

MIND BODY CONNECTIONS

PSYCHOTHERAPIST-CLIENT SERVICES AGREEMENT

Welcome to Mind Body Connections at Clarus Center. We are glad you have chosen us as your place for personal growth and recovery. This document contains important information about our professional services and business practices. **Please read it carefully** and feel free to discuss any questions you have with your therapist.

Philosophy of care at Mind Body Connections

We believe that treatment of the whole person is necessary for growth and development. This means that psychological, physical, spiritual, relational and fiscal issues may be addressed in therapy. Therapy may occur in a talk-therapy style and/or may include experiential components. Furthermore, therapy is most effective when the client is active in the therapeutic process. This means that you will be expected to work on things discussed in therapy both during sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy has both benefits and risks. Risks sometimes include painful feelings such as sadness, guilt, anxiety, anger, loneliness and helplessness. Therapy also often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of one's life. However, therapy has been shown to have benefits that include significant reduction of anxiety and distress as well as better relationships, greater self-esteem and resolution of specific problems. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees of therapy outcomes.

The first few sessions

In the first few sessions, your therapist will want to evaluate your treatment needs and learn more about you. During this time, you and your therapist will work together to create treatment goals and/or an initial plan for treatment. Most importantly, this is your time to evaluate your comfort level and confidence in your choice of therapists. Your therapist will also be evaluating if they are a good choice of therapist for you and your specific needs and goals at this time. If for some reason you do not feel as though you are with the right therapist for you, please tell your therapist, as we would like to assist you in finding the right match be it within Clarus Center or not.

Contacting therapists and Emergencies

Calls are answered by a confidential voice mail system and each therapist has his/her own direct extension. Therapists check their voice mail each business day unless they are unavailable for an extended period of time. If your therapist is away, he/she is responsible for asking another therapist to be available to you, and her/his contact information will be included in your therapist's outgoing voice mail message. Therapists will make every effort to return calls within 48 hours. It is best to leave some times when you are most available to be reached. If you need to reach me more urgently you can call my cell phone at 312-543-2133 or write me an email at smh_dmt@ameritech.net. **If your therapist is unavailable and you are experiencing an emergency, please call the nearest hospital and ask for the psychiatrist on call or dial 911.**

Professional records

The laws and standards of the mental health profession require therapists to keep Protected Health Information (PHI) about you in your clinical record. It is important to understand that pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), your therapist may keep PHI about you in two sets of professional records. One set is your clinical chart, which may be accessed by third parties (such as insurance companies) with your written authorization. Some therapists keep a second record, referred to as Psychotherapy Notes. These notes are only for use by your therapist and may include contents of therapeutic conversations, analysis of those conversations and how they impact treatment. These notes are kept separate from your clinical record and

cannot be released to insurance companies without your authorization. Insurance companies cannot penalize you if you refuse to authorize disclosure of psychotherapy notes. You may examine and/or receive a copy of your clinical record and psychotherapy notes if you request this in writing. Because these records can be misinterpreted, it is recommended that you review them in the presence of your therapist or have them forwarded and reviewed with another mental health provider. Your therapist may charge a copying fee if you request a copy of these records.

Records of Minors

Clients under 12 years of age and their parents should be aware that the law allows parents to examine their child's treatment records. Parents of children between 12 and 18 cannot examine their child's records unless the child consents and the therapist finds no compelling reason to deny the access. Parents can request information concerning their child's current physical and mental condition, diagnosis, treatment needs, services provided and services needed. Since parental involvement, in most cases, is often crucial to successful treatment, it is recommended that clients between 12 and 18 years of age and their parents enter into an agreement that allows parents access to certain treatment information.

For children under the age of 18, all paperwork should be co-signed by both parents. Signature of both parents is required in all cases of separation and all divorce situations involving any type of joint custody. Although not required by law, it is preferred to have both parents agree to treatment even in cases of sole custody with no stipulation regarding medical treatment.

