

## **Informed Consent & Agreement For Psychotherapy Services**

### **Introduction**

This document is intended to provide important information to you regarding your treatment. Please read the entire document carefully and be sure to ask me any questions that you may have regarding its contents before signing it. It is your right to have a complete explanation for any questions you may have, now or in the future.

**Information about Your Therapist.** Whenever you wish, I will discuss my professional background with you and provide you with information regarding my experience, education, special interests, and professional orientation. You are free to ask questions at any time about the above, and anything else related to your therapy or other concerns. Michelle Catania, LMFT LLC is owned by Michelle Catania, LMFT. I share space with Our Savior Lutheran Church. This practice is separate, and each is solely and entirely responsible for any liabilities resulting from that practice.

**Fees.** The fee for service is \$\_\_\_\_\_ per 60 minute therapy session.

Fees are payable at the time that services are rendered. Please ask me if you wish to discuss a written agreement that specifies an alternative payment procedure.

**Appointment Scheduling and Cancellation Policies.** Sessions are typically scheduled to occur one time per week at the same time and day if possible. I may suggest a different amount of therapy depending on the nature and severity of your concerns. Your consistent attendance greatly contributes to a successful outcome. Scheduled appointment times are reserved especially for you. If an appointment is missed, or canceled with less than 24 hours notice, you (not your insurance company) may be charged the full fee for that missed session. Exceptions may be made if you are sick or have an unavoidable emergency.

**Insurance.** Please inform me if you wish to utilize health insurance to pay for services. I will discuss the procedures for billing your insurance. Although I am happy to assist your efforts to seek insurance reimbursement, I am unable to guarantee whether your insurance will provide payment for the services provided to you. The amount of reimbursement and the amount of any co-payments or deductible depends on the requirements of your specific insurance plan.

You should be aware that insurance plans generally limit coverage to certain diagnosable mental conditions, which then become part of your medical record. You should also be aware that you are responsible for verifying and understanding the limits of your insurance coverage. You are responsible for obtaining prior authorization for treatment from your insurance carrier. Please discuss any questions or concerns that you may have about this with me.

If for some reason you find that you are unable to continue paying for your therapy, please inform me. I will help you to consider any other options that may be available to you at that time.

**Delinquent Accounts.** You understand that you are responsible for all charges incurred and that services must be paid in full at the time of each visit, unless other arrangements have been made in advance. Should your account become delinquent, you agree to pay interest at 1.5% per month, and if it becomes necessary for the account to be referred for collection action, you agree to pay the actual balance due plus any collection expenses.

**Risks and Benefits of Therapy.** Psychotherapy is a process in which we will discuss a myriad of issues, events, experiences and memories for the purpose of creating positive change so that you can experience your life more fully. It provides an opportunity to better and more deeply understand oneself, as well as any problems or difficulties you may be

experiencing. Psychotherapy is a joint effort between us. Progress and success may vary depending upon the particular problems or issues being addressed, as well as many other factors. Participating in therapy may result in a number of benefits to you, including, but not limited to, reduced stress and anxiety, a decrease in negative thoughts and self-sabotaging behaviors, improved interpersonal relationships, increased comfort in social, work, and family settings, increased capacity for intimacy, and increased self-confidence. Such benefits may also require substantial effort on your part, including an active participation in the therapeutic process, honesty, and a willingness to change feelings, thoughts and behaviors. There is no guarantee that therapy will yield any or all of the benefits listed above.

Participating in therapy may also involve some discomfort, including remembering and discussing unpleasant events, feelings and experiences. The process may evoke strong feelings of sadness, anger, fear, anxiety, etc. There may be times in which I will challenge your perceptions and assumptions, and offer different perspectives. The issues presented by you may result in unintended outcomes, including changes in personal relationships. Sometimes a decision that is positive for one family member is viewed quite differently by another. You should be aware that any decision on the status of your personal relationships is your sole responsibility. During the therapeutic process, many people find that they feel worse before they feel better. This is generally a normal course of events. Personal growth and change may be easy and swift at times, but may also be slow and frustrating. You should discuss with me any concerns you have regarding your progress in therapy.

**Discussion of Treatment Plan.** It is my intention to provide services that will assist you in reaching your goals. Within a reasonable period of time after the initiation of treatment, I will discuss with you my working understanding of the problem, treatment plan, therapeutic objectives and my view of the possible outcomes of treatment. Sometimes more than one approach can be helpful in dealing with a certain situation. During the course of therapy, I will draw on various treatment approaches according, in part, to the problem that is being treated and my assessment of what will best benefit you.

I believe that therapists and clients are partners in the therapeutic process. You have the right to agree or disagree with my recommendations. If you have any unanswered questions about any of the procedures used in the course of your therapy, their possible risks, my expertise in employing them, or about the treatment plan, please ask and you will be answered fully. You also have the right to ask about other treatments for your condition and their risks and benefits. If you could benefit from any treatment that I do not provide, I have an ethical obligation to assist you in obtaining those treatments.

**Termination of Therapy.** The length of your treatment and the timing of the eventual termination of your treatment depend on the specifics of your treatment plan and the progress you achieve. It is a good idea to plan for your termination, in collaboration with me. I will discuss a plan for termination with you as you approach the completion of your treatment goals. You may discontinue therapy at any time. If you or I determine that you are not benefiting from treatment, either of us may elect to initiate a discussion of your treatment alternatives. Treatment alternatives may include, among other possibilities, referral, changing your treatment plan, or terminating your therapy. It is best to discuss this in a planned termination session if at all possible.

