Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, we will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our 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 me. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be very careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. If your doubts persist, we will be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

### **MEETINGS**

We normally conduct an evaluation that will last from 1 to 2 sessions. During this time, we can both decide if we are the best persons to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If psychotherapy is begun, we will usually schedule one 45 to 50-minute session (one appointment hour of 45-50 minutes duration) per week or per every couple of weeks, at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be longer or more frequent. Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to be responsible for the time in accordance with the outlined policy attached to this contract unless a late cancellation or no show fee is prohibited by your insurance policy. [If it is possible, we will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.]

### **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

Our hourly fee is \$150 for the initial assessment and \$140 for individual, couples or family sessions, and \$30 for group sessions. In addition to weekly appointments, we charge this amount for other professional

services you may need, though we will break down the hourly cost if we work for periods of less than one hour. Other services include report writing, telephone conversations lasting longer than 15 minutes, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, and the time spent performing any other service you may request of us. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require our participation, you will be expected to pay for our professional time even if we are called to testify by another party. [Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, we charge \$200 per hour for preparation and attendance at any legal proceeding.]

## **BILLING AND PAYMENTS**

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage which requires another arrangement. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. [In circumstances of unusual financial hardship, we may be willing to negotiate a fee adjustment or payment installment plan.] If your account has not been paid for more than 30 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, we 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.] In most collection situations, the only information we release regarding a patient's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

## **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 a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. We will fill out forms and provide you with whatever assistance we can in helping you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; however, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of our 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 we will provide you with whatever information we can based on my 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, we will be willing to call the company on your behalf. Due to the rising costs of health care, insurance benefits have increasingly become more complex. It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how much mental health coverage is available. "Managed Health Care" plans such as HMOs and PPOs often require authorization before they provide reimbursement for mental health services. These plans are often 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. [Some managed-care plans will not allow us to provide services to you once your benefits end. If this is the case, we will do our best to find another provider who will help you continue your psychotherapy.] You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize us to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes we 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, we 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. We will provide you with a copy of any report we submit, if you request it. Once we have all of the information about your insurance coverage, we will discuss what we can expect to accomplish with the benefits that are available and what will happen if they run out before

you feel ready to end our sessions. 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].

### **CONTACTING US**

We are often not immediately available by telephone. While we are usually in the office between 9 AM and 5 PM, we probably will not answer the phone when we are with a patient. When we are unavailable, our telephone is answered by voice mail, that we monitor frequently. We will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it. If you are difficult to reach, please inform us of some times when you will be available. If you are unable to reach us and feel that you can't wait for us to return your call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychiatrist on call. If we will be unavailable for an extended time, we will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

### **PROFESSIONAL RECORDS**

The laws and standards of our profession require that we keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of the records unless we believe that seeing them would be emotionally damaging, in which case we 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. We recommend that you review them in our presence so that we can discuss the contents. Patients will be charged an appropriate fee for any time spent in preparing information requests.

### **MINORS**

If you are under eighteen years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents the right to examine your treatment records. It is our policy to request an agreement from parents that they agree to give up access to your records. If they agree, we will provide them only with general information about our work together, unless we feel there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or someone else. In this case, we will notify them of my concern. We will also provide them with a summary of your treatment when it is complete. Before giving them any information, we will discuss the matter with you, if possible, and do our best to handle any objections you may have with what we am prepared to discuss. [At the end of your treatment, we will prepare a summary of our work together for your parents, and we will discuss it before we send it to them.]

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist is protected by law, and we can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. But there are a few exceptions. In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent us 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 our testimony if he/she determines that the issues demand it. There are some situations in which we are legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if we have to reveal some information about a patient's treatment. For example, if we believe that a child [elderly person, or disabled person] is being abused, we must file a report with the appropriate state agency. If we believe that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, we are required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient. If the patient threatens to harm himself/herself, we 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 our practice. If a similar situation occurs, we

will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action. We may occasionally find it helpful to consult other professionals about a case. During a consultation, we make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of our patients. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, we will not tell you about these consultations unless we feel that it is important to our work together. We will obtain written authorization from you if you don't object. While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns that you may have at our next meeting. We will be happy to discuss these issues with you if you need specific advice, but formal legal advice may be needed because the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex, and we are not attorneys. [If you request, we will provide you with relevant portions or summaries of the state laws regarding these issues.] More specific information regarding confidentiality is included in Change Happens, INC Privacy Practices in your intake packet which requires an additional separate 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.

Rev. 3/11

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Patient / Guardian if Minor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Therapist / Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If refusing to sign, please indicate the reason for this below, sign and date.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Patient / Guardian if Minor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Therapist / Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date