



## **Informed Consent for Treatment and Acknowledgement of Understanding**

Welcome to my The Rock Counseling Group. This document contains important information about our professional services and business policies. It also contains summary information about the **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)**, a federal law that provides privacy protections and patient rights about the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information (PHI) for the purposes of treatment, payment, and health care operations. Although these documents are long and sometimes complex, it is very important that you understand them. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between your and our office. We can discuss any questions you have when you sign them or at any time in the future.

### **Goals of Counseling/Therapy**

There can be many goals for the counseling relationship. Some of these will be long term goals such as improving the quality of your life, learning to live with mindfulness and self-actualization. Others may be more immediate goals such as decreasing anxiety and depression symptoms, developing healthy relationships, changing behavior or decreasing/ending drug use. Whatever the goals for counseling, they will be set by the clients according to what they want to work on in counseling. The counselor may make suggestions on how to reach that goal but you decide where you want to go.

### **Risks/Benefits of Counseling**

Counseling is an intensely personal process which can bring unpleasant memories or emotions to the surface. There are no guarantees that counseling will work for you. Clients can sometimes make improvements only to go backwards after a time. Progress may happen slowly. Counseling requires a very active effort on your part. In order to be most successful, you will have to work on things we discuss outside of sessions. However, there are many benefits to counseling. Counseling can help you develop coping skills, make behavioral changes, reduce symptoms of mental health disorders, improve the quality of your life, learn to manage anger, learn to live in the present and many other advantages.

### **Appointments**

Appointments will ordinarily be 45-60 minutes in duration, at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be more or less frequent as needed. The time scheduled for your appointment is assigned to you and you alone. If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, *We ask that you provide me with 24 hours' notice. If you miss a session without canceling, or cancel with less than 24 hour notice, you may be required to pay for the session*. It is important to note that insurance companies do not provide reimbursement for cancelled sessions; thus, you will be responsible the cancellation fee. In addition, you are responsible for coming to your session on time; if you are late, your appointment will still need to end on time.

### **Confidentiality**

Your counselor will make every effort to keep your personal information private. If you wish to have information released, you will be required to sign a consent form before such information will be released. There are some limitations to confidentiality to which you need to be aware. Your counselor may consult with a supervisor or other professional counselor in order to give you the best service. In the event that your counselor consults with another counselor, no identifying information such as your name would be released. Counselors are required by law to release information when the client poses a risk to themselves or others and in cases of abuse to children or the elderly. If your counselor receives a court order or subpoena, she may be required to release some information. In such a case, your counselor will consult with other professionals and limit the release to only what is necessary by law.

### Confidentiality and Technology

Some clients may choose to use technology in their counseling sessions. This includes but is not limited to online counseling via Skype, telephone, email, text or chat. Due to the nature of online counseling, there is always the possibility that unauthorized persons may attempt to discover your personal information. Your counselor will take every precaution to safeguard your information but cannot guarantee that unauthorized access to electronic communications could not occur. Please be advised to take precautions with regard to authorized and unauthorized access to any technology used in counseling sessions. Be aware of any friends, family members, significant others or co-workers who may have access to your computer, phone or other technology used in your counseling sessions. Should a client have concerns about the safety of their email, your counselor can arrange to encrypt email communication with you.

### Record Keeping

Your counselor may keep records of your counseling sessions and a treatment plan which includes goals for your counseling. These records are kept to ensure a direction to your sessions and continuity in service. They will not be shared except with respect to the limits to confidentiality discussed in the Confidentiality section. Should the client wish to have their records released, they are required to sign a release of information which specifies what information is to be released and to whom.

### Contacting your Counselor

Our staff are not often immediately available by telephone. Our staff will not answer phone calls, text, or emails when with clients or otherwise unavailable. At these times, you may leave a message on our confidential voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

### Emergencies

The **best phone number** for all offices is **217-722-9079**, If you receive the voice mail, please leave a message for your personal counselor. Your counselor may be on the phone, in therapy with someone else, or out of the office. In a crisis situation, and your therapist cannot be reached you may **call the 24-hour Mental Health Crisis Line: 217-359-4141 or go immediately to your local hospital emergency room.**

### Email

Our staff may request client's email address. Client has the right to refuse to divulge email address. Counselor may use email addresses to periodically check in with clients who have ended therapy suddenly. Counselor may also use email addresses to send newsletters with valuable therapeutic information such as tips for depression or relaxation techniques. Counselor also has a blog and if this is appropriate for the client, counselor may send information through email about subscribing to the blog or information related to mental health and wellness. If you would like to receive any correspondence through email,

I have read, understand and agree to the above policies. I have been offered a copy of these policies to take with me if desired.

**Client(s) Signature(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent or Guardian Signature(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Therapist Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_