

## Consent Form

Welcome to LifeSpire! This document contains important information about our professional and business policies. Please read it carefully and jot down any questions you might have so we can discuss them at your appointment. When you sign another separate page that lists this document, it will represent an agreement between us.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Psychotherapy is not easily described in general statements. It varies depending on the personalities of the psychologist and patient, and the particular problems you bring forward. There are many different methods that each therapist may use to deal with the problems that you hope to address. Psychotherapy is not like a medical doctor visit. Instead it calls for a very active effort on your part. In order for the therapy to be most successful, you will have to work on things we talk about both during our sessions and at home.

Psychotherapy can have benefits and risks. Since therapy often involves discussing unpleasant aspects of your life, you may experience uncomfortable feelings like sadness, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and helplessness. On the other hand, psychotherapy has also been shown to have benefits for people who go through it. Therapy often leads to better relationships, solutions to specific problems, and significant reductions in feelings of distress. However, there are no guarantees of what you will experience.

Our first few sessions will involve an evaluation of your needs. By the end of the evaluation, we (a LifeSpire psychotherapist) will be able to offer you some first impressions of what our work will include and a treatment plan will follow, if you decide to continue with therapy. You should evaluate this information along with your own opinions of whether you feel comfortable working with your psychotherapist. Therapy involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy, so you should be careful about the therapist you select. If you have questions about our procedures, we should discuss this whenever they arise. If your doubt persists, we would be happy to help you set up a meeting with another mental health professional for a second opinion.

### MEETINGS

Our first meeting will be one hour (60 minutes). Your psychotherapist will normally conduct an evaluation that will last 2 to 3 sessions. During this time, you and your psychotherapist will both decide if your psychotherapist is the best person to provide the services you need in order to meet your treatment goals. If psychotherapy is begun, we will usually schedule one 45-minute session (one appointment hour of 45 minutes duration) per week at a time we agree upon, although some sessions may be longer (60 minutes) or more frequent. Once an appointment hour is scheduled, you will be expected to pay for the full session unless you

provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellation. Your insurance will not cover late cancel fees or missed appointments. If possible, we will try to find another time to reschedule the appointment.

## **PROFESSIONAL FEES**

The first session/intake appointment fee is \$180 and will be approximately 60 minutes. After this first session, the fee is \$130 for 45-minutes of individual therapy, \$175 for 1 hour of individual therapy, and \$140 for couples/family therapy (45 minutes). In addition to weekly appointments, we charge this amount for other professional services you may need, though we will break down the hourly cost if we work for periods less than an hour (\$45 every 15 minutes). With regard to psychological testing/assessment, the first session/intake appointment is \$180. Each additional hour of testing, interpretation, and report writing is billed per hour (60 minutes) at \$180 and broken down if less than an hour (\$45 every 15 minutes). Other services include telephone conversations lasting longer than 10 minutes, writing letters, attendance at meetings with other professionals you have authorized, preparation of records or treatment summaries, and time spent performing any other service you may request of us. If you become involved in legal proceedings that require our participation, you will be expected to pay for our professional time even if we are called to testify by another party. Because of the difficulty of legal involvement, we charge \$250 per hour for preparation and attendance of any legal proceeding.

## **BILLING AND PAYMENTS**

You will be expected to pay for each session at the time it is held, unless we agree otherwise or unless you have insurance coverage which requires another arrangement. Payment schedules for other professional services will be agreed to when they are requested. We accept personal checks payable to LifeSpire, LLC or exact cash. At this time we are unable to accept credit cards or debit cards.

If your account has not been paid for more than 60 days and arrangements for payment have not been agreed upon, we have the option of using legal means to secure the payment. This may involve hiring a collection agency or going through small claims court. If legal action is necessary, those costs will be included in the claim. In most collection situations, the only information released regarding a patient's treatment is his/her name, the nature of services provided, and the amount due.

## **INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT**

In order for us to set realistic treatment goals and priorities, it is important to evaluate what resources you have available to pay for your treatment. If you have a health insurance policy, it will usually provide some coverage for mental health treatment. We will fill out forms and provide you with whatever assistance we can in helping

you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; however, you (not your insurance company) are responsible for the full payment of our fees. It is very important that you find out exactly what mental health services your insurance policy covers.

You should carefully read the section in your insurance coverage booklet that describes the mental health services. If you have questions about the coverage, call your plan administrator. Of course we will provide you with whatever information we can based on our experience and will be happy to help you in understanding the information you receive from your insurance company. If it is necessary to clear confusion, we will be willing to call the company on your behalf.

