

Informed Consent

This will provide you with important information about counseling services. Please review this carefully and ask if you have any questions.

Client Responsibilities

Ownership. You will need to assume responsibility for your personal growth. Your therapist's experience, education and training are available to help you, but to be successful you will have to make decisions and take action.

Participation and involvement. You need to be actively involved in your treatment. Everything from goal setting, assignments, talking about what is important to you, and to being on time for appointments requires your commitment.

Notice of cancellation. If you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment, please give at least 24 hours notice. If appointments are missed but not canceled, you will be charged for the appointment.

Privacy of others. Although the office tries very hard to protect the privacy of our clients, you may learn information about other clients (i.e. you may see someone you know in the lobby or waiting area). By consenting to treatment, you are pledging to keep any information about other clients confidential.

Payment for services. You are responsible for payment of the services you receive.

Client's Rights

Privilege to withdraw. Treatment is voluntary. You may end counseling at any time without fear of penalty.

Respect. You can expect to be treated with respect. This means you will not be forced to divulge information you wish to withhold. Openness is encouraged, but if you are asked to disclose something you are not ready to share simply say so.

Confidentiality. Information you share in a session will be kept in strict confidence. Information such as the problems you are facing, progress, made, and goals for therapy will not be released (even to family, friends, or doctors) without your permission. Any release of information is isolated to the person giving consent (for example, if only one member of a couple requests a release, only information about that member will be given). Below are exceptions to confidentiality:

1. Suicide/homicide (threat to self or others). Information about suicide or homicide may not be kept confidential.
2. Child or elder abuse. Tennessee law requires professionals to report any reasonable suspicion or knowledge of abuse of a child or elder to State authorities.
3. Minors. If you are a minor under the age of 18 your guardian/parent retains the right to access and release your records. However, parents will be asked to respect the privacy of teens.
4. Joint Sessions. If you share session time with another person (i.e. couple, family, or group sessions) all participants will be asked to keep shared information private, but the therapist cannot guarantee that others will maintain your confidentiality.

5. Public Encounters. Your privacy will be respected if you should happen to meet your counselor outside of the office. Typically, your counselor will follow your lead in these situations. This means you can feel free not to address your counselor in public places.
6. Third party payors. Insurance companies and other third-party payors require information about your treatment. Usually this is in the form of documentation about diagnosis and/or goals and/or progress. You will sign a special form releasing information to third party payors.
7. Court Order. In certain instances, a person acting through the court system may request or require release of your record. This is very rare and such information will only be released as required by law. If possible, you will be notified of such requests.
8. Litigation Limitation: because therapy requires full disclosure of many confidential matters, it is agreed that should there be legal proceedings neither you nor your representative will call on Joseph Self to testify in court or at other proceedings, nor will his records be requested for any legal reason. The only exemption for this would be the legal mandatory reporting of abuse or threat to harm. In the event that my records are requested for this purpose, I will write a summary of my notes. A more detailed summary will be charged at a fee of \$100 per hour that is spent compiling the information. My fee for court appearance is \$1000.
9. Supervision. As a MFT Intern, I may have to share information about your case to my supervisor. Personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. Only information required to aid my supervisor in evaluating my work will be shared.

Expectations. Counseling is primarily based on the relationship you develop with your counselor. Every case is unique, but generally you can expect the following during the course of treatment.

1. Education. You can expect some information and education about what you are facing and new or more effective ways to cope.
2. Assignments. Occasionally you will be asked to complete 'homework'. This is work for you to do outside of the office between sessions. For example, you may be asked to write a letter, read an article, or practice a new behavior.
3. Client centered. You can expect to have sessions revolve around topics that concern you. This means the focus is on you and your goals, not the counselor's. The counseling relationship is not a friendship because it is 'one-sided' (focused only on you), formal, and time limited.
4. Sharing. The people who benefit the most from counseling are those that are open and honest with themselves and their counselor. You will be asked a lot of questions, but do not wait for your counselor to ask the right question, go ahead and share. Expect to examine yourself (i.e. thoughts, choices, feelings, behaviors, relationships, beliefs, etc.).
5. Length of Treatment and Frequency of Appointments. Sessions typically last 40-50 minutes, unless other arrangements are made. You and your counselor will determine the number and frequency of sessions. Some types of problems are quickly resolved in a few sessions, while others take longer. Your insurance provider may put limits on the number of sessions they will cover which may impact your ability to pay for counseling.

Emergency Sessions. You can always call your counselor in an emergency. **If you feel like you might hurt yourself or someone else and cannot contact your counselor; contact your local emergency room, law enforcement office, or Vanderbilt Behavioral Health (615) 327-7000.**

6. Telephone consultation or emergency visits are available and will be billed at your hourly rate.

Ending Counseling. Counseling should begin with the end in mind, and a good termination process will greatly enhance the benefit of counseling. Ideally you and your counselor will discuss, plan for, and

implement a termination process. However, you or your counselor may terminate counseling. You may end counseling for any reason, but your counselor may terminate counseling for any of the following reasons:

1. **Non-compliance.** Counseling may be terminated if you do not comply with treatment recommendations, fail to attend sessions, or do not adequately participate in treatment.
2. **Loss of Contact.** Your case will be closed if there is an unplanned lack of contact for more than one month.
3. **Clinical Necessity.** In some circumstances your counselor may determine that it is clinically necessary to discontinue therapy. For example, it may be that you need a different kind of care than what your counselor can offer. Your counselor will provide you with a referral to an appropriate provider.

Risks, Benefits, and Alternatives

Risks. Therapy is very safe, but there are some risks. The biggest risk is the result of change. People you know may not like if you change. Another risk is emotional pain or anxiety. For therapy to work you need to talk about what is important to you; sometimes emotionally charged discussions are painful. There may be times you feel worse after a session than before.

Benefits. The purpose of therapy is change. During therapy we learn new ways of doing things and more about ourselves and our relationships. Often the changes we make result in the reduction of problems and symptoms. You can set the goals for counseling.

About your Counselor. As you review this form with your counselor, he/she should explain to you how they counsel. This should include his/her qualification, his/her style of therapy, and any personal issues that may affect you. If you have any questions, feel free to ask your counselor.

Alternatives. There are alternatives to therapy. Medication, existing social support, and lifestyle changes are a few. There are also other types (styles) of therapy. If you do not think your counselor is helping, you can ask for a referral.

Guarantee. The potential for growth and healing is enormous, but there is no guarantee that counseling will produce the results you want. You are the single most important factor in how much counseling will help.

I have read and discussed the above information with my counselor. I understand the risks and benefits of counseling, the nature and limits of confidentiality, and what is expected of me as a client.

Signature of Client

Signature of Therapist

Date