

## INITIAL THERAPY AGREEMENT

Psychotherapy is not like other professional relationships you may have had. It calls for active - and often brave - participation on your part. 'Active' because I am not the expert on you, and you will need to do at least 50% of the work, and 'brave' because the process of knowing yourself better or changing behaviour is very likely to bring up feelings that may make you feel like you're getting worse rather than better. It is essential that you bring these feelings - anger, sadness, grief, guilt, shame, envy, anxiety - to the session so that they can be understood in the context of the work and our relationship.

The first session will be considered as an assessment period for us both. I will be able to get a better idea of what our work together might involve and if I can be of help. You will need to decide if you agree with me about the anticipated direction of the work and if you feel comfortable enough with me to make a commitment. It is essential that you raise any questions or doubts during the assessment period and at any other time in the work. If during the assessment period or at any other time in our relationship either you or I decide that I am not the right therapist for you, I will be happy to refer you to another therapist.

This agreement expresses the commitment each of us makes at the outset. Please read it through when you have time, as we will discuss things further next week. Once we have discussed and agreed the details, we will both sign and keep one copy to register our shared understanding.

1. Each session lasts about one hour (initial assessment 90 minutes). It is important for effective therapy that we try to maintain a regular and continuous commitment. If a change of circumstance makes this difficult for you, we can discuss the possibility of a different date and time and I will do my best to rearrange things if I can.
2. There is often no way of knowing at the start of therapy just how long we will continue to work together. Our initial contract will be decided after the assessment session with regular reviews.
3. My fees are £      per session.
4. I will be ready for you at the appointed time. Please try to arrive on time. If you arrive late for any reason the session will still finish at the appointed time.
5. I will take all reasonable precautions to keep our therapy space safe from interruption and intrusion, such as from telephone calls, deliveries and workmen, though there may be rare occasions when this is not feasible. I ask you to respect the therapy space too, by not accepting mobile phone calls.
6. You have my phone number in case you need it. My telephone answering machine will usually be on if I am not available when you call. Please leave good time for me to contact you and I will make every effort to return your call before the end of my working day. I cannot guarantee that I will be available to you at weekends and during my breaks unless by prior arrangement. If I am going to be unavailable and I think it necessary I will give you the name and number of a colleague to contact in my absence. Although I am happy to be available to you for occasional and short telephone contact between sessions, if you need to speak to me for a prolonged length of time (more than 5 minutes) or feel the need to contact me on a regular basis, this will be considered as chargeable on a *pro rata basis* for that time based on my session rate.

**7.** I may also bill you, or the company paying for your therapy on a pro rata basis for any reports that I may be required to write or to read in connection with your therapy.

**8.** My professional organisations, BACP / BABCP, require me to keep records of the therapy. These records are limited to any information you give me concerning your contact details, medication and contact with other professionals and a record of sessions attended, missed or cancelled. I do not keep written records of our sessions and will not take notes in your presence other than during the assessment phase to record the details mentioned above. After or between sessions I make informal notes to help me to bring the work to my supervisor who is bound by the same codes of confidentiality as I am. From time to time I may jot down thoughts in supervision but these are notes of my supervision and not of the therapy. As I do not keep formal records of our work together, I will be happy to give you at any time during or after our work together a summary of our work together unless I and my supervisor believe that doing so may be harmful to you in some way. If you give me things to keep that you or others have written I will not file them in a way that could lead to your identity being revealed.

**9.** Please avoid taking affect altering drugs or alcohol before a session. If you arrive in what I believe to be an altered state that makes you psychologically unavailable the session will not take place and I will charge for the time.

**10.** I will take holidays during the year - usually in the summer period, at Christmas/New Year, and Easter/Passover, plus 'half term' weeks where appropriate. I will let you know the dates as far in advance as possible.

**11.** It is my responsibility to monitor my health and fitness to work. This means that I may have to cancel a session at short notice due to illness or other unforeseen life events.

**12.** If you are unable to attend a session due to illness or unforeseen circumstances, please call and let me know, and we may be able to re-schedule. Please bear in mind, however, that such re-arrangement may not always be possible. My flexibility is limited by the fact that I see clients on a regular basis, at the same time and day each week, so alternative appointment times are not freely available. I will expect you or the company paying for your therapy to pay for any sessions you decide to miss altogether, as I cannot make any other use of 'your time'. If I am able to offer you an alternative appointment in the same week in which you need to cancel I will not charge you for the missed session.

**13.** If you decide to cancel sessions due to *foreseen* circumstances, such as taking a holiday yourself or working away, please let me know at least a week in advance. If you give me less than 24 hours' notice, I will expect to be paid the full fee for any missed sessions. I will not attempt to re-schedule sessions in the above circumstances.

**14.** The therapeutic relationship is intended to be healing, supportive and sometimes challenging. We need to be aware that there may be times, as in any human relationship, when things feel difficult and it seems hard to persevere. These times, if worked through together, can be very fruitful and life-enhancing for you. We both need to have the intention of seeing things through in such circumstances.

**15.** If either of us thinks it is time to bring the therapy to an end, we will discuss this together and decide if and how to do that. Sometimes one session is enough to make sure the decision is a good one. Sometimes it is better to have a series of sessions to review the work and either decide to go on with therapy after all, or else to find a way of making a good ending for you. Ending the therapeutic relationship is a shared process and should never be a one-sided or impulsive act.

**16.** Everything that happens in our therapy session remains confidential between us, with the following exceptions:

- I will discuss aspects of our work with other colleagues for supervisory purposes, but your identity will remain protected;
- When required by law, which is very rare;
- I may contact your GP or other medical professionals involved if I believe you are likely to cause serious injury to yourself or others. I may do this without consultation with you if you are not in a position to discuss other options with me.

**17.** In paragraph 2, above, we agreed to regular reviews. The purpose of these is to keep the work on track, to decide on a new direction or to flag up any concerns either of us might have. We may choose to put any new agreements in writing at that time or at any time along the way.

**18.** We may have already identified that you are someone who finds it very painful to be let down by those in whom you have placed your trust. Given that it is likely that from time to time you will feel let down by me when I get something wrong or say something unhelpful. When this happens you and I need to talk openly about the effect it has on you to avoid me becoming in your mind another inadequate person who has failed you.

**19.** I may ask to record sessions so that my supervisor can hear how I work. If I do tape any sessions you can always ask for the tape to be turned off or erased if you feel uneasy. My supervisor is bound by the same codes of confidentiality as I am and will not reveal what is private and confidential between you and me.

**Signed (Client)** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Nominated contact person and contact details in case I am concerned for your safety**

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**Contact number;** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed (Therapist)** \_\_\_\_\_

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