Costs

Fee for 60 minute session is \$120.00. For individuals struggling to afford co-payments or cost of sessions please speak with me about your situation since it is likely that we could work out an alternative financial arrangement. It is also important to know that fees may be charged for lengthy telephone conversations and time spent providing other services on your behalf. This may include extensive report writing, preparation and photocopying records or treatment summaries, consulting with other professionals with your consent and attendance at staffings. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require your therapist's participation, you will be expected to pay for all of his/her professional time, including preparation and transportation costs, even if he/she is called to testify by another party. Please discuss this with your therapist so that you clearly understand what services you will be charged for. In addition, therapists reserve the right to limit phone calls or other uses of their time to what they consider clinically appropriate, and he/she will openly discuss this with you.

Use of Insurance

Insurance is a complex issue. We ask clients **to call your insurance company** to discover what your mental health/chemical dependency coverage provides. Mental health coverage is usually different than physical health coverage. Please ask if you need pre-certification, what your co-pay is given our hourly rate, and how many sessions you are allowed in what period of time. We provide the courtesy of billing your primary insurance company, and ask for you to make your co-payment at the time of service. We also ask that you assume responsibility for tracking the usage of allotted sessions. In this regard you should take the initiative to discuss with your therapist (1) the number of sessions remaining before further approval is needed and/or (2) when no further sessions are available under your policy.

Ultimately, you are responsible for full payment of fees that your insurance company does not agree to cover. Therefore, it is important for you to fully understand your mental health and/or chemical dependency benefits. You will be responsible for discussing any disputes regarding coverage with your health insurance company. If you are disputing a claim for lack of payment with your insurance company, MBC may request that you pay your balance with us and agree to be reimbursed by the insurance company at a later date if the matter is eventually resolved.

Other billing issues

Mind Body Connections has a 24-hour cancellation policy for all sessions including group therapy. Insurance companies do not cover missed appointments. You will be billed for ½ the amount of the session if you fail to cancel with at least 24 hours notice.

We ask that *you* provide a credit card number for us to keep on file to cover balances that are minimally 30 days

overdue. We will notify you should we find it necessary to bill your card.

Mind Body Connections does use a collections agency, and may do so if an account is 90 days past due and compliance with a suitable payment plan has not occurred. If it is necessary to take legal action to collect fees, then legal fees will be included in the claim. Rather than enter an adversarial situation, we encourage you to speak directly to your therapist should financial issues arise which make timely reimbursement impossible.

Confidentiality

Illinois law protects the privacy of all communications between a patient and a mental health provider. In most situations, if you are 18 years of age or older, your therapist can only release information about your treatment to others if you sign a written authorization form that meets certain legal requirements imposed by HIPAA and/or Illinois law. However, there are several situations in which no authorization is required (please see Mind Body Connections Notice of Privacy Practices for explanation and clarification). Examples include:

- Consultation with other health and mental health professionals outside Clarus Center.
- Teaching and supervision.
- Discussion within Clarus Center.
- If you are involved in a court proceeding.
- Government Agency Oversight.
- Malpractice Suits.
- Workman's Compensation Claims.

Therapists are mandated reporters, and, as such, we have the legal obligation of notifying appropriate authorities in the following situations. Please note these situations are handled with the utmost care to protect those at risk for harm and with respect to the client's broken confidentiality.

- If your therapist believes that you present a clear, imminent risk of serious physical or mental injury or death to yourself.
- If you have made a specific threat of violence against another or if your therapist believes you present a clear, imminent risk of serious physical harm to another.
- If your therapist has reasonable cause to believe that a child under 18 known to him/her in his/her professional capacity may be abused or neglected by a parent, caretaker or other person responsible for a child's welfare.
- If your therapist has reason to believe that an adult over 59 years old, or under 60 years and disabled, has been abused, neglected or financially exploited in the preceding 12 months.