

Informed Consent

Client-Counselor Service Agreement

Welcome to Schwartz Therapy + Wellness. This document contains important information about my professional services and business policies. Although this document is long and can appear complex, it is very important that you understand it. When you sign this document, it will also represent an agreement between us. We can discuss any questions you have when you sign them or at any time in the future.

Counseling is a relationship between people that works in part because of clearly defined rights and responsibilities held by each person. As a client in counseling, you have certain rights and responsibilities that are important for you to understand. There are also legal limitations to those rights that you should be aware of. I, as your counselor, have corresponding responsibilities to you. These rights and responsibilities are described in the following sections.

Goals of Counseling

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 minutes in duration, once per week at a time we agree on, although some sessions may be more or less frequent as needed. A one-time intake appointment will be 60-90 minutes long. The time scheduled for your appointment is assigned to you and you alone. If you need to cancel or reschedule a session, I 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 [unless we both agree that you were unable to attend due to circumstances beyond your control]. It is important to note that insurance companies do not provide reimbursement for cancelled sessions; thus, you will be responsible the cancelation 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/HIPAA

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.

License

My license is regulated by Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Enforcement Division Allegation Section, P.O. Box 30670, Lansing, MI, 48909, (517) 373-9196. License number: 6401014584

Confidentiality and Technology

Sometimes, Schwartz Therapy + Wellness may choose to use technology in 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 progress notes. 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. Records will be kept for at least 7 years but may be kept for longer. Records will be kept either electronically on a USB flash drive or in a paper file and stored in a locked cabinet in the counselor's office.

Professional Fees

You are responsible for paying at the time of your session unless prior arrangements have been made. If you refuse to pay your debt, I reserve the right to use an attorney or collection agency to secure payment. If you anticipate becoming involved in a court case, I recommend that we discuss this fully before you waive your right to confidentiality. If your case requires my participation, you will be expected to pay for the professional time required. Fees are non-negotiable. Fees are subject to change at counselor's discretion.

Insurance/ Fee Schedule

If you are using your insurance, you may be required to pay a small co-pay, which is due at time of service, unless otherwise previously discussed beforehand with your counselor. These co-pays can range anywhere in price per session.

Contacting Me

I am often not immediately available by telephone or email. I do not answer my phone when I am with clients or otherwise unavailable. At these times, you may leave a message on my confidential voice mail and your call will be returned as soon as possible, but it may take a day or two for non-urgent matters. If you feel you cannot wait for a return call or it is an emergency situation, go to your local hospital or call 911.

Email

Counselor 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 and/or to send newsletters. If you would like to receive any correspondence through email, please write your email address here _____. If you would like to opt out of email correspondence, please check here _____.

Consent to Counseling

Your signature below indicates that you have read this Agreement and agree to its terms.

Client Signature _____

Date_____