**Professional Consultation.** Professional consultation is an important component of a healthy psychotherapy practice. As such, I regularly participate in clinical, ethical, and legal consultation with appropriate professionals. During such consultations, I will not reveal any personally identifying information regarding you or your situation.

**Collaboration with Other Professionals.** In order to provide quality services, I often need to collaborate with other professionals, such as your physician, psychiatrist, past therapists, and/or other mental health professionals. You will be asked to complete a release of information authorizing these exchanges; in some cases, I may not be able to provide services without this.

**Records and Record Keeping.** I may take notes during session, and will also produce other notes and records regarding your treatment. These notes constitute my clinical and business records, which by law, I am required to maintain. Such records are the sole property of the therapist. Should you request a copy of my records, such a request must be made in writing. I typically maintain records for seven years following termination of therapy. After seven years, your records will be destroyed in a manner that preserves your confidentiality.

**Confidentiality.** The information disclosed by you is generally confidential and will not be released to any third party without written authorization from you, except where required or permitted by law. Exceptions to confidentiality include, but are not limited to, situations where you pose a threat of serious harm to yourself or someone else; cases involving suspected child, elder or dependent adult abuse; cases in which I am court-ordered to testify or produce records; or as outlined in the "Notice of Privacy Practices" (copies available upon request).

If you participate in marital or family therapy, I will not disclose confidential information about your treatment unless all person(s) who participated in the treatment with you provide their written authorization to release such information. However, it is important that you know that I utilize a "no secrets" policy when conducting family or marital/couples therapy. This means that I do not keep secret information gathered in individual conversations (whether on the phone or in an individual session) if the information revealed in some way violates the integrity of the couples/family therapy (such as revealing an affair, substance problem, or intent to leave the relationship). Such information will need to be revealed to the other partner for therapy to effectively continue. Please feel free to ask me about my "no secrets" policy and how it may apply to you.

**Psychotherapist-Client Privilege.** The information disclosed by you, as well as any records created, is subject to the psychotherapist-client privilege. The psychotherapist-client privilege results from the special relationship between Therapist and Client in the eyes of the law. It is akin to the attorney-client privilege or the doctor-client privilege. Typically, the client is the holder of the psychotherapist-client privilege. If I receive a subpoena for records, deposition testimony, or testimony in a court of law, I will assert the psychotherapist-client privilege on your behalf until instructed, in writing, to do otherwise by you or your representative. You should be aware that you might be waiving the psychotherapist-client privilege regarding your entire treatment if you make your mental or emotional state an issue in a legal proceeding. You should address any concerns you might have regarding the psychotherapist-client privilege with your attorney.

**Client Litigation.** I will not voluntarily participate in any litigation or custody dispute in which you and another individual, or entity, are parties. I have a policy of not communicating with clients' attorneys and will generally not write or sign letters, reports, declarations, or affidavits to be used in any client's legal matter. I will generally not provide records or testimony unless compelled to do so.

**Therapist Availability / Emergencies.** You may leave a message for me at any time on my confidential voicemail at 860.849.6743. If you wish me to return your call, please be sure to leave your name and phone number(s), along with a brief message concerning the nature of your call. Non-urgent phone calls are generally returned within 24 hours during normal workdays (Monday through Friday). Please understand that as a solo, outpatient practitioner, I am unable to personally provide continuous 24-hour crisis services. In the event of a medical emergency or an emergency involving a threat to your safety or the safety of others, please call 911 to request emergency assistance or go to the nearest emergency room.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

By signing below, Client(s) acknowledge that Client(s) have reviewed and fully understand the terms and conditions of this Agreement. Client(s) have discussed such terms and conditions with the therapist, and have had any questions with regard to its terms and conditions answered to Client(s)' satisfaction. Client(s) agree to abide by the terms and conditions of this

Agreement and consent to participate in psychotherapy with the Therapist. Moreover, Client(s) agree to hold Therapist free and harmless from any claims, demands, or suits for damages from any injury or complications whatsoever, save negligence, that may result from such treatment.

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Client Name (please print)	Signature of Client (or authorized representative)	Date
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**Consent to Bill Insurance**

(Optional) I hereby authorize my therapist to bill my insurance carrier or any other payment source. I assign all benefits and authorize payment directly to my therapist for any benefits otherwise payable to me for all claims for such services provided or submitted prior to, or after, the date provided on this form.

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Client Name (please print)	Signature of Client (or authorized representative)	Date
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**Consent to Treatment of Minors**

This section must be completed by the parent or legal guardian of each child who attends session. Some custody agreements require the signatures of both parents for treatment. Because of this, it is generally my policy to require the signature of both parents in any divorce situation.

**Confidentiality with Minors**

The State of Connecticut provides significant confidentiality to minors seeking mental health treatment. In fact, minors over 12 years of age have many privacy rights similar to those of adults. My role as a therapist is to help minors learn to communicate openly and directly with their parents, and thus, I typically involve parents in the counseling process. That said, when children are making poor and dangerous decisions parents will be brought into the conversation as soon as possible, which in the case of many situations – such as suicidal ideation or attempts – is immediately.

I hereby consent to treatment of my child(ren) per the terms outlined in the above pages of this document:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

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Parent / Guardian Name (please print)	Parent / Guardian Signature	Date
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Parent / Guardian Name (please print)	Parent / Guardian Signature	Date
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