Due to rising costs of healthcare, insurance benefits have increasingly become more complex. It is sometimes difficult to determine exactly how much mental health coverage is available. “Managed care plans” such as HMOs and PPOs often require authorization before they provide reimbursement for mental health services. These plans are often limited to short-term treatment approaches designed to work out specific problems that interfere with a person’s usual level of functioning. It may be necessary to seek approval for more therapy after a certain number of sessions. While a lot can be accomplished in short-term therapy, some patients feel they need more services after insurance benefits end.

You should also be aware that most insurance companies require you to authorize us to provide them with a clinical diagnosis. Sometimes we have to provide additional clinical information such as treatment plans or summaries, or copies of the entire record (in rare cases). This information will become part of the insurance company files and will probably be stored in a computer. Though all insurance companies claim to keep such information confidential, we have no control over what they do with it once it is in their hands. In some cases, they may share the information with a national medical information database. We will provide you a copy of any report we submit, if you request it.

Once we have all the information about your insurance coverage, we will discuss what we expect to accomplish with the benefits that are available and what will happen if they run out before you feel ready to end our sessions. It is important you remember that you always have the right to pay for our services yourself to avoid the problems described above.

## CONTACTING ME

We are available by email and telephone. While we are usually in the office between 9 AM and 5 PM, we probably will not answer the phone when we are with a patient. When we are unavailable, our telephone is answered by voice mail. We will make every effort to return your call on the same day you make it, with the exceptions of weekend and holidays. If you are difficult to reach, please inform us of some times when you are available. If you are unable to reach us and feel that you can't wait for us to return your call, contact your family physician or the nearest emergency room and ask for the psychologist on call, or call 911. If we will be unavailable for an extended amount of time, we will provide you with the name of a colleague to contact, if necessary.

## EMERGENCIES

In an emergency situation in which one's physical safety is in danger or there is a need for hospitalization, contact Crisis Intervention for your specific county. See below:

<b>CUMBERLAND COUNTY:</b>	<b>717-763-2222</b>	<b>CARLISLE AREA:</b>	<b>717-243-6005</b>
<b>DAUPHIN COUNTY:</b>	<b>717-232-7511</b>	<b>LEBANON COUNTY:</b>	<b>717-274-3363</b>
<b>LANCASTER COUNTY:</b>	<b>717-394-2631</b>	<b>YORK COUNTY:</b>	<b>1-800-673-2496</b>

## PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

The laws and standards of our profession require that we keep treatment records. You are entitled to receive a copy of your records, or we can provide 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, we recommend that you review them in our presence so that we can discuss their contents. Patients will be charged an appropriate fee for any professional time spent in responding to information requests.

## MINORS

If you are under 14 years of age, please be aware that the law may provide your parents the right to examine your treatment records. It is our policy to request an agreement from parents that they agree to give up access to your records. If they agree, we will provide them only with general information about our work together, unless we feel there is a high risk that you will seriously harm yourself or someone else. In this case, we will notify them of our concern. We will also provide them with a summary of your treatment plan when it is complete. Before giving them any information, we will discuss the matter with you, if possible, and do our best to handle any objections you may have with what we are prepared to discuss.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

In general, the privacy of all communications between a patient and a psychologist/psychotherapist is protected by law, and we can only release information about our work to others with your written permission. But there are a few exceptions.

In most legal proceedings, you have the right to prevent us from providing any information about your treatment. In some proceedings involving child custody and those in which your emotional condition is an important issue, a judge may order our testimony if he/she determines the issues demand it.

There are some situations in which we are legally obligated to take action to protect others from harm, even if we have to reveal some information about a patient's treatment. For example, if we believe a child is being abused, we file a report with the appropriate state agency.

If we believe that a patient is threatening serious bodily harm to another, we are required to take protective actions. These actions may include notifying the potential victim, contacting the police, or seeking hospitalization for the patient. If the patient threatens to harm himself/herself, we may be obligated to seek hospitalization for him/her or to contact family members or others who can help provide protection. These situations have rarely occurred in our practice. If a similar situation occurs, we will make every effort to fully discuss it with you before taking any action.

We may occasionally find it helpful to consult with other professional about a case. During a consultation, we make every effort to avoid revealing the identity of our patient. The consultant is also legally bound to keep the information confidential. If you don't object, we will not tell you about these consultations unless we feel it is important to our work together.

While this written summary of exceptions to confidentiality should prove helpful in informing you about potential problems, it is important that we discuss any questions or concerns you may have at our next meeting. We will be happy to discuss these issues with you if you need specific advice, but formal legal advice may be needed because the laws governing confidentiality are quite complex, and we are not attorneys.

Your signature on a separate form that lists this consent form indicates you have read the information in this document and agree to abide by its terms during our professional relationship.