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### **Informed Consent**

Welcome. I look forward to working with you. Before we begin, please take time to read the following information carefully, sign your name and feel free to ask me any questions during our sessions.

#### **What to expect from therapy:**

The purpose of meeting with a therapist is to help with problems in your life that are bothering you or that are keeping you from being successful in important areas of your life. You may be here because your parent, guardian, doctor or teacher had concerns about you. When we meet, we will discuss these problems. I will ask questions, listen to you, and suggest a plan for improving these problems. It is important you feel comfortable talking to me about the issues that are bothering you. Sometimes, these issues will include things that you do not want your parent to know about. Hopefully, knowing that what you say will be kept private will help you feel comfortable and have more trust in me as your therapist. Privacy, also called confidentiality, is an important and necessary part of good counseling.

As a general rule, I will keep the information you share with me in our sessions confidential. There are however, important exceptions to this rule that are important for you to understand before you share personal information with me in a therapy session. In some situations, I am required by laws, or by the guidelines of my profession to disclose information whether or not I have your permission. The situations are:

#### **Confidentiality & Exceptions:**

Confidentiality is an essential part of the therapeutic process and is a commitment that I make to you. Consistent also with the mental health laws of Georgia, I will not release any information about you without your written consent. There are specific exceptions to the commitment of confidentiality:

- You tell me you plan to cause serious harm or death to yourself. In this situation, I must take steps to inform a parent or guardian of what you have told me and how serious I believe this threat to be, and I must take the appropriate steps to protect you from harming yourself.
- You tell me you plan to cause serious harm or death to someone else. In this situation, I must inform your parent or guardian, and I must inform the person who you intend to harm.
- You are doing things that could cause serious harm to you or someone else, even if you do not intend to harm yourself or another person. In these situations, I will use my professional judgment to decide whether a parent or guardian should be informed.

(1) Please initial that you've read this page \_\_\_\_\_



- You tell me you are being physically or sexually abused or that you have been abused in the past. In this situation, I am required by law to report the abuse to Child Protective Services.
- You tell me of a situation involving the abuse of another minor or a senior adult, in which case I am required by law to report the abuse.
- You and I determine it is appropriate to involve a third part (e.g., a doctor) in your treatment and you provide me written permission to do so.
- I feel it is professionally appropriate, with your written permission, to discuss your concerns with another professional.
- You are involved in a court case and a request is made for information about your counseling or therapy. If this happens, I will not disclose information without your written agreement *unless* the court requires me to do so. I will do all I can within the law to protect your confidentiality, and if I am required to disclose information to the court, I will inform you that this is happening.

Please note that in couple's counseling, your therapist does not agree to keep secrets between partners. While you have a right to individual privacy, any information shared with the therapist that may be detrimental to the other partner, the relationship as a whole, or effectiveness of therapy will not be kept secret. If one partner discloses such information to the couple's therapist, the therapist will conclude that either that partner would like help learning how to share the information with the other partner in session, or is ready to terminate the existing relationship and receive a referral to another couple's therapist.

#### Communicating with your parent(s) or guardian (s):

Except for situations such as those mentioned above, I will not tell your parent or guardian specific things you share with me in our private therapy sessions. This includes activities and behavior that your parent/guardian would not approve of—or would be upset by—but that do not put you at risk of serious or immediate harm. However, if your risk taking behavior becomes more serious, then I will need to use my professional judgment to decide whether you are in serious and immediate danger of being harmed. If I feel that you are in such danger, I will communicate this information to your parent or guardian.

Even if I have agreed to keep information confidential to not tell your parent or guardian I may believe that it is important for them to know what is going on in your life. In these situations, I will encourage you to tell your parent/guardian and will help you find the best way to tell them. Also, when speaking with your parents, I may sometimes describe problems in general terms, without using specifics, in order to help them know how to be more helpful to you.

You should also know that, by law in Georgia, your parent/guardian has the right to see any written records I keep about our sessions. It is extremely rare that a parent/guardian would ever request to look at these records, and doing so is strongly discouraged.

#### Cancellations:

If you cannot keep your appointment time, please give me at least 24 hours notice so that I can make the time available for others. If you cancel with less than 24 hours notice or you miss a scheduled appointment, you will be charged for that appointment. Cancellations for Monday appointments must be made by the Friday before to avoid being charged.