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Agreement for Treatment
with Rebecca Mueller, Psy.D.

This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Please read it carefully so that we can discuss any questions you may have at our next appointment. This document represents an agreement between us. Thus, I welcome your questions and comments prior to us both signing it.

Psychotherapeutic Services

Psychotherapy is an individual journey. It is not easily described in general statements, and the process varies notably depending on the personalities of the therapist and client, and the particular problems or issues you would like to address. I employ a variety of methods to deal with your concerns: insight-oriented talk therapy, mindfulness, stress reduction techniques, hypnosis, EMDR.

If you have questions about my procedures, we should discuss them whenever they arise. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead, it calls for an active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, it is essential for us to meet consistently, and for you to think about and work on things we talk about between appointments.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. We will be discussing many aspects of your life, some of which are or were distressing to you. You may experience a wide range of feelings, both during and after appointments. These could include, but are not limited to, sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, helplessness, and general emotional distress. Sometimes people feel worse before they feel better. On the other hand, psychotherapy has been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy can lead to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, reductions in feelings of distress, and a general sense of knowing and accepting one's self. However, psychotherapy is not an exact science, so predictions of the effect or experience are not precise or guaranteed.

Our first several sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, I will be able to offer you some first impressions for the focus of our work. If you decide to continue therapy together, we will discuss the frequency of our appointments and develop a treatment plan. During these first meetings and throughout treatment, I encourage you to evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with me. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy; finding a therapist who is a "good fit" is a very important aspect of the work and of its success. If you would like a referral to another provider, at any point in our work together, I will be happy to help you find another provider, either for a second opinion, or a transition to a different provider.

Confidentiality

All information disclosed within a session is confidential and may not be revealed to anyone without your written permission except where disclosure is required by law. For example, I am legally obligated to take action, even if I have to reveal some identifying information about you or your treatment without your consent, in the following circumstances:

- to preserve your life,
- to prevent harm to another person or,
- to avert abuse to a minor, adult, elder or disabled person.

These situations have rarely occurred in my practice. If such a situation does occur, I will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking action.

There are also certain circumstances under the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requiring disclosure of your health information. Details are outlined in the form titled, "Notice of Privacy Practices", which we have already reviewed. Some HIPAA permitted disclosures include: using mental health information about you for administrative purposes and to obtain approval for insurance coverage and payment.

With the exception of required disclosures, a signed consent form is required. For example, it is often helpful for communication to occur between me and other health care providers. In order for me to do so, unless there is a threat of harm, I must obtain your signed consent.

Finally, I regularly consult with other professionals about my work. I find that this is both helpful and an important part of my commitment to provide the best care for you. During consultation, I make every effort to avoid revealing identifying information. Like me, the consultant is legally bound to keep the information confidential.

Fees and billing

Our agreed upon fee for the therapy session is \$150.00 for a 45 minute session. From time to time, I may recommend a longer session. If we agree to a longer session, the fee is \$175.00 for 60 minutes or \$220.00 for 75 minutes.

The fee (check or cash) for my services is payable at each appointment. Periodic fee increases will be implemented. You will be given ample notice of any fee changes.

A monthly statement is available upon request.

Insurance reimbursement

In order for us to set up realistic goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate the resources you have to pay for treatment. If you have health insurance, it may provide some coverage for mental health services. I will fill out forms and provide you with whatever assistance I can in helping you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; however, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for full payment of my fees.

You should carefully read the section in your insurance booklet that describes mental health coverage to find out exactly what mental health services your policy covers. If you have questions about your coverage, call your plan administrator. I have a checklist highlighting important information to obtain. I will provide it upon request. I will be happy to help you understand the information you receive from your insurance company to the extent I can, based on my experience.

I am a preferred provider for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois and for Northwestern University's Aetna Student Health Insurance. I bill these providers directly. Depending on your coverage, you will be responsible for co-pay and/or co-insurance amounts.

If you have another insurance plan, it is your responsibility to submit claims. I will provide a monthly statement that may be used to obtain your out-of-network benefits. Typically, you can attach this statement to your claim form and reimbursement will be sent directly to you.

You should be aware that I am required to provide the insurance company with a clinical diagnosis when you use your benefits to cover mental health services. I may be required to provide additional information to obtain approval for continued sessions. This could include: increases or decreases in symptoms, medication changes and progress in treatment. You release me to provide this information when you consent to having me bill insurance directly.

The information I provide to insurance companies will become part of the insurance file and will probably be stored on a computer. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such

information confidential, I have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. In some cases, they may share this information with a national medical information databank.

