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INFORMED CONSENT FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Welcome to my practice. This document contains important information about my professional services, the risks and benefits of psychological treatment, and potential for referral for alternative treatment. Please read it carefully so that we may discuss it and address any questions that you might have when we meet. This consent for treatment covers your therapy, therapy for you and your partner or family member, or therapy for a child under your legal custody.

NATURE OF 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 are experiencing. During our work together, Dr. Spiro will use various psychological approaches depending upon the problem(s) being addressed and my assessment of what will benefit you. In general, his approach can be described as "psychodynamic." A psychodynamic approach essentially means that he will view your difficulties in light of how you view yourself, and how you view yourself in relation to other people, in the context of your past, your present circumstances, and your wishes for the future.

Sessions will typically focus on whatever thoughts, feelings, and descriptions of behavior you express, and entail detailed exploration and clarification of your experiences. Within this general approach, Dr. Spiro may emphasize the use of certain techniques such as cognitive (i.e., focusing on the way you think about things and how this might affect your feelings and your impressions of other people) interpersonal (i.e., focusing on your relationships with others), or specific problem-solving (i.e., generating alternatives for action on a specific issue). Emotional support, suggestions, educational comments, specific communication skill development, reflection on your spiritual life, and understanding your dreams may also be a part of what we do together. In addition, exploration of your feelings about your relationship may become an important part of your coming to understand yourself and other people who are important to you, and to resolve your difficulties.

For couple therapy, Dr. Spiro emphasizes communication skill development, interpersonal problem solving, appropriate conflict resolution, improving intimacy, increasing pleasurable time together, and as appropriate, the exploration and therapeutic working through of emotional wounds.

For children aged 10 to 13, therapy is typically more verbal in nature, but simple games may be utilized to provide comfort and decrease the pressure for eye contact while discussing difficult topics. Many times, the treatment will include parental guidance and training to address a child's behavioral issues. Family therapy may be recommended when it is necessary to address difficulties that emerge as a result of family dynamics, its relationships, its structure, and its roles. Often, but not always, family therapy may be provided by a different therapist to maintain appropriate boundaries and preserve the therapeutic relationship that exists within a child's individual therapy.

As a result of our work together, it is expected that you will become better at making choices in your life in a way that will help ameliorate your distress, cope with various stressors, manage your life more adaptively, provide you with a greater sense of security, and assist in your emotional and interpersonal growth. If you have questions about his approaches, their possible risks and benefits, or Dr. Spiro's skill in using them, please ask him and he will address them as fully as possible.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

The majority of individuals who obtain therapy benefit from the process. Benefits may include relief of specific symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression, and fears), improved interpersonal relationships, greater self-confidence, easier decision-making, and improvement in the specific concerns that you (or you and your partner/family member) to seek psychotherapy. Success may vary depending on the particular problems being addressed as well as your consistency and motivation. Psychotherapy involves active participation, self-exploration, gaining new insights about yourself and others, finding ways of dealing with problems, and learning new skills. Typically, the length of psychotherapy is determined by our collaborative discussion and agreement as we work together. However, we can agree on a predetermined number of sessions or length of time at the outset. The length of psychotherapy needed usually depends upon the extent and severity of your specific problems, practical considerations that may impact your ability to commit time and financial resources, any preferences that you may have, and my professional recommendation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL RISKS

Although research and clinical experience indicates that psychotherapy is typically beneficial, there are some risks. While the benefits of therapy are well known, you may have unwanted experiences such as disruptions in your interpersonal relationships, negative experiences in your immediate work life, unhappiness, anxiety, fear, anger, guilt, frustration, or insomnia. These are often a natural part of the therapy process and typically provide the basis for change. Important personal decisions are often a result of therapy. These decisions, including changing behavior, exploring employment options, substance use patterns, schooling, or relationships, are likely to produce new opportunities as well as unique challenges. Sometimes a decision that is positive for one family member will be viewed quite negatively by another family member. There are no guarantees that therapy will produce positive or intended effects. However, commitment to the process and motivation toward positive change will most likely assist in a helpful outcome. Changes are sometimes made easily and quickly, but sometimes change is a slow and frustrating process.

ASSESSMENTS, REFERRALS & OTHER TESTING

Psychological assessment in the form of testing can also help us understand why behaviors occur and Dr. Spiro may recommend it. Initial impressions about treatment plans, suggested procedures, and goals will be discussed by Dr. Spiro and you. In the beginning of your work together, and periodically along the way, we will examine your goals and revise them as needed and discuss how long therapy will be expected to last to meet your goals.

If you could benefit from any interventions that Dr. Spiro does not provide, he will assist, to the best of his ability, to help you obtain those services. The cost and decision of that care is your responsibility.

Discussion of any physical problems that you might have may become a focus and your physical self-care may improve as a result of the work together however, Dr. Spiro does not specifically treat physical illnesses, and it is your responsibility to have these conditions treated by your physician.

CONCLUSION OF THERAPY

Within the first few sessions, Dr. Spiro will assess whether he can be of help to you (or you and your partner/family member). If, in Dr. Spiro's opinion, he cannot be of help to you, he will give you appropriate referrals for your consideration. Your own feelings about whether you are comfortable working with a particular psychologist or therapist is an important part of the process. Feel free to discuss these issues with Dr. Spiro at any time. If you have questions about the services being provided you may ask for clarification. Dr. Spiro will help you secure an appropriate consultation with another mental health professional whenever necessary.

If at any point during therapy you decide that Dr. Spiro is not being effective in helping you make progress toward your therapeutic goals he is obligated to discuss it with you and, if necessary, end the therapy. You may end the therapy at any time, although Dr. Spiro prefers that you discuss your intentions before ending treatment. In either case, Dr. Spiro will give you appropriate referrals and, if you request and authorize in writing, he can talk with the doctor/ therapist of your choice to ease the transition to that professional.

On very rare occasions, a conflict of interest may develop that would require Dr. Spiro to end the therapy. The exact reasons for such termination may not necessarily be explained to you so that all parties involved can remain protected.

OTHER

I have received the following documents:

- Notice of Privacy Practices
- Practice Policies Consent
- Confidentiality Policy for Psychological Services
- Welcome letter
- Patient Registration Form

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR TREATMENT

I understand that no guarantees have been made to me with respect to the results or my treatment. I understand that it is my responsibility to follow instructions about and make arrangements for follow-up care as directed by the Practice.

I understand that I have the right to make informed decisions regarding all care and treatments, and that I should ask Dr. Spiro to further clarify or explain anything I do not understand. This right includes the right to refuse any services.

In signing below, I acknowledge that I reviewed all the information in this document, I have had ample opportunity to discuss it with Dr. Spiro, and I have had my questions answered to my satisfaction. I acknowledge that I am making an informed, voluntary decision, to engage Dr. Spiro for services in the evaluation and/or psychotherapy.

Patient Name (Please Print)

Date

Signature of Patient or Parent / Guardian if patient is a minor

Parent / Guardian (Please Print)