Informed Consent for Telepsychology

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This **Informed Consent for Telepsychology** contains important information for doing psychotherapy using the phone or the internet with a focus on video (visual) based therapy. Please read this carefully and let me know if you have any questions.

If a situation ever arises where we decide to do a telepsychology session rather than skipping your appointment because I am only able to do telehealth sessions that day, if there is severe weather or predicted severe weather, or your or my exposure to a communicable illness such as the flu, or another reason then this signed consent is already in place. *You are not required to do a telehealth session. If you prefer, you can wait until your next scheduled appointment with me.*

Benefits and Risks of Telepsychology

Telepsychology refers to providing psychotherapy services remotely using telecommunications technologies, such as video conferencing or telephone calls. One of the benefits of telepsychology is that the client and clinician can engage in services without being in the same physical location. This can be helpful in ensuring continuity of care if the client or clinician moves to a different location, takes an extended vacation, or is otherwise unable to continue to meet in person. It is also more convenient and takes less time.

If you are out of the state at the time of your appointment Telepsychology services cannot occur and will need to be rescheduled.

Telepsychology requires technical competence on both our parts to be helpful. Although there are benefits of telepsychology, there are some differences between in-person psychotherapy and telepsychology, as well as some risks. For example:

- Risks to confidentiality. Because telepsychology sessions take place outside of the therapist's private office, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session. I will take reasonable steps to ensure your privacy. But it is important for you to make sure you find a private place for our session where you will not be interrupted. It is also important for you to protect the privacy of our session on your cell phone or other device. You should participate in therapy only while in a room or area where other people are not present and cannot overhear the conversation.
- Issues related to technology. There are many ways that technology issues might impact telepsychology. For example, technology may stop working during a session, other people might be able to get access to our private conversation, or stored data could be accessed by unauthorized people or companies.
- Crises management and intervention. Usually, I will not engage in telepsychology with clients who are currently in a crisis situation requiring high levels of support and intervention. Before engaging in telepsychology, we will develop an emergency response plan to address potential crisis situations that may arise during the course of our telepsychology work.
- Efficacy. Most research shows that telepsychology is about as effective as in-person psychotherapy. However, some therapists believe that something is lost by not being in the same room. For example, there is debate about a therapist's ability to fully understand non-verbal information when working remotely.

Electronic Communications

I will primarily work with video-conferencing telepsychology and secure phone calls, but we will decide together if other forms of telepsychology will be used. I do not provide therapy over texts, social media, or email. You may require certain computer or cell phone systems to use telepsychology services. You are solely responsible for any cost to you to obtain any necessary equipment, accessories, or software to take part in telepsychology.

Things needed for Telepsychology sessions:

- A smart phone, tablet or computer with audio and visual capabilities
- A Secure WIFI connection and not a public wifi
- A quiet, private space with little to no interruptions to conduct the sessions

For communication between sessions, please call my main office number and my office manager will assist you (405-321-0303). This includes things like setting and changing appointments, billing matters, daytime emergencies between the hours of 8:30am and 4:30 pm, and other related issues. You should be aware that I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information communicated by email or text. Therefore, I will not discuss any clinical information by email or text and prefer that you do not either. Also, I do not regularly check my email or texts, nor do I respond immediately, so these methods **should not** be used if there is an emergency.

Treatment is most effective when clinical discussions occur at your regularly scheduled sessions. In an emergency you have several choices depending on how quickly you need a response. You can:

- consult with your local ER and ask for the psychiatrist or psychologist who is on-call.
- call your insurance and alert them it is an emergency and ask for a referral to a nearby psychiatric hospital.
- call me at my office from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Friday, and 9:30 – 3:30 Saturday

I will return your call usually within 24 hours and maybe sooner. If I am unavailable, I will have another therapist in my office cover for me; call my office number and find out which doctor is covering for me.

Do not text me during an emergency, to ensure your privacy. I won't know who you are since I do not store patients' cell phone numbers on my cell phone.

Confidentiality

I have a legal and ethical responsibility to make my best efforts to protect all communications that are a part of our telepsychology. However, the nature of electronic communications technologies is such that I cannot guarantee that our communications will be kept confidential or that other people may not gain access to our communications. I will try to use updated encryption methods, firewalls, and back-up systems to help keep your information private, but there is a risk that our electronic communications may be compromised, unsecured, or accessed by others. You should also take reasonable steps to ensure the security of our communications (for example, only using secure networks for telepsychology sessions and having passwords to protect the device you use for telepsychology).

The extent of confidentiality and the exceptions to confidentiality that I outlined in my Informed Consent still apply in telepsychology. Please let me know if you have any questions about exceptions to confidentiality.

Appropriateness of Telepsychology

Because telepsychology is not appropriate for every situation, I will let you know if I decide that telepsychology is no longer the most appropriate form of treatment for you. We will discuss options for engaging in in-person counseling or referrals to another professional in your location who can provide appropriate services.

Emergencies and Technology

Assessing and evaluating threats and other emergencies can be more difficult when conducting telepsychology rather than traditional in-person therapy. To address some of these difficulties, we will create an emergency plan before engaging in telepsychology services. I will ask you to identify an emergency contact person who is near your location and who I will contact in the event of a crisis or emergency to assist in addressing such a situation. I will ask that you sign a separate authorization form allowing me to contact your emergency contact person as needed during such a crisis or emergency.

If you are having an emergency during the telehealth session and the session is interrupted for any reason, such as the technological connection fails, do not call me back; instead, call 911, or go to your nearest emergency room. Call me back after you have called or obtained emergency services.

If the session is interrupted and you are not having an emergency, disconnect from the session and I will wait two (2) minutes and then re-contact you via the telepsychology platform on which we agreed to conduct therapy. If you do not receive a call back within two (2) minutes, then call me on the phone number I provided to you: 405-321-0303.

If there is a technological failure and we are unable to resume the connection, you will only be charged a prorated amount of the actual session time.

Fees

Please call our office with your payment prior to or right after our session: 405-321-0303. Insurance companies have differing policies on whether they cover telepsychology services. My billing company, JCarman Billing & Consulting, will do a benefit verification prior to your first session and my office staff will share the benefits given to us with you. Of course, this doesn't guarantee an insurance benefit and payment, and we encourage all patients to check their policy as well. See my main Business Policy for my fee schedule and other policies regarding payments.

Records

The telepsychology sessions shall not be recorded in any way unless agreed to in writing by both parties by mutual consent. I will maintain a record of our session in the same way I maintain records of in-person sessions in accordance with my policies.

Informed and Signed Consent for Telepsychology

This agreement is intended as a supplement to the general informed consent for treatment that we agreed to at the outset of our clinical work together and does not amend any of the terms of that agreement. Your signature below indicates agreement with its terms and conditions. You must also sign my Client Services Agreement and Consent for Treatment Form, which is a separate document.

_____ _____

Signature of Client or of the Legal Guardian with rights for medical consent for patient

Date

Please sign and return to our office manager via email or fax by your first appointment:

office@normanpsychology.com or fax to us at 405-801-2846

A signed consent form must be on file prior to any Telepsychology sessions.