It is important for you to remember that you always have the right to pay for my services yourself to avoid the process described above.

Health care is in flux at this time. The landscape is changing at a relatively rapid pace. It is uncertain what these changes will mean for mental health care and insurance. I will do my best to alert you to changes as I become aware of them. Ultimately, however, it is your responsibility to stay informed about how any changes in health insurance coverage will affect our work together.

Appointments

Once you and I decide to work together, we will establish a mutually agreeable ongoing appointment time. This time will become your slot that we will both preserve. In order to best address your areas of concern, it is very important that we meet as predictably and consistently as possible. Should you need to cancel an appointment due to an unavoidable conflict, please provide at least 48 hours notice.

Appointments cancelled with less than 48 hours notice will be billed at your regular rate. Please note that if I am billing insurance for your therapy appointments, I will not be able to bill for sessions you do not attend. Hence, should you cancel with less than 48 hours notice, you will be responsible for the entire cost of the session.

Likewise if you are late for a session, I may not be able to bill the full time of your session to insurance. You will be responsible for the difference between the time I have reserved for you and the actual amount of time spent in session. I can only bill the actual amount of time we meet.

If you are consistently needing to reschedule your appointment to a different time it is likely that I will not be able to hold your time slot, and we will discuss alternative times.

Contacting me

The best way to reach me is by phone/voicemail at my office: 847-492-8230. The voice mail will receive a message of up to 3 minutes. Please be sure to leave your phone number for a more rapid reply. Failure to leave a return number will delay my ability to respond.

I am generally in my office Tuesday-Friday. I check my messages often and will return your call as soon as time permits, usually within 24 hours. Occasionally, it may take several hours, but I will do my best to get back to you the same day. If you haven't heard from me and you feel a reasonable time has passed, or your message reflected urgency and I have not called, please call again. Messages have been lost by AT&T voicemail. I'd rather receive two messages than have you waiting for me to return a call that might not come.

On weekends, I access voicemail messages less frequently than on weekdays. Non-urgent calls received after 5 on Friday through Monday are returned on the following Tuesday, unless you indicate you need to hear from me sooner. In that case, I will return your call as soon as I am able.

Email (rebecca@rebeccamueller.com) can be used for administrative matters, for example, upcoming scheduling, billing questions, or other practical concerns. Emails are not encrypted. For your own security, you may want to avoid addressing anything of a sensitive nature via this means. As a matter of my own practice, I do not address anything of a confidential or clinical nature via email. If there is such an issue, please contact me by phone rather than email.

PLEASE NOTE: I rarely have my computer at the office. I typically check email in the morning and late evening. *Urgent matters, same-day scheduling changes, or close to 48-hour notice*

should be addressed by phone.

Emergencies

If you are unable to reach me and feel you cannot wait for my return call, you should call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room for consultation and evaluation. PLEASE NOTE: I do not carry a pager and am not available 24 hours a day. If you believe you need such crisis services, this may not be the best practice fit for you. I will assist you to the extent I am able in finding another practitioner.

Vacation Coverage

Periodically during the course of a year, I will be unavailable to meet due to vacations or attendance at professional meetings. During those times one of my trusted colleagues is available in the event issues arise that cannot wait for my return.

The name and contact number for this covering therapist will be on my outgoing message. The covering therapist will not be checking my voicemail, so you must contact the individual directly. This therapist will not know detailed information about you or your situation, unless you and I have made previous arrangements and you have signed a release of information to this effect.

My colleagues do not carry pagers. If you contact the covering individual and are unable to wait up to several hours, or overnight, for their return call, you need to call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room for consultation and evaluation.

Waiting Room Etiquette and Safety

Our waiting room is intended to provide a warm, calming and quiet environment. Water, tea and magazines are provided for your comfort. We ask that a contemplative atmosphere be maintained. Thus, we request that conversations be limited, voices lowered and no cell phones used.

The waiting room has restricted access for everyone's safety. The security code is provided with the request that you not share it with anyone. Please be sure to pull the door closed behind you and to not let anyone in. If someone is struggling with the door, or is knocking, please let one of the therapists handle it.

Professional Records

The laws and standards of my profession require that I keep treatment records. You may request a copy of your record, or I can prepare a summary for you instead. Because these are professional records, they can be misinterpreted and/or upsetting to untrained readers. If you wish to see your records, I recommend that you review them in my presence so that we can discuss the content.

Independent Practice

I am in independent practice. Although I share this suite with other, independent clinicians and Collaborative Therapy Partners, I am not part of a group.

Signature _____
Date

Signature _____
Date

Provider Signature _____
Date